POLITICKÉ VEDY / POLITICAL SCIENCES

SECURITY CONFERENCE:
"SLOVAK SECURITY FORUM 2016"

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The 10th year anniversary of the Slovak Security Forum (SSF) has traditionally taken place in the University Library in Bratislava. One of the biggest Slovak security conferences hosted representatives of government, non-governmental and private sector, who had the opportunity to express their opinion about the current challenges of Slovak foreign and security policy. Organisers of the SSF 2016 are the Euro-Atlantic Center, a student non-governmental organisation, and the University Library in Bratislava – the NATO Deposit Library. The conference was held under the auspices of Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, **Miroslav Lajčák**.

The opening speeches of the General Director of the University Library in Bratislava – **Silvia Stasselová** and the President of the Euro-Atlantic Center – **Martina Šinková** have officially welcomed all distinguished guests. After that, **Lukáš Parízek**, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic followed with the keynote speech. He named the biggest threats the whole community has to face – the influx of migrants from Syria, terrorism of Islamic State's radicals, as well as the unstable and failing states. Consequently, he pointed out that the European Union does not only have the resources, but also instruments to solve these security challenges, although he also noted that these have to be used effectively. **L. Parízek** also mentioned the Security and Defense Strategy of the Slovak Republic, which is being prepared and will have to be the result of public debate and consensus, and complementary towards the commitments and principles of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as well.

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The keynote speech was followed by the first panel discussion – *NATO after Warsaw summit: the Implications for the Slovak Republic,* moderated by **Dušan Fischer**, a research fellow of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association. The first speaker to hold the floor was **Tomáš Valášek**, the Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to NATO, who has summed up the results of the Warsaw Summit for the Slovak Republic. The main goal of NATO is to strengthen its presence in the east. The Alliance's inactiveness is, by his words, the worst possible solution. NATO has no interest in the escalation of tensions, but stands behind its member states with the aim to deter Russia form trying to test the Alliance's capability. The member of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, **Martin Klus** has criticised both the political sector and the media, which have not effectively brought the results of the Warsaw summit to the public. He positively evaluated the fact that the Warsaw summit has clearly determined threats, including the hybrid war. The first Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Slovak Armed Forces, Lieutenant-General **Pavel Macko** summarized the results of the Summit from the defence point of view, with emphasis on long-term aspects. In the case of the armed forces, it is about their modernisation, structural changes, tactical training and a higher measure of integration and interoperability with partners. **Marian Majer**, the Director of the Slovak Institute for Security Policy, has pointed out that form the analytical and security point of view, the Warsaw summit is one of the most important meetings, as it has brought a consensus in problematic topics. He also mentioned a need to increase the activity and attention in the field of cybersecurity.

The topic of the second panel dealt with *the Security and Defence Strategy of the Slovak Republic*. After a brief introduction presented by **Jaroslav Ušiak**, the Vice-Dean for International Relations at the Faculty of Political Science and International Relations, Matej Bel University, who moderated the panel, the floor was given to **Robert Ondrejcsák**, the State Secretary of Ministry of Defence. He mentioned the need for developing new defence and security strategy, as the current one was drawn up back in 2005, and since then the local security environment has changed dramatically. This concerns especially the use of military force in Europe and in our vicinity, or significant changes in the Middle East. **Peter Mišík**, the Director General of the Political Section of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, commented on Manifesto of the Government (2016-2020), which incorporated the need to develop a draft of security strategy by June 2017. Moreover, the Manifesto repeatedly recognised the European orientation of Slovakia, namely the need to adapt to the affairs and

events in the EU. The strategy must also respond to the adaptation within NATO. In order to respond to the changes in the security environment, necessary qualitative changes must take place. The process of creating a strategy must be inclusive and the guarantee of its implementation in practice should be the communication with the public during the process. Program Director for Security & Defence in Slovak Security Policy Institute, **Jaroslav Naď**, pointed out that the new security and defence strategy should have been developed in 2014 as a reaction to the events in Ukraine and to the migration waves. Compared to the countries in the region, Slovakia is the only state, which after the aforementioned events did not draw up a new strategy. According to **Jaroslav Naď**, the absolute priority of the new strategy should be the fight against extremism.

The third and last panel concerned *extremism, radicalism and paramilitary units in Slovakia.* In introduction, a journalist **Radovan Bránik** pointed out that the phenomenon of extremism in various forms exists in almost all EU countries. Many experts agree that the reason is the so-called "Brussels dictate". According to analyst **Daniel Milo**, this argument is sustained mainly due to failure of the EU in addressing critical issues. In the words of activist **Martin Dubéci,** it is a traditional way of far-right parties, which are looking for the enemy that is responsible for all the problems. Criticism of the EU is primarily based on the fact that for the people the Union is something alien and distant. Even the political elite often fails to explain its functioning or why it is necessary. **Pavol Struhár** from the Department of Political Science, University of Trenčín, considers as a critical mistake the passivity of Slovakia in relation to the EU. The Union is generally perceived as a donor of funds to promote culture and infrastructure, but the relation with the EU is not seen as a reciprocal. We are not used to the European solidarity and to give the EU something back. All the panellists agreed that it is important to elaborate on these topics. It is necessary to combat misinformation and conspiracy theories and raise public awareness about the facts and the usefulness of pro-Atlantic orientation of Slovakia.

After discussion, the Conference concluded with final comments by Professor **Peter Terem** who acts as the Head of the Department of International Relations at the Faculty of Political Science and International Relations, Matej Bel University. Professor briefly summarised the most important ideas of the day and stressed the need to organise similar conferences that contribute to dialogue of Slovak security community.

The end of the official program was followed by the event *"Cyber Security - current challenges and threats",* which was open to public.