

TEN YEARS OF SLOVENIAN FOREIGN POLICY: A SMALL STATE ENCOUNTERS THE WORLD

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Since attaining independence in 1991, Slovenia has been the undisputed success story of the Balkans. After seceding from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) on June 25, 1991, Slovenia, following a ten-day war with Yugoslav federal troops, extracted itself from the developing quagmire of the wars of Yugoslav secession and quietly embarked on a program of state-building and democratic consolidation. Slovenia has enjoyed considerable success in both of these endeavors.¹ In its ten years of independence (and eleven of democracy), it has conducted three successful parliamentary elections and experienced four routine changes in government. It has compiled a consistent and exemplary record of respect for human rights and the rule of law.² Slovenia's economy provides it with by far the highest standard of living among the former socialist states. At \$12,000 per capita estimated for 2000, Slovenia's GDP stands at approximately 70 percent of the European Union (EU) average, placing it on a par with Portugal and Greece.³ But a country's success—if not survival—also depends on its ability to conduct a successful foreign policy. Upon achieving independence, Slovenia has faced (and continues to face) a myriad of foreign policy challenges. For Slovenia the normal foreign policy challenges of a European state were complicated by the volatile situation in the Balkan region and the difficult task of establishing Slovenia as an accepted national actor in the international system. Slovenia's foreign policy successes and failures over the preceding ten years will have a major impact on its

¹ See Charles Bukowski, "Testing Consolidation Theory: Understanding Slovenia's Experience," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 3.1 (2000): 67–88; and Sabrina Petra Ramet, "The Slovenian Success Story," *Current History* 98.3 (1998): 112–18.

² For an early assessment, see US State Department, *Report on Human Rights, 1992* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1993) 907–11. For the most recent review see www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/eur/8341.htm.

³ US Central Intelligence Agency, *World Factbook 2001* (available at www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html).

future role in world affairs and on its ability to prosper as a small European state. This paper will examine the first decade of Slovenia's foreign policy and demonstrate the influence of the country's small size and its domestic politics on its foreign policy choices. The paper will commence with a brief description of some of the problems facing Slovenia as a small, new state confronting the challenges of a post-Cold War world. Second, some thoughts will be offered regarding Slovenia's historical view of its place in the world. Third, an assessment of Slovenia's major foreign policy initiatives during the 1990s will be offered (space limitations preclude a comprehensive review) and juxtaposed with significant domestic political developments. Finally, conclusions will be presented regarding the impact of Slovenia's small size and its domestic politics on the state's foreign policy choices.

Small State Challenges in the Post-Cold War World

Small states such as Slovenia face a variety of challenges in their efforts to conduct successful foreign policies, not the least of which is the limited quantity of resources they can devote to the task of policy implementation. Slovenia is no exception. Despite enjoying a relatively high GDP per capita, with a population of just 1.97 million,⁴ the level of resources Slovenia can make available to conduct its foreign policy places severe limitations on its capabilities. This constraint is evident in the extent of Slovenia's representation abroad. It maintains thirty-two embassies, six missions, and eight professional consular posts worldwide involving 207 diplomatic personnel (out of a total of approximately 450 Foreign Ministry personnel). Another forty posts are staffed by honorary consuls, who provide Slovenia with a symbolic presence. Indeed, one may legitimately ask whether such a small foreign policy bureaucracy is physically capable of managing effectively a complex issue such as achieving NATO candidacy. Lack of resources also limits the size of Slovenia's presence in a country. One of the country's largest embassies is in Washington, DC, and yet only seven diplomats are accredited to serve there (including the ambassador and the military

⁴ US Central Intelligence Agency, *World Factbook 2001* (available at www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html).

attaché).⁵ It is notable that Slovenia's limited diplomatic resources are further stretched by its quest to obtain membership in the European Union (EU). As a consequence of its candidacy, Slovenia maintains a diplomatic presence in the capitals of all but one of the fifteen EU members (excepting Luxembourg) as well as an official presence devoted to relations with the EU's headquarters in Brussels.

As a small state, Slovenia possesses very limited influence in the international system. In 2000 its GDP (gross domestic product) was estimated at just \$22.9 billion.⁶ Nor does Slovenia possess any special physical resources that might enhance its international economic standing such as oil or other strategic minerals, or a disproportionate production capability of a particular product.⁷ Its full-time armed forces total approximately 10,000 personnel, of which about 6,000 are conscripts.⁸ Obviously there is little tangible that Slovenia can bring to an international negotiation, and its capabilities appear even more limited when compared to those of most countries in Europe. Slovenia's opportunities to exert an influence on other states' policies are very limited, and in most international negotiations, it must enter the proceedings as a petitioner with little to offer in return for its requests. And as a new state, Slovenia cannot rely on the influence of any traditional historical role. In fact in the first decade of its foreign policy, as a new state, Slovenia faced the additional challenge of just making itself known while handicapped with the burden of limited resources and capabilities.

⁵ Information provided to the author by the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Slovenia, February 2001. By contrast, the US maintains 252 posts in 160 countries, staffed by approximately 5,000 Foreign Service Officers as well as several thousand other US government personnel assigned to over 30 agencies or offices in the US federal bureaucracy. US Department of State, Overseas Presence Advisory Panel, "America's Overseas Presence in the 21st Century" (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1999).

⁶ US Central Intelligence Agency, *World Factbook 2001*.

⁷ Luxembourg, for example, is home to the largest steel manufacturer in Europe. Alan Osborn, "Banking on the Euro," *EUROPE*, 384 (March 1999): 8. Thanks to Zlatko Šabič for bringing this to my attention.

⁸ US Department of State, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers 1998* (Washington: US Government Printing Office) 103.

Slovenia does possess the theoretical advantage of being nimble. One might expect its small foreign policy bureaucracy to be better able to adjust to the ongoing turbulence of the post-Cold War international environment. As a small state, Slovenia cannot be expected to have a global presence and, to a limited extent, can be selective in choosing where to get involved. However these advantages are contingent on possessing an enlightened leadership that is capable of undertaking a sound analysis of the international environment and setting policy priorities that are in the country's interests. Further, East contends that the limited resources of small states means they are "unable to maintain a high level of attention focused on foreign affairs" and as a result they will "perceive developing situations ... rather late."⁹ In order for Slovenia to maximize its opportunities for success and overcome the handicap of its size, it must do a superior job of anticipating problems and of devising effective solutions to those problems. Unlike a larger power, it does not have the resources to come late to an issue or to fall behind its competitors with the expectation that it can close the gap.

Slovenia's Traditional World View

To an inexperienced observer, Slovenia's seventy-three years of association during the twentieth century with the Croats and Serbs—first in the State of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (1918), giving way to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1929), and finally as a constituent republic in the SFRY—suggests an orientation toward the Balkans. A more historically accurate view requires the observer to understand that Slovenia first became associated with the Habsburg Empire late in the thirteenth century, and that it was ruled from Vienna until the Empire was dissolved in the aftermath of World War One.¹⁰ Slovenia's decision to look instead to the south after World War One arose out of its ongoing dissatisfaction with the manner in which Vienna had historically treated the Slovenian people as well as an effort to minimize the ability of Austria and Italy to interfere in Slovenia's

⁹ Maurice A. East, "Size and Foreign Policy Behavior," *World Politics* 25.3 (1973): 566.

¹⁰ See William E. Lingelbach, *Austria-Hungary* (New York: Arno, 1971) 74–76.

affairs in the future.¹¹ In the end, unfortunately, Slovenia simply came to exchange one set of restrictions for another, and the experience only strengthened Slovenia's orientation away from the Balkans and toward Western and Central Europe.¹²

In terminating its association with the SFRY and shortly thereafter dealing with the economic consequences of the wars of Yugoslav secession, Slovenia was forced to redirect a significant portion of its commercial ties back toward Western Europe, building on existing ties with the then-named European Communities.¹³ By 1992, one year after independence, sixty-nine percent of the country's exports were being purchased by EU countries, primarily Germany, Austria, and Italy. The comparable figure for 1989 was fifty-two percent.¹⁴ Slovenia's turn toward Western Europe did not represent an entirely new phenomenon. In addition to maintaining a substantial trade flow with EU countries while still a part of Yugoslavia, Slovenia participated in some Western European regional organizations such as the Alps-Adria Working Community and the Assembly of European Regions.¹⁵ Similar ties existed at the citizen-to-citizen level as many Slovenian associations held memberships in European cultural, economic, and scientific organizations.¹⁶ And a March 1991 report passed by the Slovenian Republican Assembly declared that full membership in the European Communities must be a part of Slovenia's foreign policy strategy.¹⁷ Bučar and Brinar argue that the reasons for this orientation go beyond "the political, economic, and security thinking of the

¹¹ Lenard J. Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995) 12.

¹² In the mid-1990s Slovenia used "the sunny side of the Alps" as a catchphrase to attract tourism. Slovenians would often lament that their country was on the "wrong side" of the Alps.

¹³ To avoid confusion, the organization will hereafter be referred to as the EU.

¹⁴ Bojko Bučar and Irena Brinar, "Slovenian Foreign Policy," in *Civil Society, Political Society, Democracy*, ed. Adolf Bibič and Gigi Graziano (Ljubljana: Slovenian Political Science Association, 1994) 436. This rapid change in Slovenia's export patterns represents a remarkable effort, especially in light of a transportation infrastructure built primarily to facilitate commerce between Slovenia and the other Yugoslav republics.

¹⁵ Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1995) 156.

¹⁶ Bučar and Brinar, "Slovenian Foreign Policy" 432.

¹⁷ Bučar and Brinar, "Slovenian Foreign Policy" 438.

government and the parties.” It is due also “to the cultural heritage of the nation and the strivings of the civil society, which feel part of Europe.”¹⁸

Foreign Policy after Independence Securing Recognition

Since Slovenia’s secession was not a sudden or unanticipated event, the Slovenian republican leadership had several months to develop public—including foreign—policies.¹⁹ Initially the new democratically elected government appointed official representatives of the republic’s Executive Council to establish contacts in key capitals. Notable examples include Lojze Sočan, who headed the Ljubljanska Banka office in Brussels (August 1990); Ivan Gole, who also represented the Slovenian firm Slovenijales in Moscow (September 1990); Štefan Lončnar, the Ljubljanska Banka representative in Prague (October 1990); and Peter Millonig (October 1990), whose appointment to Washington represented a more blatant gesture since he did not have a dual responsibility.²⁰ Later efforts were made to establish ties with Slovenian émigré communities wherever possible, and discrete contacts were made with Slovenian members of the SFRY diplomatic service.²¹ This latter endeavor was hindered by the relatively small number of Slovenian diplomats. By one account, only three percent of the employees of the SFRY’s Federal Secretariat for Foreign Affairs, and between three and five percent of Yugoslavia’s diplomatic personnel, were Slovenian (whereas the Republic of Slovenia accounted for eight percent of the SFRY’s population).²² Provisions also

¹⁸ Bučar and Brinar, “Slovenian Foreign Policy” 433.

¹⁹ Silber and Little contrast Slovenia’s well-planned march toward declaring independence with the ad hoc policies of Tudjman in Croatia during the first half of 1991. Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of Nation*, rev. ed. (New York: Penguin, 1997) 149–50.

²⁰ Republic of Slovenia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “The Tenth Anniversary of the Appointment of the First Authorised Representative of the Republic of Slovenia Abroad” (available at www.sigov.si/mzz/ang).

²¹ James Gow and Cathie Carmichael, *Slovenia and the Slovenes: A Small State and the New Europe* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2000) 181.

²² Republic of Slovenia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “A Decade of Slovenia’s Independent Foreign Policy” (available at www.sigov.si/mzz/ang).

had to be made to permit Slovenians working in the Yugoslav diplomatic service to be “repatriated” into the new Slovenian diplomatic corps. This move disrupted somewhat the ability of the SFRY to interfere in Slovenia’s affairs just prior to its declaring independence, and, more importantly, provided Slovenia with a small cadre of experienced and often well-connected diplomats to manage the republic’s contacts just prior to secession and into the period immediately following independence.²³

Slovenia’s brief war for independence ended on July 7, 1991 with the signing of the Brioni Declaration brokered by the EU in which Slovenia agreed to suspend its declaration of independence for three months while further negotiations took place with Belgrade and, more importantly, the Yugoslav Army withdrew from Slovenia. Slovenia used this hiatus to garner support for its cause among various international actors. Important sympathetic countries were judged to be Austria and Germany, and significant efforts were made to cultivate their support. While the US was viewed as a key player, it—along with Britain and France—was thought to be opposed to Slovenia’s secession. The Slovenian leadership had hoped that Austria would be among the first to recognize Slovenia, but Vienna assumed a cautious approach, most likely because of it was in the midst of seeking membership in the EU. However, Germany did not disappoint Slovenia. It was German pressure that led the EU to issue guidelines for the recognition of Yugoslav successor states following the end of the three-month moratorium that resulted from the Brioni Declaration. And it was Germany that broke with the EU by recognizing Slovenia on December 19, 1991 rather than the date set by the organization for recognition: January 15, 1992.²⁴ Austria joined the remaining EU states in recognizing Slovenia on January 15.²⁵ The US was the fifty-eighth

²³ Bojko Bučar, “Slovenia,” in *Political and Economic Transformation in East Central Europe*, edited by Hanspeter Neuhold, Peter Havlik, and Arnold Suppan (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995) 286–87. It should be remembered that the SFRY had an extensive network of diplomatic contacts, maintaining relations with eighty-four countries. In addition many of Yugoslavia’s missions were quite large. Gow and Carmichael 181; and Bučar 288, n. 22.

²⁴ Gow and Carmichael, *Slovenia and the Slovenes* 182–84.

²⁵ The first country to recognize Slovenia was Croatia. This act was part of an arrangement between Slovenia and Croatia whereby they would

country to recognize Slovenia—on April 7, 1992. The US delay was partially due to its displeasure with Slovenia for ignoring US wishes to remain a part of the SFRY. Indeed, US relations with Slovenia through the first half of the 1990s were tainted by the view in the US Department of State that Slovenia should shoulder a large part of the blame for the break-up of Yugoslavia.²⁶ The US decision to grant Slovenia recognition was not discrete. The act took place in conjunction with American recognition of Croatia and Bosnia. The primary motivation for this act was the misplaced hope that, in establishing diplomatic relations with Bosnia, the US might forestall Serb aggression against Bosnian Muslims following the March 1 referendum in Bosnia supporting that republic's secession from the SFRY.²⁷

Slovenia also set about securing recognition by international institutions. This process was necessary because, in seceding from the SFRY, Slovenia was not considered a legal successor state and so did not automatically receive membership in all of the international organizations to which Yugoslavia belonged. However, once Slovenia received recognition by the EU states, membership in most key international organizations proceeded quickly and smoothly. It entered the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (then the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) (OSCE) on February 24, 1992. Other important memberships included the World

simultaneously declare their independence from the SFRY and each would accord diplomatic recognition to the other. They had also agreed to a mutual defense arrangement and to sharing intelligence, but Croatia broke this agreement a few days before the two countries seceded by doing nothing when forces of the Yugoslav National Army passed through the republic on their way to Slovenia. Silber and Little, pp. 149–50. Former Soviet states (Lithuania, July 30; Georgia, August 14; Estonia, August 25; Latvia, August 29; and Ukraine, December 12) were the next five countries to recognize Slovenia. This is not surprising given the political origins of these countries. For a chronology of states that have recognized Slovenia, see the *Journal of International Relations*, 1.1 (1994): 82–84.

²⁶ Charles Bukowski, "Slovenian-American Relations in the Context of NATO Enlargement," in *Small States and the Post-Cold War World: Slovenia and NATO Enlargement*, ed. Zlatko Šabič and Charles Bukowski (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002) 53–82.

²⁷ Warren Zimmerman, *Origins of a Catastrophe* (New York: Times Books, 1999) 194; and Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy* 147.

Health Organization (May 7, 1992), the United Nations (UN) as well as the UN Conference on Trade and Development (May 22, 1992), the International Telecommunications Union (June 16, 1992), the International Atomic Energy Agency (September 21, 1992), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (December 23, 1992), the International Monetary Fund (January 15, 1993), the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (February 25, 1993), and the Council of Europe (May 14, 1993). In terms of active representation abroad, by November 1992 Slovenia had established 22 embassies, five consulates general, and four missions, staffed by approximately 100 Slovenian nationals.²⁸

The Early Years: 1992–96

While Slovenia enjoyed considerable and relatively rapid success establishing itself as a recognized actor in world affairs, it made less progress pursuing a coherent foreign policy strategy. First, Slovenia was confronted with limitations on its resources. Obviously it could not maintain a diplomatic presence comparable to that undertaken by the SFRY. It lacked not only the financial resources, but also the human resources—averaging about three staff per post, plus another seventy staff working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.²⁹ Second, Slovenia lacked a coherent foreign policy strategy. In early 1992, the Foreign Affairs Ministry presented a short document to Slovenia's parliament outlining a strategic plan for foreign policy. This plan was approved by the parliament's Committee on Foreign Relations, but it was never endorsed by the full parliament, which deferred approval until it could agree on an analogous national security strategy. When the latter effort failed, the foreign policy strategic plan died as well, leaving Slovenia with "not only a lack of a clearly defined strategy in foreign relations, but no foreign relations strategy at all."³⁰ Subsequent efforts to gain

²⁸ Bučar, "Slovenia" 289, n. 25.

²⁹ Bučar, "Slovenia" 288, 289, nn. 21, 24. Bučar notes that the unofficial policy was to hold the funding level of Slovenia's Foreign Service to approximately the amount Slovenia contributed to the cost of Yugoslavia's diplomatic representation: about \$25 million annually. Bučar, p. 289, n. 24. By the end of 1993, twenty embassies had opened in Ljubljana. *Radio Slovenia*, December 28, 1993.

³⁰ Bučar, "Slovenia" 287–88.

parliamentary approval of a foreign policy strategy continued under Foreign Minister Peterle through 1993 and 1994, but the effort died with Peterle's resignation in October 1994.³¹ Peterle's successor, Zoran Thaler submitted a revised strategic plan to parliament in 1995. It languished there for nearly a year, but received preliminary approval in April 1996. Unfortunately, it too died when Thaler resigned in July of that year.³²

Despite the lack of a strategic plan, two trends are evident in the first few years of Slovenian foreign policy: in contrast to Yugoslavia's traditional orientation of non-alignment, Slovenia made a keen effort to associate itself with Western and (to a lesser extent) Central Europe; and there was a corresponding attempt to remove the country from the events taking place in the Balkans. Both of these endeavors were pragmatic decisions. Western Europe offered both political stability and economic opportunity, whereas the region of the former Yugoslavia offered neither. Key to Slovenia's economic survival was the cultivation of commercial ties in the EU. As noted above, between 1989 and 1992 the share of Slovenia's exports going to the EU rose from fifty-two percent to sixty-nine percent³³ as it sought to replace the Yugoslav internal market that it had largely lost access to as a result of secession and war. And it was equally important for establishing a favorable initial image of Slovenia in the world that everything possible be done to avoid being labeled a "Balkan" country, or becoming associated with the conflicts that were raging throughout much of the remainder of the former Yugoslavia. A strong European orientation also represented a first step toward joining the EU, a goal that had been explicitly stated by the Slovenian government even before independence. In terms of a specific foreign policy activity, EU membership must be considered Slovenia's primary goal from independence through at least mid-1994.

³¹ Stan Markotich, "Making Steady Gains in Foreign Policy," *Transition*, 8 September 1995: 40.

³² Bojko Bučar, "On the Way to Normality: the Foreign Policy of Slovenia," in *At the Crossroads: Disaster or Normalization? The Yugoslav Successor States in the 1990s*, ed. Valeria Heuberger, Henriette Riegler, and Hermine Vidovic (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999) 129–30.

³³ Bučar and Brinar, "Slovenian Foreign Policy" 436. Also see Vladimir Gligorov, "Reorientation of Foreign Trade in Slovenia," *Communist Economies and Economic Transformation* 7.1 (1995): 543–54.

An early success and a step toward establishing Slovenia as a “normal” European state rather than a “Balkan” state was the conclusion of a treaty in November 1992 with Hungary. This treaty committed Ljubljana to protect the Hungarian minority residing in Slovenia and Budapest to defend the Slovenian minority living in Hungary.³⁴ This accomplishment undoubtedly enhanced Slovenia’s pending application with the Council of Europe, which subsequently admitted Slovenia to full membership in May 1993.

Yet the signing of the treaty with Hungary had only tangential relevance to Slovenia’s primary foreign policy goal of full membership in the EU. The origins of Slovenia’s relationship with the EU lie in a cooperation agreement on preferential trade between that organization and the SFRY signed in 1980 and which allowed Slovenia’s commercial ties to the EU region to grow. Once Slovenia had gained recognition as an independent state, it was granted temporary trade preferences by the EU through 1992,³⁵ and on April 3, 1993 Slovenia concluded its own cooperation agreement on preferential trade with the EU. Along with the trade pact, Slovenia also agreed to a statement on political dialog, a protocol on financial cooperation, and a transport agreement.³⁶ Perhaps most importantly the signing of the cooperation agreement allowed dialog to begin on concluding a Europe Agreement with the EU. Short of full membership, a Europe Agreement represents the highest form of cooperation between the EU a nonmember country and would be a necessary step on the road to EU accession.

The cooperation agreement in effect normalized Slovenia’s relationship with the EU and provided guarantees for its long-term access to the EU market—an attraction, it was hoped, to foreign investors. The agreement also represented another step toward presenting Slovenia as a normal European country.

In addition to the benefits directly accruing to Slovenia, the cooperation agreement was vital to Slovenia in its efforts to keep pace with the other Central European countries as they positioned themselves as candidates for EU membership. Hungary and Poland

³⁴ Markotich, “Making Steady Gains” 40.

³⁵ Bučar and Brinar, “Slovenian Foreign Policy” 437, n. 34.

³⁶ “Chronicle of Foreign Policy,” *Journal of International Relations* 1.2 (1994): 92.

signed Europe Agreements in December 1991 (coming into force in February 1994); the Czech Republic signed a Europe Agreement in October 1993 (coming into force in February 1995). Although, at this time, the EU had made no definitive statements about enlargement to the east, no post-socialist country could risk being left behind and excluded from the first opportunity for accession. Slovenia could already have been viewed as trailing behind Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. Since no one knew when the EU would initiate the process of reviewing applications of aspirant states, for Slovenia to maximize its chances of receiving an invitation to membership, it was important that it assemble qualifications equivalent to the three perceived frontrunners. Slovenia's concern over being left behind is evident in a September 1994 interview given by then-Foreign Minister Lojze Peterle. In responding to a proposition by some German political leaders that certain countries could be perceived as on a fast track (velocity) toward possible EU membership compared to others, Peterle stated, "If five or six countries are fit for the appropriate velocity today, this has to be taken into account. But if a certain country attains these countries in its development at some future time, it should have the possibility of joining the first countries in the league."³⁷ Three months earlier the Drnovšek government contended that one of the impediments to Slovenia's efforts to gain a Europe Agreement was "some European politicians who maintain that Slovenia is still a Balkan state."³⁸

In many ways Slovenia did possess the qualifications necessary to be viewed as a frontrunner for EU membership (e.g. a high standard of living, a market driven economy in which inflation had been largely controlled, a successful series of democratic elections, and a commitment to protecting human rights), unfortunately it faced a major impediment to this goal in its rocky relationship with Italy. The focal point of the difficulties between the two countries was the status of property that had belonged to Italians before they were expelled from Yugoslavia following World War Two. Slovenia considered the disposition of that property resolved when the Osimo Treaty was signed between Italy and Yugoslavia in 1975. At most Slovenia was willing to discuss compensation for the property, but Italy indicated a preference

³⁷ Quoted by STA (Ljubljana), 13 September 1994.

³⁸ Radio Slovenia, 15 June 1994.

for allowing its citizens to buy it back.³⁹ In addition to a (perceived) disturbing attempt by Italy to revise a long-standing and successful agreement, the prospect of an Italian repurchase of property touched on a sensitive issue for the Slovenian public: the fear that their new-found independence would be lost as foreigners gradually bought up the small country's property. Thus Article 68 of Slovenia's Constitution significantly restricted the ability of foreigners to acquire property in the country.

Relations with Italy further declined in the spring of 1994 when the right-of-center government of Silvio Berlusconi came to power (his coalition included neo-fascists). At this point it became clear that Italy would use its veto power to prevent Slovenia from concluding a Europe Agreement until the property issue had been resolved to Italy's satisfaction. Slovenia voiced its discontent, with Prime Minister Drnovšek stating in a June 1994 interview that, "Italy takes advantage of its position in EU.... The government is already taking measures to prevent this and we will not allow [ourselves] to be blackmailed."⁴⁰ Three months later Drnovšek indicated that Slovenia hoped to "internationalize" the dispute with Italy by seeking support from other EU members, especially Germany.⁴¹ In October, the Foreign Relations Committee of the Slovenian Parliament warned that relations with Italy had become so poor that there was reason to be concerned for the rights of ethnic Slovenians living in Italy.⁴² Indeed, when Foreign Minister Peterle was forced to resign in September 1994, his inability to resolve the dispute with Italy was cited as a major contributing factor for the move.⁴³

The resignation of Peterle was closely followed by the collapse of the Berlusconi government. The timing of these events proved fortuitous as it allowed both countries to resume negotiations in a more congenial atmosphere and with a minimum of political baggage. In January 1995 Prime Minister Drnovšek named Zoran Thaler to the post of foreign minister. Thaler was a supporter of Peterle's policy of

³⁹ Gow and Carmichael, *Slovenia and the Slovenes* 204–206.

⁴⁰ STA (Ljubljana), 14 June 1994.

⁴¹ Yugoslav Telegraph Service (Belgrade), 18 September 1994.

⁴² Stan Markotich, "A Balancing Act Between NATO and the EU," *Transition*, 7 December 1995: 55.

⁴³ Markotich, "Making Steady Gains in Foreign Policy" 41.

engagement with Italy. In Rome the new government indicated its support for improving relations with Slovenia. Serious negotiations between the two governments quickly resumed.

An important change regarding relations with Italy appears to have taken place in the Drnovšek government in early 1995: a decision to make concessions to Italy. As a result, the government indicated its willingness to amend its constitutional restrictions against foreign purchases of Slovenian property. By June of 1995, with Italy having dropped its objection, Slovenia initialed a Europe Agreement. Unfortunately, the planned signing of the association agreement in September of that year was postponed until Italy was satisfied that its citizens would gain immediate access to the Slovenian property market. The Drnovšek government dragged its feet on this concession leading some in the EU to conclude that Slovenia was to blame for the delay.⁴⁴ Finally the EU indicated that it would terminate negotiations with Slovenia unless Italy's concerns were met. At this point Slovenia made additional and substantive concessions, and the Agreement was quickly made ready for signing on May 26, 1996. Nevertheless, the agreement did not take effect until Slovenia formally amended its Constitution to remove most restrictions on the foreign ownership of property, an event which did not occur until July 1997.⁴⁵ Given the sensitive political nature of the issue of foreign ownership, the long process by which Slovenia came to this point should not be surprising. To the very end the issue was highly contentious, and the opposition parties made great use of the controversy. In order to make the change more palatable politically, it was sold as a major step toward EU membership since ultimately, if Slovenia were to be invited to membership, it would have to put its property rights laws into conformance with EU standards by allowing the citizens of all EU states the right to purchase property in Slovenia.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ STA (Ljubljana), 3 October 1995.

⁴⁵ Gow and Carmichael, *Slovenia and the Slovenes* 207–208.

⁴⁶ Dimitrij Rupel, "Slovenia and Central Europe's March Toward the EU: the Restrictive Role of the European Great Powers," *Slovene Studies* 17.1–2 (1995) (published August 1998): 91–94. Rupel notes that Foreign Minister Thaler's pointed defense of the government's concession in the spring of 1996 likely contributed to his dismissal in July of that year. (91, n. 9).

While the domestic reception for the government's decision to accede to Italy's demands was hardly enthusiastic, the progress Slovenia made toward its goal of EU membership as a result of its acquiescence was remarkable. Within days of fulfilling its obligation under the Europe Agreement, Slovenia was recognized by the EU as one of the countries qualified to begin accession discussions with the organization. These talks commenced in March 1998. Thus Slovenia had moved from a situation in which for three years it feared being left out of possible EU accession talks to being one of the frontrunners in those talks.⁴⁷

Although the outcome of Slovenia's long quest for a Europe Agreement was ultimately successful, the frustrations encountered during 1995 appear to have led the government to at least temporarily add a second foreign policy priority: membership in NATO. Sometime in September 1995, NATO membership became a highly visible goal of the Drnovšek government. Markotich suggests that the trigger for the change may have been a visit to Ljubljana by then-US Secretary of Defense William Perry, who praised Slovenia's political and economic transition and suggested that no other former communist country had accomplished more.⁴⁸ Prime Minister Drnovšek subsequently remarked that Secretary Perry's visit was evidence Slovenia has become "a strategic priority" of the US.⁴⁹

Slovenia's interest in NATO at this point was not new. In March 1994, Slovenia became the fourteenth country (out of twenty-four total) to join NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP). Foreign Minister Peterle declared that while Slovenia appreciated the opportunity to join the PfP, it was just "the first step" and "too little" for Slovenia's overall security needs. He stated that "we [Slovenia] must achieve our security within the context of European security."⁵⁰ Nevertheless NATO membership did not receive the same high level of visibility that Slovenia had given to its ongoing EU saga until the fall of 1995. But by early 1996, the NATO issue began to recede and Slovenia refocused its efforts on concluding a Europe Agreement. By this time the EU had indicated its lack of patience with Slovenia, so the urgency

⁴⁷ Gow and Carmichael, *Slovenia and the Slovenes* 204.

⁴⁸ Markotich, "A Balancing Act Between NATO and the EU" 55.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Markotich, "A Balancing Act Between NATO and the EU" 55.

⁵⁰ Nachrichten-TV (Berlin), 2 February 1994.

of the EU issue was clear, and perhaps it also had become clear to the Drnovšek government that, although NATO membership represented a good solution to Slovenia's security concerns, it would do little for its EU accession prospects.⁵¹

Although Slovenia sought to remove itself as much as possible from Balkan affairs and to achieve a corresponding "European" identity, the nature of its outstanding issues with Croatia required that considerable attention be paid to this relationship. It was also important to Slovenia's attempts to build bridges to the EU and NATO that it demonstrate a good faith effort to maintain normal relations with its neighbors and show a willingness to address outstanding issues. Several problems arose as a result of the secession of Slovenia and Croatia from the SFRY, and their resolution was not made easier by the atmosphere of distrust that pervaded Slovenian-Croatian relations from their onset. As noted above (see note 25) prior to secession, the two Yugoslav republics agreed to mutual assistance in several security-related matters only to see these agreements ignored within days of them both declaring their independence.

Several difficult problems separated the two countries in these first years. For Slovenia a major concern was free access to international waters from its ports. The shape of Slovenia's limited coast (the Bay of Piran) requires that Slovenian vessels pass through Croatian or Italian territory before reaching international waters. Slovenia desired a compromise on Croatia's part as a means of gaining direct access to open seas. Croatia sought guarantees from Slovenia regarding access to electricity produced at the Krsko (Slovenia) nuclear power plant—a plant built partially with Croatian money. Other issues included areas where the international border is ill-defined, the disposition of Croatian deposits in the Ljubljanska Banka, the property rights of Slovenians in Croatia (and the high taxation of Slovenian property in Croatia), and the legal status of Croatian workers in Slovenia.⁵² Although Slovenia maintained an ongoing dialog with Croatia during the 1991–96 period, the effort generally received a lower

⁵¹ Markotich, "A Balancing Act Between NATO and the EU" 55.

⁵² Bučar, "Slovenia" 291–92, n. 31; Sabrina P. Ramet, "The Slovenian Success Story," *Current History* (March 1998): 114–15; and Markotich, "Making Steady Gains" 42, 61.

visibility and priority than the dialog with the EU.⁵³ It is notable that in a long interview on foreign policy priorities with the Slovenian Press Agency (STA) in September 1994, Foreign Minister Peterle failed to mention relations with Croatia. Also, in discussing Slovenia's foreign policy strategy, he stated that, "The strategy gives little notice to former Yugoslavia."⁵⁴ A year later (December 1995), Foreign Minister Zoran Thaler indicated that fundamental interests of Slovenia's foreign policy were not jeopardized by the lack of improvement in relations with Croatia.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, by early 1994, Slovenia could point to the signing of six agreements with Croatia as proof of its efforts to cultivate good relations with its neighbors.⁵⁶

Finally, Slovenia's attempts to turn away from the Balkans and Yugoslavia were also evident in its participation in cooperative efforts in Central Europe. In 1992 it joined the Central European Initiative and a year later became a part of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA). Both of these affiliations involved political and economic cooperation and paved the way for special trade agreements with the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland.⁵⁷ It was hoped that the demonstration of regional cooperation would make the member states more attractive candidates to the European Union.

Finding A Place in Europe: 1997–2001

Slovenia's second half-decade as a sovereign state saw a foreign policy that was largely an extension of the country's first five years of independence. Initially, it continued to function under the same two constraints of a lack of resources and the absence of a legislatively-approved strategic plan. The former problem had been

⁵³ Markotich, "Making Steady Gains" 61.

⁵⁴ STA (Ljubljana), 13 September 1994. Peterle mentioned discussions with the EU, the UN arms embargo against Slovenia, cooperation with Central European countries, developing good relations with countries that are home to large numbers of individuals of Slovenian ancestry, and even relations with China.

⁵⁵ STA (Ljubljana), 20 December 1995.

⁵⁶ Laura Silber, "Survey of Slovenia," *Financial Times* 12 April 1994, supplement.

⁵⁷ Silber, "Survey of Slovenia."

alleviated somewhat as the Foreign Ministry was well on the way to reaching its present level of staffing. But, as noted above, the overall resource constraints on Slovenia were still significant in terms of both the size of missions and the number. For example, Slovenia only maintains one embassy on the entire continent of Africa (in Egypt). And Parliament had not managed to give its approval to a foreign policy strategy for Slovenia, having failed in various attempts in 1993, 94, 95, and 96. However, after five years of carrying out foreign policy without formal parliamentary backing, it is fair to say that this deficiency did not constitute the obstacle it once did. Nevertheless, conducting diplomacy as a small state is difficult enough without the burden of having a negotiating adversary know that the country's foreign policy team does not enjoy strong legislative support.

If Slovenia's foreign policy constraints were largely unchanged at the beginning of its second five years of independence, so too was the overall direction of its foreign policy. It continued in its efforts to remove itself from Balkan affairs (and a corresponding Balkan identity) and it maintained a strategy of engaging itself in (West) Europe. However, both of these emphases were about to be challenged.

The signing of Slovenia's association agreement with the EU in May 1996 clearly represented the crowning achievement of Slovenia's first half-decade of foreign policy. Unfortunately the second half-decade commenced with what was arguably the greatest foreign policy disappointment in Slovenia's short history: its July 1997 failure to be included in the first round of NATO enlargement.

Although EU membership occupied the highest priority among Slovenia's foreign policy activities during much of the period from 1991 to 1996, membership in NATO at times, received almost as much visibility. As noted earlier, for a brief period toward the end of 1994, NATO candidacy appeared to supersede EU membership as Slovenia's top priority. However, unlike EU accession, NATO membership has not always been a principal goal of Slovenian foreign policy. By the end of 1992, after Slovenia had fully established itself as an actor in world affairs, its security situation was relatively benign. It faced no real security threats beyond a proximity to the ongoing war in Bosnia, and NATO membership appeared to have little direct relevance to Slovenia. Rather, NATO candidacy emerged as part of a broader agenda as Slovenia sought to occupy a place in Europe. According to Gow and

Carmichael, Slovenia's foreign policy came to include "a desire to join not only the processes of political and economic integration in Europe but also the evolving security structures and the humanitarian and international peace support roles."⁵⁸ In Prime Minister Drnovšek's words, NATO membership would "ensure Slovenia its ultimate exclusion from the region of instability and inclusion into a more stable world of democratic, market economy countries with which we share similar values."⁵⁹ As a result of this view, Slovenia was relatively quick to join NATO's PfP, and Foreign Minister Peterle indicated that Slovenia sought even more substantial ties (see above). Accordingly, Slovenia was the first country to establish a bilateral dialog with NATO (in April 1996) on the issue of full membership.⁶⁰ This auspicious start did not come to a successful conclusion, however, when, at its historic summit held in Madrid, NATO issued invitations to Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to join the alliance. Slovenia, along with Romania, received only the distinction of being recognized in the summit declaration for its "positive developments towards democracy and the rule of law."⁶¹

The failure at Madrid had significant political repercussions in Ljubljana. The foreign minister, Zoran Thaler (serving in that office of the second time) resigned, and the political opposition made a strong, but unheeded, call for Drnovšek to resign as well.⁶²

Slovenian foreign policy quickly recovered from the failure at Madrid. Rather than lose interest in NATO, the Drnovšek government, with a new foreign minister, Dr. Boris Frlec, embarked on a program to increase Slovenia's attractiveness to NATO. Sensitive to the criticism that Slovenia had shirked its responsibilities toward the former Yugoslavia and had done nothing to help the alliance deal with conflict in the region,⁶³ Slovenia increased its involvement in NATO-related activities. In November 1997 it announced its intention to commit

⁵⁸ Gow and Carmichael, *Slovenia and the Slovenes* 194.

⁵⁹ "Address to Parliament," Radio Slovenia (Ljubljana), 8 January 1997.

⁶⁰ Gow and Carmichael, *Slovenia and the Slovenes* 195.

⁶¹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Press Release, "Madrid Declaration on Euro-Atlantic Security and Cooperation," 8 July 1997, available at www.nato.int/docu/pr/1997/p97-081e.htm.

⁶² Agence France Presse, 1 August 1997.

⁶³ "Survey—Slovenia," *The Financial Times* 18 May 1998: 2.

forces to the SFOR peacekeeping mission in Bosnia.⁶⁴ In November 1999 it made a similar commitment to the KFOR effort in Kosovo.⁶⁵ And in March 1999, when NATO sought overflight permission from Slovenia in conjunction with its operations against Yugoslavia, the Slovene government acted positively in a matter of hours.⁶⁶ One Western diplomat in Ljubljana referred to Slovenia's conduct during the Kosovo campaign and toward the Balkans in general as "mature and constructive."⁶⁷

Slovenia also sought to improve its relations with two key NATO members, France and the US. In February 1998, Prime Minister Drnovšek paid his first official visit to France, meeting with several senior French officials including President Chirac and Prime Minister Jospin. Two weeks later, French Foreign Minister Vedrine came to Slovenia for official talks. Slovenia worked hard to improve ties with the US as well. Relations with the US had been a difficult issue for Slovenia. The early history of Slovenian-US relations was rather rocky. While relations were always officially cordial, the US State Department held that Slovenia played a major role in the disintegration of the SFRY and was displeased with Slovenia's reluctance to remain engaged in Balkan affairs after achieving independence. As a result, Washington was not inclined to go out of its way to assist Ljubljana in any endeavor. This attitude began to change around 1995, as evidenced by Defense Secretary Perry's visit to Ljubljana.⁶⁸ In March 1997, in an effort to placate the US (and in response to a letter from President Clinton to Prime Minister Drnovšek), Slovenia reversed its original decision not to participate in the US-sponsored Southeastern European Cooperative Initiative (SECI). Initially, the Drnovšek government opted not to participate, in keeping with its ongoing plan of removing itself as much as possible from Balkan affairs. In November 1998, Slovenia withdrew its co-sponsorship of a Swedish UN General Assembly resolution on nuclear disarmament after the Clinton Administration expressed its displeasure with Slovenia's actions; it later

⁶⁴ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, "Newline," 4 November 1997.

⁶⁵ *Uradni List Republike Slovenije – Mednarodne Pogodbe*, 18 February 2000.

⁶⁶ STA (Ljubljana), 31 March 1999.

⁶⁷ "Survey—Slovenia," *The Financial Times* 7 June 1999: 3.

⁶⁸ Bukowski, "Slovenian-American Relations."

abstained during formal voting on the resolution.⁶⁹ This process culminated in June 1999 when President Clinton made a state visit to Slovenia and was enthusiastically received. Any animosity that existed between the State Department and Slovenia was, at this point, definitely a thing of the past.⁷⁰

Finally, Slovenia has moved to address deficiencies in its armed forces that may have hindered its candidacy. To this end, Slovenia intends to increase the size of its professional (non-reserve) armed forces from 4,200 to 7,000 between 2000 and 2010—reducing its reliance on conscripts. And defense spending is slated to increase to 2.3 percent of GDP (up from 1.6 percent) by 2010 as well.⁷¹ These changes favorably address concerns of both the US and NATO.

Once the Europe Agreement was signed and Slovenia had been identified as a leading candidate for accession to the organization, Slovenia's policy toward the EU necessarily changed in approach. In general, attaining EU membership largely became a matter of domestic politics as Slovenia began the complicated process of making its laws conform to the EU's *acquis communautaire*, the nearly 80,000 pages of laws and regulations with which Slovenia must harmonize its public policy if it is to be granted accession. To this end, in 1998, Slovenia created an Office for European Affairs as well as thirty-one working commissions with members from relevant ministries to review Slovenia's current body of laws and regulations and prepare revisions that will meet EU standards.⁷² On the diplomatic side, Slovenia pressed

⁶⁹ Bojko Bučar and Primož Šterbenc, "Relations Between Large and Small States in a Multilateral Context: a Case Study of US-Slovenian Relations Concerning NATO," in *Small States in the Post-Cold War World: Slovenia and NATO Enlargement*, ed. Zlatko Šabič and Charles Bukowski (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002) 103–28.

⁷⁰ The existence of this animosity and its dissipation are based on the author's interviews with US Department of State officials in April 1994 and July 2000.

⁷¹ STA (Ljubljana), 12 March 2000. The US would like to see the figure rise to 3.0 percent. This number is based the author's interviews with US Department of State officials, July 2000.

⁷² "Survey—Slovenia," 18 May 1998. The harmonization process was not a new endeavor. Slovenia, almost from independence, began writing laws and regulations with the intent of having them conform to EU standards. The extent of the effort required to make Slovenia ready for EU accession is

the EU and the governments of the member states to commit to a definite schedule for enlargement. It undertook this effort both bilaterally and in conjunction with the five other states that were designated by the EU, at its 1998 summit in Luxembourg, as the most promising candidates for enlargement (the so-called Luxembourg Group includes Cyprus, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Estonia, as well as Slovenia).⁷³

Slovenia's ongoing efforts to resolve outstanding issues with Croatia were given a boost in late 1997 after Boris Frlec replaced Zoran Thaler as Slovenia's foreign minister. Frlec devoted greater attention to Croatia than his predecessor. Whether this move involved a true concern on the part of Frlec or was simply an effort to temporarily redirect Slovenian foreign policy in light of the NATO failure is difficult to determine. It is likely that both explanations applied, and (as noted above) good relations with neighboring states are considered positive attributes for both EU accession and NATO membership. In addition, upon beginning a new term as prime minister in January 1997, Drnovšek indicated that improved relations with Croatia would be one of his foreign policy priorities.⁷⁴ This concern was sidetracked in the run-up to the Madrid NATO summit, and Frlec's appointment represented an opportunity to gain a fresh start on this difficult problem. Unfortunately, neither Frlec nor his successors (Frlec resigned in February 2000) could settle any of the contentious issues that had plagued Slovenian-Croatian relations since the two countries became independent. The two countries remained at a deadlock through the 1990s, but renewed optimism arose when the Croatian government came under the control of the democratic opposition following elections at the beginning of 2000. The newly elected Croatian President, Stipe Mesić, hosted Slovenian President Kučan at a summit in Zagreb in June 2000. Slovenian Foreign Minister Rupel also met with the new Croatian prime minister, Ivica Račan. While no breakthroughs were

evident in the government's estimates of the resources needed to complete the task. It was reported that Slovenia will have to spend about four percent of its GDP annually on the harmonization process, necessitating more than 2,500 additional bureaucrats. In comparison, the central government only has a bureaucracy of approximately 12,000. "Survey—Slovenia," 7 June 1999.

⁷³ STA (Ljubljana), 23 May 2001.

⁷⁴ Radio Slovenia, 8 January 1997.

announced (and none were expected), they acknowledged the deficiencies of the existing effort and the need for new approaches to the problems.

The latter half of the 1990s saw Slovenia continue with its ambivalent attitude toward the Balkans. After being passed over by NATO in 1997, there was a realization in Ljubljana that Slovenia's chances for admission to the alliance would be improved if it sought to reengage itself in Balkan affairs. Its participation and support for various NATO and US efforts in the region were described above. In addition to these efforts, Slovenia agreed to participate in the EU's major effort in the Balkans, the Stability Pact for Southeast Europe, launched in 1999. Given Slovenia's long-standing effort to avoid being labeled a Balkan country, it is likely that it would have preferred to opt out of the effort. But its desire for membership in NATO and to avoid any bad feelings with the EU precluded that possibility. Nevertheless, Slovenia expressed reservations about the Pact, including concern over being arbitrarily grouped into the Balkan region, and it sent limited representation to the summit meeting held in Zagreb designed to promote the initiative.⁷⁵ In the end, the government portrayed Slovenia's participation as that of a donor rather than a recipient state, agreeing to establish a center for interethnic projects in the region⁷⁶ and sending only a "representative" to the Pact's 2000 summit in Zagreb.⁷⁷ In a related issue, Slovenia did opt out of the summit meeting of Balkan leaders held in Macedonia in October 2000. Slovenia was the only former Yugoslav state that did not attend this summit.

Finally, Slovenia enjoyed a unique opportunity to raise its profile in the world diplomatic arena when it was elected in 1998 to a two-year term as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. By most accounts Slovenia acquitted itself well in this important and highly visible role which included chairing the sanctions committee at a time when Libya agreed to hand over two of its citizens for trial in the Lockerbie bombing case.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ *Vjesnik* [Zagreb] 28 July 1999: 1–2 (translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 29 July 1999).

⁷⁶ Radio Slovenia, 27 May 1999; and "Newslines," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 20 April 2000.

⁷⁷ HINA [Zagreb], 23 November 2000.

⁷⁸ "Survey—Slovenia," 7 June 1999.

Recent Developments

Slovenia's current foreign policy situation has been complicated by several recent developments. Although the election of a new democratic government in Croatia has presented the opportunity for a fresh start in negotiations with Zagreb, the outcome of elections in Austria and Italy have brought the potential for new problems with these two countries. In Austria, the inclusion of Joerg Haider's Austrian Freedom Party in the new governing coalition triggered fears that Austria might block Slovenia's candidacy to the EU over the issue of property that had belonged to Austrian minorities in Slovenia and had been nationalized by the Yugoslav government after World War Two. Thus far the Austrian government has indicated that it will not let bilateral issues obstruct any potential accession by Slovenia to the EU, but the issue remains an ongoing concern.⁷⁹ A similar issue has emerged with the return of Berlusconi to power in Italy after elections there in May 2001. There is reason to fear that the new government in Rome may reopen some of the issues over property that it raised during Berlusconi's previous tenure as well as the control of the Italian-Slovenian border.⁸⁰ Thus far the Slovenian government has tried to play down Berlusconi's victory, with Drnovšek stressing the "European orientation" of the new Italian government.⁸¹ In contrast, elections in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and in Serbia have presented Slovenia with an opportunity to improve relations with Belgrade. Ljubljana moved quickly on this issue, officially opening diplomatic relations with the FRY on December 9, 2000 and negotiating a free trade agreement with Belgrade.

Limited progress has been made toward solving the problems that have plagued Slovenia's relations with Croatia for the past decade. In July 2001 the two countries signed a comprehensive border

⁷⁹ Radio Slovenia, 24 August 2000; and 1 September 2000.

⁸⁰ During the campaign, Berlusconi's current coalition partner, Umberto Bossi, threatened to erect a fence along the entire border with Slovenia to prevent illegal immigration. The state of the border is a sensitive issue. The Slovenian government estimated that in 2000 about 35,000 people illegally crossed the border into Italy. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, "Balkan Report," 13 April 2001.

⁸¹ STA (Ljubljana), 18 May 2001.

agreement,⁸² but their respective parliaments have yet to ratify it. An agreement on the operation of the Krško nuclear power plant signed in December 2001 seems to have better political prospects in both countries, but its ratification is by no means assured.⁸³ As noted above, full normalization of relations with Croatia may enhance Slovenia's candidacy with both NATO and the EU, so the issue has acquired an enhanced priority in Ljubljana.

Slovenia has made good progress in its efforts to meet the EU's accession criteria. As of April 2002, Slovenia had closed negotiations with the EU on all but three chapters (categories) of the *acquis communautaire*. The remaining chapters include agriculture and regional development aid. These are highly controversial topics within the EU, and negotiations with the aspirant countries are unlikely to proceed any further until the EU itself reaches a consensus on how it wishes to deal with these policies in the context of enlargement.⁸⁴ To some extent such an accounting can be misleading as some chapters represent easier undertakings than others (e.g. statistics vs. taxation). Yet the EU has indicated that such a criterion would be a factor in determining a final shortlist of accession candidates.⁸⁵

Conclusions

In analyzing Slovenia's various foreign policy accomplishments and failures during its first ten years of existence, two determining influences deserve notice. Perhaps the most prevalent influence, in terms of understanding Slovenia's disappointments, is domestic politics. For various reasons, Slovenia's parliament has seldom been able to give strong support to many key foreign policy undertakings. This lack of support commenced with parliament's failure to approve a foreign policy strategy document in 1992 followed by similar failures in 1993 and 1994, as well as a subsequent effort with a revised document in 1995 and 1996. The current strategic plan passed on December 17, 1999, cleared the assembly with "an unconvincing

⁸² "Newslines," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 26 July 2001.

⁸³ *Delo* 10 May 2002: 1.

⁸⁴ *Business Eastern Europe* 8 April 2002: 16.

⁸⁵ *European Report* 4 April 2001: 501.

majority” and little support from opposition parties.⁸⁶ The parliamentary delay can be explained as much by domestic political preferences as by sincere differences over foreign policy strategy. The lack of an approved strategy allowed members of parliament (especially the opposition) a freer hand in debating foreign policy, while, at the same time, the ability to criticize the government for its failure to develop a plan that was capable of meeting parliamentary approval.⁸⁷

A more substantive hindrance has been the politically weak position of the government during periods that were critical for Slovenian foreign policy. The period 1996–97 is most exemplary of this situation. In the approximately four months leading up to the November 1996 elections, the Drnovšek government conducted an extremely cautious foreign and domestic policy so as not to adversely affect the prime minister’s chances for success in the parliamentary elections. The inability or unwillingness of the government to complete the terms of the European Agreement (and thus allow the Agreement to become fully functional) can be partially explained by pre-electoral paralysis. Obviously amending the country’s constitution to permit foreigners to own property in Slovenia was a sensitive and politically unpopular issue best dealt with after elections. Unfortunately, the elections resulted in a near stalemate between the two major political groupings. It took over two months before a new government was formed by Drnovšek, and that government held only a slim majority in the Slovenian Parliament, while including parties from both the left-center and right-center. The fragile coalition did not allow Drnovšek much political space in either foreign or domestic policy.

The extensive demands of governance suggest a partial explanation for Slovenia’s failure to receive an invitation to join NATO in July 1997. Certainly the NATO decision was a complex one, involving the individual demands of the member states, the needs of the alliance, the qualifications of the aspirant states, and the campaigns conducted by those states. While Slovenia was as well-qualified (or even better qualified) as the successful aspirants in terms of objective criteria (e.g. support for democracy, civilian control of the military, a market economy, ability to cooperate militarily with NATO), some have found fault with the manner in which it waged its campaign to convince

⁸⁶ Radio Slovenia, 17 December 1999.

⁸⁷ Bučar, “On the Way to Normality” 130.

NATO members of its fitness to join the alliance.⁸⁸ It is well beyond the scope of this paper to conduct an analysis of the NATO enlargement decision,⁸⁹ and it is not beyond question that there was nothing Slovenia could have done to have gained inclusion in the first round of NATO enlargement. It is clear, however, that during the period when Slovenia should have been at its most active in terms of lobbying for its candidacy—January-June 1997—the government was occupied with simply keeping the ruling coalition together. Given the fragile nature of the coalition in 1997, amending the constitution in order to fulfill the terms of the Europe Agreement plus undertaking an effective external campaign to gain NATO admission may have been beyond the capabilities of the government. And the NATO effort was further hindered by the reluctance of the political opposition to actively support NATO accession until the enlargement selection process was well underway.⁹⁰

The impact of domestic politics can also be seen in the many changes in the position of foreign minister that the country has endured. Since independence, there have been nine appointments to this office involving five individuals—Peterle and Thaler have served in the position twice, while the current minister, Dimitrij Rupel, now occupies the office for a third time. (This figure does not include Prime Minister Drnovšek, who served as his own foreign minister from October 1994 to January 1995.) Such instability is not conducive to conducting a coherent foreign policy or to making the difficult and controversial decisions that EU accession and NATO membership require.

The impact of domestic politics on foreign policy is not unique to Slovenia or to small states and has long been a subject of scholarly inquiry. Rosenau's seminal work, in which he argued that some categories of foreign policy by virtue of their broad impact on domestic politics were difficult to distinguish from domestic policy, remains

⁸⁸ See for example, Bukowski, "Slovenian-American Relations."

⁸⁹ This issue and related matters are thoroughly addressed in Zlatko _abi_ and Charles Bukowski, eds., *Small States in the Post-Cold War World*.

⁹⁰ It was not until mid-April 1997 that all of Slovenia's major political parties agreed to a statement expressing support for Slovenia's accession to NATO despite polls at the time showing that about 70 percent of Slovenians supported the move. Agence France Presse, 7 May 1997.

relevant here.⁹¹ Indeed, the relationship between domestic politics and Slovenia's foreign policy is so strong that analytically it is possible to view foreign policy as one aspect of the broader phenomenon of public policy. In a public policy model, all governmental policy outputs are viewed as the result of the same categories of sources, with different categories having different impacts depending upon the type of issue under consideration.⁹²

A second factor that has had a major impact on Slovenia's ability to carry out a successful foreign policy is the consequences of the country's small size. These restrictions were described earlier in this paper, and they clearly can be seen as impairing Slovenia's ability to achieve its foreign policy goals. The primary effect of small size can be seen in resource limitations. Slovenia has limited representation abroad and its posts are small. Pursuing the two complex undertakings of seeking admission to the EU and NATO while conducting the necessities of routine diplomacy may have been beyond the capacity of the Slovenian government and its Foreign Ministry. The strain on resources was further complicated by the fact that both EU and NATO enlargement were driven by external circumstances, and thus Slovenia was required to respond at times not always of its own choosing. In the case of the former, it was well-known in 1996 that the EU was close to making decisions as to which countries it would begin possible accession talks with and that Slovenia risked being left out if a Europe Agreement were not completed. A similar situation existed with the NATO enlargement deadline. It is notable that, of the most attractive NATO aspirants (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia), only Slovenia was struggling to complete a Europe Agreement during the run-up to the Madrid summit. The inability to manage two complex issues along with normal diplomatic relations should not necessarily be perceived as an unfavorable evaluation of the Slovenian diplomatic corps or its management team—although in a 1999 interview Foreign Minister Frlec acknowledged that his ministry still had some personnel whose skills he considered deficient.⁹³ The

⁹¹ James N. Rosenau, "Foreign Policy as an Issue-Area," in *Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy*, ed. James N. Rosenau (New York: Free Press, 1967) 11–50.

⁹² James A. Kuhlman, "A Framework for Viewing Domestic and Foreign Policy Patterns," in *The International Politics of Eastern Europe* ed. Charles Gati (New York: Praeger, 1976) 275–91.

⁹³ Radio Slovenia, 1 September 1999.

problem does clearly illustrate how Slovenia's small size and correspondingly limited resources have hampered its ability to carry out critical aspects of its foreign policy goals.

Slovenia's efforts to gain admission to NATO provide confirmation of two theoretical contentions regarding the foreign policy behavior of small states. Upon gaining independence, Slovenia was faced with three options for directing its foreign policy orientation: to remain neutral; to "balance," that is to support a coalition that opposes the region's greatest power; or to "bandwagon" by seeking ties with the most important power of the region. Obviously a bandwagon approach, from the traditional balance-of-power perspective, is a destabilizing activity, and yet many small powers do choose to bandwagon. Rothstein, Walt, and others have argued that small powers usually choose to bandwagon because they do not wish to risk the disapproval of the great power, and because they believe that their limited power will do little to change (destabilize) the balance.⁹⁴ Clearly Slovenia, in desiring to join NATO, has chosen to bandwagon. But it is not clear that the motivations commonly given for bandwagoning apply to Slovenia. Given that Slovenia was unsuccessful in gaining NATO membership, risking the disapproval of the great power does not seem to apply. More importantly, Slovenia's preference was to see NATO and the US become more dominant in Southeastern Europe, along with a corresponding decrease in influence of its two former partners in the SFRY: Croatia and Serbia. There is irony in the second reason given for why small states bandwagon: that they believe that their small capabilities would do little to change a balance-of-power. It may partially have been for this very reason that Slovenia was not invited to join the initial NATO enlargement process. In selling the concept of NATO enlargement the Clinton Administration, among other things, had to address the contributions that could be made by the invitees. While none of the post-socialist states could contribute substantially to NATO, Slovenia, because of its small size, had less to offer than Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic.

⁹⁴ Robert L. Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers* (New York: Columbia UP, 1968) 11; Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1987) 29–30. Also see Michael I. Handel, *Weak States in the International System* (London: Frank Cass, 1990) 29; and Jack S. Levy, "The Causes of War: A Review of Theories and Evidence," in *Behavior, Society, and Nuclear War*, ed. Philip E. Tetlock, et. al. (New York Oxford UP, 1989) 231.

Some of the confusion over whether Slovenia's desire to join NATO represents a destabilizing act from the balance-of-power perspective can be cleared up by viewing Slovenia's action as an effort to leave one system for another. Upon gaining its independence from the SFRY, Slovenia did not seek to participate in any system centered on the Balkans region (where it could have chosen to balance in conjunction with Croatia and against Serbia, for example); instead Slovenia sought to remove itself entirely from the Balkans maelstrom and become part of the well-established and successful Atlantic alliance system.

The handicap of small size is also evident in Slovenia's lack of influence over issues of importance to its foreign policy agenda. In all cases, Slovenia must play the role of supplicant. The benefits or incentives it can bring to the bargaining table with NATO or the EU are, from the perspectives of these two organizations, minimal if not non-existent. With few tangible benefits to offer, Slovenia is reduced to making a case for the lack of drawbacks its candidacy presents compared to other aspirant states.

In his study of international negotiations between strong and weak powers, Habeeb found that weak nations can, at times, make up for their overall lack of power (defined as "aggregate structural power") if they bring particular assets to the bargaining table relating to the issue at hand (defined as "issue-specific structural power"). This particular advantage can be transformed into success at the negotiating table provided the weaker state utilizes effective negotiating tactics (defined as "behavioral power").⁹⁵ Habeeb's reconceptualization of power as a measure of how effectively countries utilize their resources helps explain why weak states can often emerge successfully from a bargaining process with a stronger state. Successful weak states are willing to devote more attention and effort to attaining their goals and effectively utilize whatever issue-specific structural power advantages they might possess.⁹⁶ Unfortunately for Slovenia, it has little issue-specific power to bring to bear on its goals of EU and NATO membership. While the issues mean much more to Slovenia than to the

⁹⁵ William M. Habeeb, *Power and Tactics in International Negotiation: How Weak Nations Bargain with Strong Nations* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1989) 17–25.

⁹⁶ Habeeb, *Power and Tactics in International Negotiation* 129–49.

EU or NATO, Slovenia's foreign policy resources are extremely limited, and the handicap of lack of resources is compounded by the less-than-effective use of those resources. For a small state to be effective in achieving its foreign policy goals, it must work both harder and smarter.

The realistic assessment of Slovenia's lack of influence was a key element in the country's successful conclusion of a Europe Agreement. The Slovenian government had hoped that it could negotiate a compromise with Italy and secure an agreement with the EU. Ljubljana even tried to internationalize the dispute in the hope that it could count on the support of Germany and others. But by 1996 it was apparent that Slovenia's only hope of closing an agreement was to meet Italy's key demands. This decision was not without its domestic ramifications and probably cost Foreign Minister Thaler his job, but it did quickly move Slovenia to the front line of potential EU candidates. And, to its credit, Slovenia has been successful at maintaining its place at the front.

In the case of NATO, as has already been noted, while Slovenia met the alliance's objective criteria for membership as well (if not better) than the successful aspirants, it had little to offer NATO. Its political influence with the alliance's membership, especially the US, was considerably less than the three states chosen.

The lessons of the first ten years of Slovenian foreign policy suggest that in order for the country to pursue a successful foreign policy strategy, it must recognize the handicaps it faces as a small state and act to minimize them. In some cases, Slovenia will be required to make concessions—often unilateral—and the government must be willing to accept the domestic political consequences of its concessions. This can best be done when the country's foreign policy strategy enjoys support throughout the government, including the Parliament and the major elements of the political opposition. In all cases, Slovenia will need a political leadership and a foreign policy bureaucracy that can anticipate problems and react to them while they are still manageable given the country's limited foreign policy resources. Arriving late to an issue or a problem often can represent an insurmountable obstacle for a small state.

While Slovenia was unable, in its first decade of existence, to attain its two main foreign policy goals of EU and NATO membership,

its policy has been by no means a failure. It has made significant progress toward membership in both organizations. Completing these goals will take patience and persistence, a willingness to make both compromises and concessions, and enlightened leadership with broad political support. These factors represent a recipe for success for virtually any state, but they are especially crucial for a small state. In recognizing its limitations, Slovenia can increase its capabilities.

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POVZETEK

DESET LET SLOVENSKE ZUNANJE POLITIKE: SOOČENJE MAJHNE DRŽAVE S SVETOM

Prispevek podaja kratek pregled in analizo prvih desetih let slovenske zunanje politike. Na vsebino te politike so možno vplivali slovenska majhnost in notranjepolitični spori. Po začetnih uspehih, ko se je Slovenija uveljavila kot priznan dejavnik v mednarodnih odnosih, pa je l. 1997 doživela veliko razočaranje ob zavrnitvi v prvem krogu širitve Nata. Slovenija pa ostaja močna kandidatka za vključitev v Nato v naslednjem krogu širitve in je prva v vrsti za zgodnji vstop v Evropsko unijo, čeprav jo bo njena majhna velikost vedno ovirala.