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MAREK ŠTASTNÝ
editor

VISEGRAD COUNTRIES IN AN ENLARGED TRANS-ATLANTIC COMMUNITY

Authors

Martin Brusis
Petr Drulák
Ján Figel
Serena Giusti
Gunther Hauser
Olga Gyárfášová
Radek Khol
Pavol Lukáč
Tamás Réti
Tomáš Valášek



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Marek Štastný
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Ján Figel

Foreword**VISEGRAD – NOT ONLY A SYMBOL,
BUT A CHALLENGE FOR THE FUTURE****Ján Figel**

Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee,
National Council of the Slovak Republic
Main Negotiator with the EU

Attempts at peaceful coexistence and cooperation by the Visegrad countries date back almost seven centuries. This long-standing set of relations between the Visegrad countries finally took concrete form after 1990 when the first summit attended by heads of governments of the four countries was held in Bratislava, followed by a similar gathering in Visegrad, Hungary in February 1991. Visegrad became not only a symbol, but a challenge to countries, which have regained their freedom. They stood up to this challenge by cooperating in overcoming their totalitarian past and dismantling the structures of the old regime on their way to building democratic institutions and modern, market-oriented economies, as well as rejoining Euro-Atlantic structures

8 and the “new Europe”. The similarities in goals and transition paths chosen to reach these set goals put the same tasks before these countries. Therefore, cooperation did not only represent a logical realization of national interests of individual countries, but it was an expression and proof of the maturity for pursuing a common path – a path to a united Europe. It is up to the Visegrad countries – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia – to accomplish this historic task on their own. Integration begins at home, continues through good-neighbourly relations and leads to sharing responsibility for European unity and security in the Euro-Atlantic area.

The first set of goals defined by the Visegrad meeting was fulfilled. Communism, along with its international tools is a thing of the past, even if marginal sentiments toward it in this region are still present. The political transformation brought with it pluralistic civic societies on a regional and sub-regional level. All four countries meet the criteria of a functioning market economy, have signed up to the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) and are members in the Organization for Cooperation and Development in Europe. Three Visegrad countries are members of NATO. All four countries are on the right track to finishing negotiations with the European Union and in so doing to contribute to this community of shared values. Completing this step will complete the process begun over a decade ago. But cooperation of the four countries should not end after they become members of the EU; regional cooperation will serve only as a complimentary tool in the context of a broader cooperation within the enlarged Union. V4 never was, and never will be, an alternative to European integration, but rather act as its catalyst.

It is true, especially for Slovakia that its road to Euro-Atlantic structures leads through Visegrad cooperation. Slovakia is the only country that shares its borders with the other three Visegrad countries and thus has the unique potential to be the “glue” for this group of nations. At the same time Visegrad represents for Slovakia an important concept because, of the four countries, it is the smallest country, and for this reason the most vulnerable. By joining forces with its neighbours, Slovakia gains in international recognition and importance. It takes on a role of “unifier” of Central Europe. Similarly, Slovakia’s three neighbours, by participating in this cooperation project the image of solid partners, thus improving their international standing.

The Visegrad cooperation is informal in nature, which is the reason behind its dynamism and usefulness. The only formal institution is the International

Visegrad Fund that sponsors activities in the area of culture, education, sports and cross-border projects. Secretariats and bureaucracy do not play a decisive role – rather it is the spirit of togetherness and common interest. Visegrad cooperation has been noted outside of the region: representatives of Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Great Britain, United States, Ukraine, the countries of Benelux, France and others have attended V4 meetings at various levels. The group has also coordinated steps within the framework of the United Nations, including the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. Investment flows to this part of Europe with a potential market of 65 million have had a stimulating effect.

Members of Visegrad do not approach the prospects of future cooperation in a static and reserved way. The project of building a “new Europe” represents a historic challenge. Therefore, the architecture of the future united Europe calls for a political and cultural dimension. Accession of more countries of Central and Eastern Europe to CEFTA, enlargement of NATO, entry into the EU, cooperation with Ukraine and Russia, participation in rebuilding the Balkans, convergence with the Schengen system in the area of justice and home affairs, the fight against organized crime, assistance to victims of environmental catastrophes, initiation of new projects in cross-border regional cooperation, construction of integrated infrastructure, improvement in the environment, cultural exchanges, cooperation between administrations and non-governmental organizations on a municipal level – are all part of a broad agenda for close cooperation between the four countries.

Visegrad cooperation will continue to thrive by focusing on agenda shared by all members. Disinterest, unilateralist approaches or inappropriate demands will weaken its potential. V4 is as much to the benefit of the countries that make it up, as it is to Euro-Atlantic structures. Intensive cooperation will bear fruit if its not characterized simply by communication at the highest level (i.e. between presidents, ministers, etc.), but if it creates lasting bonds between the people of these countries. If the shared sense of togetherness is reinforced, it will lead to a greater degree of shared responsibility for the common future of the people of Visegrad 4, as well as Europe as a whole.

The meeting of the three kings who ruled the Visegrad region in 1335 introduced a period of peace, stability, and progress to the region. If the Visegrad spirit of togetherness and shared responsibilities becomes incorporated into the common interests of democratic representations of individual Visegrad

- 10 countries and finds a place in everyday contacts between the citizens of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, it will continue the foundation for mutual understanding, tranquility and progress, not only for this region, but also for areas beyond it.

Pavol Lukáč and Oľga Gyárfášová

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Chapter I

THE ROLE OF HISTORY AND IDENTITY IN SHAPING TRANS-ATLANTIC RELATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Recent years witnessed an increasingly lively debate among politicians and intellectuals on future relations between the United States and its allies in Western Europe. This debate will probably not remain merely on the level of security and economic relations, but is to include issues of culture.

Of course, none of these issues represent a new problem, as they all existed in various forms since the end of World War II. However, the bipolar division of the world and the image of a sworn enemy embodied by the Soviet Union once reduced the intensity of these problems and catalyzed the adoption of compromise solutions between the US and other Western democracies. The collapse of communism revived a number of “old” problems between traditional trans-Atlantic allies and aided in their coming to surface in a “new”, more open form. Central and Eastern European countries that had previously been controlled by the Soviet Union have now become involved in this political discourse.

This chapter focuses on a region of Central Europe represented by members of the Visegrad Four group: Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. These countries are currently preparing to join the European Union and three of them (Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary) became full-fledged members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1999. Consequently, the new Central European democracies are faced with particular issues on the trans-Atlantic agenda in the simplest possible form – namely whether they would prefer to support American foreign policy and US administration’s notion of addressing global problems, or whether they would rather lean toward the

- 12 European approach. The problem with the common European standpoint is not only that a clear idea is often missing, but also that even if it did exist – it is not clear which European countries would subscribe to it and which would not.

Attitudes of particular Central European countries will probably differ. The political motivation of their behaviour depends on criteria determined by their individual experience in the area of economy, security, and foreign policy. An important role will also be played by the political and ideological orientation of ruling administrations in particular countries, including the perception of their country's history, tradition and national identity. The goals of this analysis are to map out the application of historical factors in favour of political options open to Central European countries in the context of trans-Atlantic relations, determinants of their attitudes in the context of their modern history, the role of their national identities in the process of shaping their foreign policy, as well as public perception of these phenomena. This study does not attempt to cover all relevant aspects in a comprehensive manner. In the four case studies we present what we consider to be determinant components in the shaping of national identities in V4 countries on a case-by-case basis.

NATIONAL IDENTITIES AND FOREIGN POLICY – A THEORETICAL CIRCUMSCRIPTION

The relation between European national identities and foreign policy has not often been researched. Ilya Prizel, author of *National Identity and Foreign Policy*, comments that “literature on the role of national identity in the formation of foreign policy remains in an embryonic state” (Prizel 1998: 7). Prizel simultaneously highlights the schism between the identity nursed by the nation's elites and the one espoused by the masses (Prizel: 3). This issue is closely related to the role of commemoration, maintaining the nation's “collective memory”, and the way this memory is employed as a “usable past”. Another thesis is that the nations inhabiting this region are “obsessed” with history, and that history has a much greater impact on shaping contemporary policies than other European regions. George Schöpflin, professor of government at the London School of Economics writes that “... in Central Europe, perceptions of history, its public role and functions are marked by

13 historicism, propensity to project the present onto the past, to see history as a weight on the present that obscures *prima facie* inappropriate historical precedents, and to assume that answers to the present will be found in the past, that the present is best understood through the past” (Schöpflin 1989).

Let us leave aside the question of whether this is something truly typical for the region and focus on the fact that this is the way Western academicians, politicians, and diplomats perceive the relation between the history and politics in this region. The American perspective on the issue of history and its impact on politics in the region of Central and South-Eastern Europe was presented by William H. Luers, former United States Ambassador to Communist Czechoslovakia (before 1988) and a respected authority on Central European affairs: “The problem with the nations of Eastern Europe is that they produce more history than they can consume locally” (Luers 1992).

If the thesis on history's enhanced role in contemporary political processes is accepted, one could expect that solutions to particular issues on the trans-Atlantic agenda would also be sought in the ‘historical reservoir’. When examining the entire issue, it is crucial to keep in mind who is the “spokesperson” or “guard” of the “collective memory” and who is in charge of interpreting history. Prizel highlights the fact: “Since the symbols of national identity hold great political power, the political elites jealously guard them from usurpation by non-governmental actors” (Prizel: 20). He adds: “the concept of national identity is a derivative of real or imagined collective memory of polity. Since memory is highly selective, it is vital to consider who has the custodianship of that memory. When the custodian of a national identity changes, so do perceptions of the past and, consequently, the parameters of national interest” (Prizel: 35).

SYMBOLIC GEOGRAPHY AND MENTAL MAPS

In order to understand better the examined issue, we can apply certain methods of symbolic geography that have been developed and elaborated by various social scientists during the past decade on how the East, Eastern Europe and the Balkans are perceived by Western observers. This way of perception, it was claimed, created a plenitude of stereotypes and interpretations marked by oversimplification – interpretations that have since become deeply en-

14 trenched in the Western mind, and often defined the image of “the other”. Let us in this respect mention *Orientalism*, a classical work by Edward Said, an American thinker of Palestinian origin. In his book, the author points to the fact that the ability to manipulate the narrative collective memory lends politics a moral, but also actual power.¹

Although in Central and South-Eastern Europe one can find historians and political writers who have been indirectly inspired by similar methodological approaches, social and political science continue to lack a work that elaborates on the image of the West in a similar way, or addresses the perceptions of Atlanticism by Central and Eastern European elites in juxtaposition to Said's *Orientalism*.²

Therefore, the following remarks about the image of Atlanticism in the political rhetoric and historical memory of Central European countries' elites should be understood rather as an introduction to, or an outline of, this still little examined issue. The basic approach to history as political “material” designed to supply politicians and opinion-formers with historical arguments can be divided into four categories: interpretation of history, re-interpretation, simplification, and political instrumentalization.

The political “marginalization” of Central and Eastern Europe and the political decisions made during and after World War II – widely referred to as “Yalta”, — was followed by the marginalization of this region out of the area of political criteria and even the intellectual discourse. Here, one can speak of the Cold War paradigm which caused that division of Europe into the West and the East soon found, not only temporary political advocates, but also intellectual supporters who claimed that the East-West “schism” was natural. Historiography – especially the so-called Sovietology, during the Cold War – endeavoured to justify Europe's division based on its natural duality. However, the Cold War lent a vulgarizing tone to attempts to remove Central Europe out of the Western European or Euro-Atlantic context. Consequently, opinions have appeared – in historiography and other social sciences – that

¹ Said's work has inspired other works, such as *Inventing Eastern Europe in Late Enlightenment* by Larry Wolff, *Imaging the Balkans* by Maria Todorova or *The Uses of the Other* by Yver Neumann.

² Although Maria Todorova wrote the following in the preface to her book: “I do not wish to create a counter-stereotype of the West, to commit the fallacy of “Occidentalism” (Todorova 1999: ix).

15 speak of different Europes, of the West and the East, of Orient and Occident, of “our” Europe and “the other” Europe.

Historians from Central and Eastern Europe reacted to these tendencies only sporadically, which was natural not only because of censorship, but also due to the Communist indoctrination. In the West, especially, some historians from émigré circles examined the issue. Outstanding among them was Oskar Halecki, a Polish historian who wrote two important works dealing with the subject: *Limits and Divisions in European History* (1950), and *Borderlands of Western Civilisation* (1952). Halecki tried to show that the mutual link between America, West and Central Europe has existed, while criticizing the notion that only the western edge of the European continent has traditional links to the Euro-Atlantic space. He argued that this space was always organically incorporated with the centre of Europe, bringing him to a conclusion that historically and traditionally, Central Europe has always been a part of the “Atlantic community”, forming the Eastern frontier of the “Atlantic West”. During that time, Halecki used the terms “Atlantic community” and “Atlantic civilization”. At the end of *Borderlands of Western Civilisation*, Halecki expresses a hope that the temporary Cold War division of the continent will end one day, allowing for Central Europe's re-incorporation into its natural Atlantic/Western space that it helped to shape throughout the history.

In his monumental work *Europe: History of a Continent*, respected British historian Norman Davies illustrates the so-called allied concept of history – a concept shared by victors of great wars of the 20th century. Davies shows how this notion gradually won recognition throughout Western Civilization and, due to its influence throughout the world, is also winning support in Central and Eastern Europe (Veber 2001). This concept of history has several specific features:

1. Belief in an unrivalled status of the Western Civilization which is considered the pinnacle of human history and is characterized by these important milestones: Wilsonianism (1917) and Atlantic Charter (1941).
2. Exceptional nature of the struggle with evil represented by Nazism – adversaries and victims of Nazism deserve “utmost respect and compassion”.
3. Demonic fascination with Germany, a country that is to blame for everything.
4. Compassion for Russia, Tsarist and Bolshevik alike. The Russians are merely wrong – only their foe committed crimes; they keep approximat-

ing to the West (nowadays this approach has a serious drawback, for it took only several years for Russia to become a periphery of world centres).

5. Unspoken endorsement of Europe's division into the West and the East – the rich West shares Atlantic values, while the East is poor and backward for which it is itself to blame (tendencies to totalitarianism and communism were purportedly inborn to Eastern people) and, therefore, it was rightfully in Russia's sphere of influence.
6. Everything that does not fit this concept is disregarded. Davies adds that this concept has never been officially formulated, discussed or questioned; nevertheless, it is gaining the upper hand and has become accepted as an indisputable reality. He concludes that it is a fallacious notion that should have no place in Europe of the 21st century (see Veber: 14).

It is necessary to note that although the world of politics pays little attention to historiography, indirectly, it is strongly influenced by it. In his description of the relation between leadership and power, Michel Foucault observes that the notion of Western or Atlantic superiority and excellence in respect to Central and Eastern European countries' backwardness or underdevelopment does not only lead the Western political elites to make self-expedient simplifications, but it is also manifested in actual policies. Andrei Plesu, Romania's former Minister of Foreign Affairs, historian and philosopher said in one interview: "Western politicians... sometimes give the impression that to them, we are people from the periphery, while they represent the center. We feel that their endeavour is aimed at forcing us to accept their viewpoints and finalized decisions and not at encouraging us to participate actively in the debate by bringing forward our own proposals" (*Sme*, 17 August 2002).

A totally opposite position is presented in the argumentation of Central and Eastern European politicians who use historical and cultural examples to strengthen their negotiating position vis-à-vis NATO and EU. In the same interview, Andrei Plesu spoke of diplomats from Eastern European, particularly Balkan countries: "... I have to admit that the language of southern politicians contains traces of certain arrogance and pride that stems from the well-confined inferiority complex. Sometimes it makes them speak in a way that makes it seem that they represent 'the voice of prime origin,' as if they spoke in the name of tradition and experience of their cul-

ture and religion, possessing superiority over the pragmatism of the Western world. They are sensitive and provincial at the same time, as they try to force their independence and their values upon [their partners]" (*Sme*, 17 August 2002).

A concrete example of using history's political instrumentalization is employing "moral" arguments against Western countries in the process of NATO enlargement. The Polish diplomacy, besides a variety of rational arguments, used the Yalta example to demonstrate that the West had betrayed Poland. Along the same lines, the Czech diplomacy cited the Munich experience. Consequently, both countries reiterated the necessity to be compensated for these political and historical wrongs.³

CENTRAL EUROPE AS A REGION BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

The region of Central Europe has never faced the dilemma of having to choose between Western Europe and the United States. For most Central European countries, the classic dilemma throughout their modern history has always been the one of "the West or the East". The East was represented by the authoritarian and imperialistic Russia. On the other hand, the West was not merely conceived of in geographical terms, or even in terms of influential Western European powers, such as Germany, Great Britain or France, shaping the political processes on the entire continent. Above all, the West represented the "idea of Europe" – a united, prosperous and secure Europe that

³ See Mastný: Pražský puč v únoru 1948 a počátky Severoatlantického paktu [The Prague Coup of February 1948 and the Beginnings of the North Atlantic Alliance], *Soudobé dějiny*, No. 2-3/1998, p. 256 or a lecture given by Alexander Vondra, former Ambassador of the Czech Republic to the United States, at the Slovak Foreign Policy Association on October 1st, 2001 where he stated: "All of us are familiar with how it sometimes goes in politics and know that sometimes it is difficult to have all the fragments under control one hundred percent of the time. We encountered this when we were traveling across the United States and were helping Senators garner support for [NATO] enlargement and when our ammunition was gone, ... we reached for arguments of last resort – these were arguments of the ethical and historical nature. In Poland's case it was Yalta, in ours, Munich, and it helped us" (Modern Foreign Policy Program 2001, SFPA, Bratislava 2002: 22).

18 attracted Central Europeans like a magnet. Aside from these idealistic views, Central European countries also followed historical conflicts between particular Western European countries and their “selfish” attitudes, which often contradicted their individual interests. Therefore, the words written by George Schöpflin, apply: “Europe as a whole has never had the same high expectations of itself as of America” (Schöpflin 1989).

The basic problem shared by the nations of the Central European region was their troubled relations with Germany, which applies particularly to Poland and the Czech lands, less so to Slovakia and even less to Hungary. Generally speaking, Central European countries have all experienced what Claudio Magris, a famous Italian author, in his cult book *Danube* put as follows: “Getting to grips with Europe today means coming to terms with one’s relation to Germany” (Magris 1992: 28). However, coming to terms with Germany traditionally brought with it specific problems. Eva Hahn, a Czech historian, wrote: “from the Czech viewpoint, the position of Germany on Czech maps of Europe represents for Czechs even a bigger problem than their own placement there. The geographical fact that the Germans are the Czechs’ western neighbours can hardly be denied, however, since the Germans are traditionally perceived as having a negative influence on the Czech cultural development, many a Czech intellectual faces a fundamental problem when contemplating the future of Europe, more specifically – how to create an attractive concept of Western Europe without the Germans” (Hahn 1997: 31).

America in contrast, has enjoyed a positive image of itself in Central and Eastern Europe – an image whose greatest attributes are democracy and prosperity. This is mostly due to its geographical remoteness, but also because it never had imperialistic ambitions in Central Europe and because the countries in the Central and Eastern European region have had minimal chances to be confronted with it. Not even the massive communist propaganda about “the evil imperialistic America” succeeded in damaging this image. Besides, America’s positive image was nourished in many Central European countries by numerous communities of economic and political emigrants who managed to get a foothold in America and maintained strong ties with their homeland.

FOUR VISEGRAD CASE STUDIES:

Poland

The process of formation of Poland’s national identity has always been interwoven with its complicated historical, and even more complex constitutional development. The emergence of various ephemeral state formations, their subsequent decline, and the threats posed by its immediate neighbours (i.e. Germany and Russia), along with the country’s relatively large area encouraging some Polish leaders to exaggerate its “superpower” status on the international scene – all these factors had a share in shaping Poland’s national identity. Furthermore, due to Poland’s negative historical experience, certain peculiar elements in its political inclinations have developed, including excessive mistrust of the West, which to its detriment tended to conclude agreements with Russia, Poland’s traditional enemy. Thus, an unusual mix of influences, ranging from obsession with the West, through feelings of permanent endangerment, to various conspiracy theories, have left their imprint on the Polish national identity.

Similar to many other countries located on Europe’s periphery, Poland considered itself to be the last promontory of the West, its bulwark of defence, its protector and at the same time also the promoter of European values to the East (a similar perception is also typical of Serbia, Romania and Croatia). In Poland’s historical perception, this doctrine was dubbed as the West’s *antemurale Christianitas*.

Poland’s Western orientation developed in the mid-19th century and was considered an anomaly among other Slavic nations. When Slavophilism prevailed among the Czechs, Slovaks and Balkan Slavs, Poland gave up its Slavonic character relatively easily. Although it was a state with unstable borders (“a state on wheels”, in Winston Churchill’s words), Poland has always relied more on its size and geographical location than its cultural or ethnic character. At the same time, this concept was combined with the idea of a state that has a specific mission. According to a “European federalist” Józef Piłsudski, Poland’s was “Promethean civilization mission” eastward. However, since its (super) power aspirations clashed with concrete interests of true superpowers such as France and Germany, Poland’s mistrust of other European countries deepened even further, leading to an idealization of America.

20 To an observer it may seem that Warsaw sees more eye-to-eye with Washington than Berlin or Paris. Janusz Reiter, Poland's former Ambassador to Germany expressed it best when he said: "Although Odra and Nisa are merely rivers, they feel much broader than the entire Atlantic." In respect to symbolic geography and to what Sorin Antohi labeled "geo-cultural bovarism" (i.e. the tendency of certain countries and communities to abandon their natural geographic space and seek a new imaginary geographical location), Poland's case offers some interesting examples of this phenomenon. In an interview with a Russian journalist, Poland's former President, Lech Walesa said: "Neither Russia nor Poland can be transferred to America. We are destined to be together" (Prizel: 135). Jacek Kochanowicz, Professor of Economic History at Warsaw University commented on the issue in the following way: "Neo-liberals support integration out of practical reasons. Poland lies on the European side of the Atlantic, consequently, it cannot join the NAFTA. Membership in the EU is the second best solution. As opposed to isolation and marginalization, Poland's only reasonable alternative is integration" (Kochanowicz 2001).

As a direct result of Poland's ideological closeness to the United States, it began to be referred to as the United States' Trojan horse in the region of Central Europe. "For many Polish politicians, America is simply the older brother to be summoned when our fifteen colleagues refuse to play with us or yell at us" (Osica 2001). Poland's recent efforts to build a "special relationship" with the United States is fully in line with exaggerating the importance of its own position and role. Olaf Osica comments on these efforts as follows: "...Nor will we be able to secure the same degree of influence on American policy as we can on European. (...) To talk of Poland having a special privileged relationship with the United States is a misunderstanding. It is an example of megalomania and inferiority complex of Polish policy, which seeks to improve its stock in Europe by the means of extravagant rhetoric" (Osica: 291).

Czech Republic

A Czech historian Eva Hahn describes the Czech history of the 20th century as a "history of Czechs' mental traveling between East and West on the European continent." As she points out, many Czechs perceived former Czechoslovakia's foreign political orientation during the interwar period as an ex-

pression of its cultural solidarity with the Western Civilization. Quite understandably, the Munich agreement of 1938 traumatized Czech society, aroused feelings of betrayal by the West and simultaneously encouraged the resurrection of older Slavophile emotions and feelings of sympathy with the East. However, these feelings vanished soon after, mostly due to the rule of an oppressive communist regime under the control of the Soviet Union.

Upon the collapse of the communist rule, the Czech society pinned its hopes on a fashionable slogan of "Back to Europe", in which Europe meant the West. Eva Hahn comments: "At the end of the 20th century, the round trip of the Czechs' notions of Europe is a trip "from the West to the East and back"...[the trip] concludes where it started at the beginning of the century: in a close regional rapprochement with neighbouring countries against the background of a broad and diverse community of European nations reaching from the Atlantic to the Urals" (Hahn: 6). A concrete example of some of the concerns connected with coming to terms with its western neighbour, Germany, and subsequently with the idea of European integration, is the so-called "Euro-realist" manifesto elaborated by the Civic Democratic Party (ODS). This manifesto has become the ideological platform for criticizing the European Union. Coming to terms with history, including "reinterpretation" of history in "other", i.e. not the Czech spirit, has become a strong source of Czech Euro-skepticism. A passage of the ODS document reads: "As far as Germany is concerned, it is necessary to mention one problem in particular which seems to have disappeared from the bilateral Czech-German agenda, and nevertheless is beginning to resurface in the Czech-EU agenda through the European Parliament. It is an attempt of Sudeten-German interest groups to accomplish a historical revision of the results of World War II through abolishing the presidential decrees issued by President Beneš as a trade-off for allowing the Czech Republic to join the EU to accomplish a subsequent reinterpretation of Czech history along the Sudeten-German line and related legislative and property restitution. It is extremely disturbing that these claims find resonance within Czech conservative and Germanophile media and intellectual circles. Therefore, it is essential to confront these attempts and stave them off consistently, fundamentally and most emphatically" (Zahrádil et al. 2001: 71).

Some advocates of Central European co-operation consider the bloc's proclivity to align itself with the US to be in contradiction with the geographical and geopolitical reality. They hold a view that the United States is too remote, whereas the nearby Germany – a traditionally strong player in the Central

22 European region – is being needlessly overlooked. For instance, former Chairman of the Czech Senate, Petr Pithart wrote: “The Central European reality does not lend itself well to any reductionism, including economic and, above all, geopolitical: it appears that the Atlantic perspective refuses to acknowledge the significance and responsibility of the reunited Germany. We, inhabitants of Central Europe cannot, and must not afford that. I simply maintain that the Atlantic transplant will not strike a root here, and rightfully so” (Pithart 1998: 237). In line with symbolic geography, Pithart refuses the presence of the “Atlantic” in the region, while outlining the imaginary mental ground plan of Central Europe: “The Atlantic perspective may appear quite appealing, the only problem is that there is no Atlantic here. Our *mare nostrum* is the rugged, spiritually mobile and imaginative Central Europe” (Pithart: 238).

Historian Petr Luňák contributed his realist opinion to the debate, although his sober perspective somewhat surprisingly contains traces of passivity which shows in author’s preference for a rather fatalistic approach to participation in trans-Atlantic agenda: “Regardless of what government is in power, the Czech Republic should not loathe European Union that is politically more integrated. Although it is unrealistic to speak of the United States pulling out of Europe completely, the continent’s defence will grow increasingly dependent on European resources. If this is the reason why Prague worries about a security vacuum in Central Europe, the Czechs should pray for a stronger and more integrated Europe” (Luňák 1997: 376). Luňák correctly adds that this task faces all three political entities with a different historical experience and different interests. “Americans, Western Europeans and Central Europeans are together facing a great task: building a new, undivided Europe” (ibid: 377).

Dual legacy of Czechoslovakism

Examining the process of constructing national identity with the use of political instrumentalization of history we come to a conclusion that one of the key elements for the Czechs is the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918. The Czechs regained a state of their own, built on democratic principles, while the Slovaks found their national and cultural liberation. However, despite the similarities in both the Czech and Slovak languages, the new state included two rather different national entities as well as other minority

groups. Among other differences between the two nations, we can cite lower economic and educational level in Slovakia as well as strong Catholicism of the Slovaks compared to the Czechs who were more secularized.

Nevertheless, the official concept of a single Czechoslovak nation with two branches of government and two languages in reality meant that the existence of separate Czech and Slovak nations was not recognized. The Constitution of 1918 declared the Czechoslovak language the official language of the Republic, but in reality, there were two separate languages – Czech and Slovak (and also the German and Hungarian languages spoken by ethnic minorities). This concept was asserted by the founding fathers mainly for pragmatic reasons. But Czechoslovakism met with a considerable resistance in Slovakia, and was accepted only by the smaller part of Slovak politicians. Thus, the Czechoslovak identity was entirely a political construction, rather than something that came naturally. As Brodský argues (2001: 23): “State sovereignty was granted to the ‘Czechoslovak nation’, but a nation cannot exist without its language. From the linguistic point of view, the word ‘Czechoslovak’ has always been a compound of two words – Czech and Slovak.” Consequently, the identification with the Czechoslovak state was completely different in the two parts of the country. While the majority of Czechs considered themselves to be Czechoslovak, in Slovakia, Czechoslovakism became increasingly identified with Czech nationalism. In contrast to the position taken by the majority of Czechs, Slovaks wanted to see the common state as an alliance of two sovereign nations.

Omitting the historical development that led to the creation of a Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and to the Slovak “independent” state in 1939, we will look at the most recent “chapter” of the Czecho-Slovak history that can be metaphorically termed – *from the velvet revolution to the velvet divorce*. It came about in early 1990s, following the fall of the communist regime in November 1989. The first indication of Slovaks’ sensitivity towards national issues surfaced during the discussion about the election of the new Czechoslovak President in December 1989. Parts of the Slovak elite favoured Alexander Dubček, the former leader of the Prague Spring instead of Václav Havel. The tensions and friction between Slovaks and Czechs began to be more resonantly articulated in the so-called “battle over the hyphen” – a dispute between both nations’ top political leaders over whether the name of the state should be Czechoslovakia or Czecho-Slovakia, with a hyphen dividing the two nations. It was seemingly an absolute triviality, but it actually amounted to the beginning of a definitive end of the common state of Czechs and Slovaks.

24 Symbolically speaking, the hyphen has eventually become a punctuation mark that set both nations apart. In the background of this seemingly trivial dispute, vibrant and complex socio-historical processes were underway such as reconciliation with the common historical heritage or overcoming social disparities that had developed as a result of “asynchronous modernization” (Musil 1993), combined with all kinds of stereotypes, prejudices and resentments.

The dynamics of the political developments following the 1992 parliamentary elections led to the division of the Czecho-Slovak Federative Republic and the subsequent founding of the Slovak Republic as an independent state on January 1, 1993. Hundreds of articles have been written about the “Velvet Divorce”, pondering “*why?*” and “*why so easy?*” However, despite the fact that the majority of the population did not support the split, the idea of a common Czecho-Slovakia became obsolete surprisingly quickly after the division. Both newly emergent states had to process their new independence, since the Czechoslovak state was as much a source of the Czech, as it was of Slovak identity. In Slovakia, however, the national identity was defined in opposition to the Czech or Czechoslovak one. A well-known Czech author described it as follows:

“For many Czechs, Czechoslovakia was synonymous with ‘their’ state. The Czechoslovak Republic was seen as the revival of Czech historical statehood, i.e. the continuation of the Bohemian Kingdom, and was created artificially, on the basis of a pragmatic consideration of a particular time. From this point of view, the creation of two independent states (the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic) in 1993 was very similar. It was artificial and decided exclusively on the level of the political elites. But this was not the only factor contributing to the split. It was partly the result of the elections in 1992, which determined Czech-Slovak relations at the time. Also, due to political rhetoric, the split of Czechoslovakia was interpreted as a result of a spontaneous historical development, as something natural and inevitable” (Brodský: 27).

The events of 1992 signaled the birth of two “new” identities – Czech and Slovak. Whereas the Slovak identity was, historically, relatively new, it was not problematic for the majority of Czechs to define their identity, because it had been synonymous with the Czechoslovak one. Václav Havel represented a very important personality for the Czechs. He was “a certain moral model for the Czech nation at the beginning of ‘90s, he was the determinant of the

25 way Czechs perceived themselves and the way they wanted to be perceived by the West. He was understood as a guarantee that Czechoslovakia was not going to experience any resurgence of communism. He was somebody with whom the whole Czechoslovak nation felt to be identified (as well as represented by) and especially with his ideals, morality, understanding of Czech history and appeal of the first Czechoslovak President” (Drulák 2001: 28).

The list of national holidays observed in the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic can serve as an illuminating mirror of the official “policy of memory” and construction of national identity. In the Slovak Republic, the official state holidays commemorate especially the most recent history – January 1st marks the day of its founding, while September 1st marks the day the Slovak Constitution was adopted (approved even before the split of the federation in 1992).⁴ Until 2001, Slovakia did not commemorate the anniversary of November 17, which was the initial day of the 1989 Velvet Revolution, and still does not observe the 1918 founding of the first Czechoslovak Republic, while the Czechs continue to celebrate both of these historical landmarks.

Hungary

If we were to agree on a generally perceived image or a national characteristic of Hungarians in the region, it would be their national pride. The Hungarian author András Balogh starts his paper about the Hungarian identity in the following way:

“The national identity of Hungarians is one of the most ancient and strongest on the European continent. Early 12th century chronicles clearly emphasize the historical and linguistic differences of Hungarians that set them apart from the rest of European communities. The awareness of these differences was rooted in the living memory due to relatively late appearance of Hungarians in Central Europe, in the collective experiences of consecutive foreign invasions and dominance, and in the multi-ethnic character of the country. So Hungarian history offers a ready-made material for theories of “national exclusiveness”, based on “permanently hostile international environment” (Balogh 2001: 69).

⁴ The list of Slovakia’s official state holidays is completed by the anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising of 1944 and the arrival of Constantine and Methodius to the Great Moravian Empire as envoys and propagators of Christianity.

26 The minority living beyond Hungary's borders represents the crucial constituent element of the Hungarian national identity. The Treaty of Trianon is to the Hungarians a symbol of national defeat, a dark side in the Hungarian history. Balogh illustrates this point:

"The first anti-governmental mass demonstration after the 1956 revolution was organized in June 1998 in support of the oppressed Hungarian minority in Transylvania. The communist regime was condemned by the strongest opposition groups first of all because of its "anti-national course" its "close cooperation and collaboration with the Soviet power", its "indifference to and neglect of the national interests", its silence concerning the nation's historic tragedies, including the "partition of the country and the nation" in Trianon (ibid.: 70).

Hungarian sociologists Ágnes and Gábor Kapitány identify two main traditions that have shaped national identity: the "peasant-type" and the "nobleman-type" which serve as models for approaches to everyday life. In the nineties and in intellectual circles the "nobleman-type" model was stronger. The central elements of the "peasant-type" model of national identity are as follows: preoccupation with rural life, dominated by everyday work, without ideological emphasis. The "nobleman-type" of national identity is more ideological in its essence, more emphasis is placed on historical developments, political struggles are important in it. Representative and status-related symbols characterize its features (Kapitány 2001:13).

In defining the national identity, prominent members of the government and the conservative parties frequently used the following arguments:

- Hungary is part of the West. Hungary was only temporarily separated from the Western part of the continent by Soviet occupation and communist dictatorship;
- The common European values are based on the Western forms of Christianity;
- Hungary has for many centuries defended Europe and Christianity;
- There is a significant difference between Central and Eastern Europe;
- Hungary has a moral right to be admitted to the European and Atlantic communities.
- Full membership in Western institutions and organizations should be interpreted as a re-integration to Europe (Balogh: 73).

The Hungarian national identity is inextricably linked with the status of Hungarian minorities in the neighbouring countries. The most famous sentence on this issue is dated early 1990, when the first freely elected parliament had a conservative majority and Prime Minister József Antal led the conservative government. During one of his first public appearances, Antal uttered these words: "I spiritually want to be the Prime Minister of 15 millions Hungarians." The fate of Hungarians living outside Hungary's borders became a central issue of the national identity discourse. Prime Minister Antal and Secretary of State Géza Jeszensky were the representatives of this position and have opened the issue very often at various international forums.

The Socialist-Free Democrat Coalition that came to power in 1994 changed the hierarchy of priorities in Hungarian foreign policy, although openly this shift of emphasis was rarely admitted. Theoretically, the socialist-liberal government accepted the idea of "triple priorities" (commitment to the cause of Euro-Atlantic integration, development of good neighbourly relations, taking moral and political responsibility for Hungarian minorities living outside the borders). Nevertheless, Prime Minister Gyula Horn gave an undisputed priority to Hungary joining EU and NATO. The Socialists thus identified the Hungarian national identity with Europe. Overall, relevant Hungarian political actors perceive their national identity as complementary to the European one. Balogh offers a closer look:

"Even in strong nationalist sentiment is the Hungarians' role in history portrayed as "defenders of Christian Europe" and "the Eastern-most outpost of the Western Civilization" where, unlike in most neighbouring countries, the Western form of Christianity has survived and all Western ideological, artistic and political currents have been adopted (Humanism, Renaissance, Reformation)." There are significant differences as well. Political parties and many observers see these differences as fundamental and consider the direction of the foreign policy of the two subsequent governments vis-à-vis the pro-European orientation and support for Hungarian minorities as "each other's alternatives" (Balogh: 77–78).

Taking moral and political responsibility for the Hungarian minorities living beyond the border represents a significant element of the Hungarian national identity. There is a broad consensus in Hungary that the fundamental democratic rights of minorities and their unhindered contacts with the "mother country" can only be guaranteed by accepting the "European standards" (ibid.).

Slovakia

The presence of American influence throughout the Slovak history, even though it represents a distant Atlanticist element, comes to the forefront and recedes during different periods. The relation of Slovakia's history to that of the United States could be metaphorically labeled as "perforated connectedness." Intellectual impulses of the American Revolution resonated in Slovakia as is apparent from the writings of Czech historian Ivan Pfaff: "In the second decade of the 19th century, following the initial interest of Czech followers of Enlightenment in the American revolution, the focus of scholarly interest in America has shifted to Pressburg (Bratislava), a venue that is much more open-minded and receptive of liberal impulses and where these impulses are symbolically embodied in young František Palacký."

In Pressburg he was introduced to a global interpretation of Europe's position between America and Russia sometime around 1819, drawing on the work of Rotteck, German author espousing liberalist ideas. Perhaps an even more important impetus to his interest in America was given by his January 1819 reading of American history written by Robertson, a Scottish historian. However, Palacký informed his colleague Jungmann about his intention to write history *à la Robertson* already in December 1818. An attempt to explain this time discrepancy brings us from the exquisite atmosphere of Pressburg aristocratic saloons with parquet floors Palacký liked to visit, to rooms of Slovak followers of Enlightenment and national revivalists among whom sympathies for revolutionary and liberal America were generally felt" (Pfaff 1996: 207). Even before then, in 1794, Slovak geographer of the Enlightenment period Ladislav Bartolomeides published in Pressburg *História o Amerike* [The History of America], the very first book on American history written in Czech (Pfaff: 207).

In 1834–1835, František Cyril Kampelík prepared the first popular anthology of Benjamin Franklin's works; however, due to censorship the book was banned from publication in the Czech lands and even in Budapest. Eventually, after three years of struggling with red tape, it was published in Banská Bystrica in 1838 (ibid.: 210). Slovak historian, Lubomír Lipták also mentions the "perforated connectedness" of the Slovak and American history: "Everyone who surfs through the Slovak history from the end of the 19th century up to present, at every period, at every turn and at every intersection is confronted with the United States. America played its historic part by engaging in 1918 or in 1989, and sometimes also by disengaging, as was the case

in 1938 or 1968. The reflection of Slovak society vis-à-vis America cannot be expressed in simple terms and decidedly. It is made up of intimate life experiences of Slovak emigrants, but also contains perspectives from afar – conveyed by, and seen through a prism of our sense of belonging to Europe and our alignment with power blocs" (Sme, 11 September 2002).

History also provides us with a story with an anecdote about Count Apponyi – a strong advocate of the assimilation of Slovaks into the Hungarian part of Austro-Hungarian Empire. During his visit to the northwestern region of Kysuce (of what is now Slovakia) for an election campaign, he spoke to the locals in Hungarian. Since they did not understand a word of Hungarian, some of them who had worked in America suggested to him to address them in English. Yet another fact that may perhaps strike an anecdotic note could be that the proponents of a Czechoslovak nation, out of gratitude for help in breaking up the Habsburg Monarchy and the subsequent introduction of Wilsonian democracy to Central Europe, proposed in 1918 to rename historic Bratislava (then also called Prešporok) to "Wilsonovo" mesto. Although this name did not catch on, and nowadays we can only be reminded of it by maps of that period, it serves as a testament to Slovakia's "perforated connectedness" to Atlanticist ideals.

As in the case of other Central European nations, Slovaks were somewhat perplexed by their geographic location between the West and the East. This led them to consider every step toward political freedom to be a step that would bring them closer to the West. This was the case in 1918, as well as after the fall of the communist regime. Illustrative of this fact is a citation by an influential Slovak diplomat Štefan Osuský. In his essay entitled "Slovakia and its Place in the New Europe", he wrote: "Thanks to the victory of 1918, the Slovaks were definitively ranked among Western nations. (...) Slovakia's escape from the sphere of Eastern culture into the sphere of Western Civilization was a true accomplishment which – from the viewpoint of its future development – was no less important than actual achievement of freedom" (Osuský 1997: 116). Long before the integration process in Western Europe was launched, former Czechoslovak Prime Minister and a native Slovak, Milan Hodža forecast that only a regional organization comprising all Central European nations could be an adequate partner not only to Western Europe but also to America: "Only a regional agreement concluded by Central European states provides the platform for discussion and agreement with the rest of Europe and – even more importantly – with America. However, there is a very appealing assumption that the best subject to deal with America is some kind of Pan-Europe" (Hodža 1931: 312).

Rediscovering history is a common feature across the post-communist world. It is also a natural reaction to history's misinterpretation during communism. In Slovakia, this process has been made even more challenging as well as controversial by the fact that it is a newly established state which lacks a generally accepted consensus over "the brighter times" (be it Masaryk's democratic tradition of the first Czechoslovak Republic in the case of the Czech Republic or the post-war "Wiederaufbau" and neutrality in the case of Austria). The key historical events in Slovakia's modern history have entirely contradictory interpretations. In particular, this applies to the historical interpretation of the wartime fascist Slovak State and the Slovak National Uprising that sought to overthrow it. Right after November 1989, the dispute over the interpretation of these historical events became one of the strongest polarizing forces within the society. Nationalists defended the wartime Slovak State, while neglecting its totalitarian character and emphasizing the fact that in 1939 Slovaks had achieved independence for the very first time in their history.

As far as the Slovaks' collective historical memory is concerned, sociological surveys conducted shortly after November 1989 identified extensive blank areas in Slovak society's "historical consciousness" in respect to the country's past. Later, influenced by a broad public debate and the fact that Slovakia's political elites subscribed unambiguously to the tradition of the Slovak National Uprising against Nazism, socially diverse classes of the Slovak society agreed upon two significantly positive figures in Slovakia's history – Milan Rastislav Štefánik and Alexander Dubček. The "darker" side of Slovakia's history is in public perception represented especially by leaders of both totalitarian regimes of the 20th century – president of the wartime Slovak State, Jozef Tiso, and top officials of the communist regime, Gustáv Husák and Vasil Biľak.

While the public's perception of the wartime Slovak State experienced a certain increase in awareness in the course of the '90s, Slovaks showed increasing "benevolence" when evaluating the pre-November '89 communist regime and its top officials. A significant share of Slovak citizens continues to remember this period as "good old times", largely ignoring the regime's totalitarian character. Since the communist experience is accepted very benevolently, the communist past of numerous Slovak politicians did not become an obstacle to continuing their political careers after 1989. For a good proportion of Slovaks, a certain sense of nostalgia is attached to the pre-November regime. They remember fondly its positives compared to what followed in the way of

groundbreaking societal changes of November 1989. Of all post-communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe, public tolerance of former communists returning to public posts is the highest in Slovakia of all the Visegrad countries.⁵ The Slovaks' reflection on their own history tends to lean either to indolent oblivion or, when it suits the purpose (e.g. for the sake of political mobilization), to creation of self-celebrating myths.

For centuries, the Slovak national identity has been defined in relation to its neighbours, especially the Hungarians and the Czechs. The Slovaks have always aspired to be equal partners with either nation, in order to achieve their own statehood. "The historical struggle for own statehood" is a deeply rooted mythical phrase. Historians point out that from the historical viewpoint, this "struggle" was very short and only a very narrow group of the political elite participated in it (see Kováč 2000).

DIGESTING ONE'S INDEPENDENCE

The 1992 election became a turning point in resolving the Constitutional issue that resulted in the division of the former Czechoslovak state and the subsequent founding of the Slovak Republic as a separate state on January 1, 1993. The civic platform reacted with unhidden embarrassment. First reactions of those who were for the division were marked by certain bewilderment and efforts to seek a positive way out of the situation – a situation that the civic right did not desire in the first place. The attitude taken by the civic right was based on several premises: trying to fill the undesired form by a desired content: "Today, the question is not anymore whether [we want] the Slovak Republic or not, but what kind of republic it is going to be" (Zajac 1993). This premise marked the beginning of a struggle fought by a portion of Slovakia's intelligentsia, but also the broad public. It was a struggle for the character of the newly established state. The second premise espoused by the right was that the divorce with the Czechs defined a new opportunity for Slovakia to acquire an equal partnership within the united Europe.

⁵ According to a survey conducted in 1999 by the Office for Public Opinion Research, only 17% of the population in Slovakia thinks that former members of the Communist Party should not hold public posts. The same opinion was endorsed by 52% of Czech respondents, followed by 44% of Poles and 44% of Hungarians (p.21).

On the other hand, the image of the Slovaks seen through the prism of the nationalist press of that period differed significantly. Nationalist press painted an image of Slovaks as peace-loving, modest people who are coming belatedly and from behind – as eternal underdogs who, despite all the historical wrongs committed against them, have matured and reached out for their freedom. Moreover, in the aftermath of the division, figurative images began to be applied also to Slovakia's new state and statehood. "The rhetorical figure of the 'young state' became an institutional excuse for any problem the state administration ran into. In this context, to be young meant to be adolescent, pubescent and immature. It meant to be someone or something that is hard to control. (Zajac 1999: 290). The young statehood was often presented as an antithesis to "the old nation".

The process of formation of the Slovak national identity in the context of a newly established independent state was accompanied by a deep polarization of the society. Beyond the border that emerged between the Czech Republic and Slovakia on January 1, 1993, a new, internal division had formed soon thereafter. On the level of political attitudes, the nation became torn between those who were in power and more or less explicitly desired the split of the federation, and those who opposed the move and were branded by people from the other camp as pro-federal, pro-Klausist. However, similar front lines also divided communities of authors and intellectuals (e.g. Forum of Slovakia's Intelligentsia vs. the "Korene" [Roots] association) and journalists. The entire society became divided into "good" and "bad" Slovaks. The "founding fathers" of the state posed as its only protectors and focused on identifying its "internal enemies". Former advocates of the federation began to be accused of "smearing the good name of Slovakia".

The first year of the country's independence uncovered the fact that the main hurdle on Slovakia's road to EU and NATO was, above all, Slovakia itself. As soon as there was no one to be blamed, the country's historical legacy as well as the potential of the Slovak society became fully exposed. Ambiguities of the future position and role of the newly independent state, as well as shortcomings in the democratic system of governance, defined the new Republic. Especially after the 1994 parliamentary elections, these factors caused Slovakia's departure from the Central European transition path.

FROM POLARIZATION TO DIFFERENTIATION

The 1998 parliamentary elections represented crossroads on the transition path. The mature behaviour of the Slovak citizens expressed by voting Prime Minister Mečiar out of office became honourable; adjectives, such as "rebirth of democracy" or birth of a citizen were often used. Slovakia, as a successor state of Czecho-Slovak Federative Republic had met all the preconditions to be in the "front-runner group" for NATO and EU membership, while the policies of the Mečiar administration had previously disqualified it from integration processes.

During the years since 1998, important decisions were made: three former Warsaw Pact members were invited to join NATO, and the first group of candidates for EU membership had started accession negotiations. In July 1997, the NATO summit in Madrid recommended not to include Slovakia among the countries in the first wave of NATO enlargement. In December 1997, the summit of the EU held in Helsinki relegated Slovakia to a second, slower track toward EU membership. Despite a markedly later date of beginning negotiations with the EU, Slovakia has fairly quickly closed the gap between its neighbours in the Visegrad group. It is also a hot candidate for NATO membership and expects to get an invitation at the Prague summit in the fall of 2002.

Against the backdrop of normalizing Slovakia's international status, the country began to form a new identity as a self-confident nation that aspires to enter the community of prosperous and democratic states. However, it was not until after 1998 that differentiated opinion platforms – no longer determined by pro- and anti-Mečiar attitudes – started to form. In the aftermath of the founding of independent Slovakia, the country's political elites could not continue in a natural process of profiling their different platforms or streams. In the struggle against Mečiarism, all democratic forces had to unite and close their ranks, becoming amalgamated by the common vision of a democratic Slovakia. Thus the competition of political ideas and concepts promoted by Slovakia's socialists, liberals and conservatives was artificially frozen for several years. A convincing proof of this phenomenon was the make-up of the first Dzurinda government, which was made up of a broad coalition comprising political parties on a left, as well as the right of the political spectrum. Nevertheless, differences between these parties were clearly apparent and were often voiced.

DOES THE TRANS-ATLANTIC IDENTITY EXIST IN SLOVAKIA?

Ordinary people (and not only those living in Slovakia) usually do not tend to think in broader contexts because conflicts and issues played out on the domestic political scene often take the front seat. In Slovakia, people's sense of solidarity with the outside world is poorly developed and thus their approach is often characterized by the attitude of "what can we do about it?" Even in respect to international integration processes, part of the political elite and the public seems to base their position on a premise that "they" need "us" because of our country's geopolitical value, and not because *we* could make a contribution to them. Generally speaking, the Slovaks lack stronger identification with their own active and responsible contribution to functioning of international institutions.

Long-term surveys show that majority of Slovaks is clearly pro-Western, however, this orientation lacks a depth of purpose. It is interesting that a counterbalance to the clearly dominating pro-Western attitude is not a pro-Eastern orientation (its public support is only marginal), but rather a vacillating attitude that may, for instance, take on the form of endorsing the call for neutrality. This attitude is a gut reaction, rather than a well-considered option and stems most probably, in a figurative sense, from the fear of a "draft caused by opened windows", as well as from a certain degree of suspiciousness toward the "West". The perception of the United States (and, consequently, the North Atlantic Alliance) and Western Europe (and, consequently, the European Union) differs considerably in Slovakia. The image of Western European countries is considerably more structured and shaped by prevailingly positive associations.⁶

Public opinion polls suggest that the image of the United States in Slovakia is more differentiated in comparison to the image of Western European countries. A positive feature – one of an economically developed country – is the most prevalent one, but it is cited by "only" 39% of respondents. The second most frequently mentioned characteristic is "superiority", which has a rather negative connotation in Slovak. Since the image of NATO overlaps with that

⁶ Over 60% of respondents stated that these were economically developed countries. The second most frequently mentioned association related to democracy. A negative association – superiority – was mentioned by less than 7% of respondents (NOC, April 2002).

of the United States for many respondents, it is important to identify the reasons for these negative attitudes and stereotypes. The results suggest that it would be desirable to continue explaining to the public that NATO does not equal the United States, and engage in highlighting the fact that most Western European states themselves are NATO members. Vigilance in respect to the United States is relatively widespread in Slovakia. Compared to other V4 countries, the public's posture toward the United States is the most reserved. In 1999, only 59% of Slovaks said they had a favourable opinion of the USA, compared to 85% of respondents in Poland, 84% of Hungarians and 79% of Czechs (*Department of State...*, 2000). On the other hand, the same comparative study showed that the Slovaks had the most benevolent opinion about Russia of all V4 nations.

When subjecting the Slovak citizens' trust or distrust toward particular countries to examination, we can divide the outcomes into specific groups. First, Slovaks seem to trust the Czech Republic and Poland the most, which applies virtually to all demographic categories of respondents. Slovaks' confidence in the Czech Republic seems only natural, given traditional mutual ties, however, it is still a remarkable phenomenon in light of the relatively recent split of the federation. Relations with Poland are free from conflicts in the long term, although from the viewpoint of citizens, they are less intensive.

Second on the confidence scale ranks a group of western countries, although the level of trust is considerably lower compared to the top two countries (Czech Republic and Poland), it still significantly surpasses the level of distrust. However, the aggregate average obscures substantially differing perceptions of Slovak citizens of particular western countries. Austria is the most favourably perceived of all western countries. The United States received relatively least favourable evaluation (although trust still prevails over distrust). Third on the list is the group of former Soviet Republics – here distrust generally prevails over trust and there is a relatively broad agreement on this point across all demographic groups. Among ten examined countries, Russia, Ukraine and Belarus fall into the category of countries to which Slovaks feel the least amount of trust but not the highest level of distrust. Finally, the greatest distrust by the majority of the Slovak population is felt toward Hungary, which can be explained by a combination of historical stereotypes. It only makes sense that the perception of Hungary among ethnic Hungarians differs vastly from that of the rest of the population.

36 Slovaks seem to identify strongly with Slovakia as a whole, but also with its regions and localities. They identify least with the territorial units introduced by the public administration reform enacted in 2001. Beyond Slovakia's borders, the Slovaks feel the closest to Central Europe, followed by Europe as such and, after a certain gap, the trans-Atlantic space determined by Europe, United States and Canada.⁷

CENTRAL EUROPE AS A HOMOGENEOUS (VISEGRAD) BLOC IN TRANS-ATLANTIC RELATIONS

After subjecting attitudes of particular Central European countries to analysis, we would like to try to propose common policies that could possibly be pursued by the single Central European bloc. In light of this ambition we have to give due consideration to the multinational character and diverse historical tradition, in Europe in general and Central Europe in particular. We find it unlikely that, in the foreseeable future Central Europe, or Visegrad will speak with a single voice in response to the single voice from across the Atlantic. Paraphrasing a famous question posed by Henry Kissinger, "what telephone number should I dial if I want to speak to Mr. Europe?" – it is pretty safe to assume that Mr. Visegrad will not have a single telephone number, headquarters or a concrete name too soon either – if ever at all. With a certain amount of exaggeration, the future model of communication will look something like this: on one end of the line will be the United States, and on the other end, one politician will hold the receiver with his colleagues all shouting over his shoulder.

The model of Central European co-operation based on the principle of good will and democracy appeared several times during the existence of the Hapsburg Empire. Nevertheless, it did not begin to draw any significant attention until the time of the monarchy's decline. Later, it was resurrected in the aftermath of World War I. The search was on for alternative models to

fill the power vacuum in Central Europe and simultaneously avoid the fallacies of Hapsburg policies whereby, in line with concert of European powers and the balance of power principle, alliances with European great powers were traditionally sought – particularly and repeatedly with Germany. Alternative models of co-operation in Central Europe repeatedly emphasized establishing a counterbalance to Germany and, naturally, counted on the support of Germany's traditional enemies, such as Great Britain and possibly the United States. Consequently, efforts to establish a communication and closer political co-operation within Central Europe envisaged – from the very outset – support of European superpowers and, especially, the United States.

During World War I, when European leaders discussed the future disassembly of the Hapsburg Empire under Masaryk's slogan of *Austria delenda est* (Austria must be destroyed), individual Central European nations in compliance with democratic principles united in a joint body to indicate that they intended to act in concert. It was little surprise that they did so in the United States and that the Mid-European Democratic Union – an organization of nations inhabiting the territory between Russia and Germany – congregated in Washington, Philadelphia and New York. Despite the fact that this organization, relatively early on, got entangled in mutual disputes brought about by ambitions for territorial gains as well as personal animosities between particular political leaders, it was the very first historical experience of American politicians and intellectuals in co-operation with Central European countries in an attempt to create, out of the ashes of Austro-Hungarian Empire, a future Central European federation according to the American model (Mamatey 1991: 47).⁸

Following the end of World War I and the withdrawal of the United States (championed particularly by US President Woodrow Wilson) from pursuing an active European policy, Central Europe – its role and position between European great powers, and especially the role of the United States in providing stability in Europe – was reopened again during World War II. A great number of political emigrants from countries occupied by Nazi Germany found a refuge in Great Britain and the US – democratic countries that stood

⁷ According to a survey conducted in autumn 2001 by the National Educational Centre (NOC), the feeling of solidarity with Slovakia was expressed by over 90% of respondents, while in the case of Central Europe it was 77% and in the case of a trans-Atlantic space 46% of respondents.

⁸ Mamatey's is a translated passage from *The United States and East Central Europe 1914-1918: A Study in Wilsonian Diplomacy and Propaganda*. Princeton University Press 1957, an extensive book written by American historian of Slovak descent. Please, see also Masaryk, Tomáš G.: *Nová Evropa. Stanovisko slovanské* [New Europe: A Slavic Viewpoint]. Brno, 1994.

38 up to Hitler. It was these emigrants whose ranks made up politicians and intellectuals, who elaborated a number of schemes with an aim of integrating the Central European region. Their effort did not only remain on the level of planning, however – an agreement between exile governments of Poland and Czechoslovakia was signed that called for establishing a confederation at the end of the war. The governments in exile envisaged co-operation with two Anglo-Saxon democracies – the United States and Great Britain, considered as patrons of a Central European federation. In January 1942, the Central and Eastern European Planning Board was established in New York in order to lay the groundwork for future federalization of Central Europe. Again, it was American experts who helped Central Europeans with theoretical preparations for establishing the Central European bloc.

Following the Yalta Conference and a consequent division of Europe into two antagonistic blocs by the Iron Curtain, the democratic emigration in Western Europe and the USA harboured these unification plans and counted on their application in case the Soviets were ousted from Central and Eastern Europe. Thus America became a breeding ground for numerous plans seeking to unify Central Europe. America's tradition of political thought became a source of intellectual inspiration and, simultaneously, the United States was supposed to guarantee the future existence of such a bloc. Similar historical parallels were drawn immediately after the fall of Communism. Already at the beginning of 1990, a respected American political scientist and geostrategist, Zbigniew Brzezinski proposed to establish a Czechoslovak-Polish confederation. Moreover, William H. Luers, former US Ambassador to Czechoslovakia, deemed it very important to create new regional ties within this space and proposed to "build a new political and economic organization" (*The New York Times*, 12 April 1991).

It is necessary to point out that the American administration and its decision-makers took quite some time to "re-invent" Central Europe as a region with a specific cultural and historical experience and, consequently, as a separate political identity. On September 20, 1994, Reuters News Service released a news piece headlined "The State Department has made it official – no longer is there East Europe." Richard Holbrooke, Assistant for European and Canadian Affairs at the US State Department and former US Ambassador to Germany, giving testimony before the US Congress in which he stated: "the people of the region do not consider themselves to be Eastern Europeans. (...) Prague lies west of Vienna and Budapest has a long cultural tradition, as rich as that of Paris, Vienna, or Berlin." Therefore, Holbrooke concluded, "Eastern Europe

[should] now revert to what it was before the start of World War II in 1939 – Central Europe." Simultaneously, the US State Department issued instructions to all embassies throughout the region ordering them to replace the term "Eastern Europe" by the term "Central Europe".

In the spring of 2001, foreign ministries' state secretaries of all V4 countries jointly visited the United States where they were received by top officials of the new administration of President George Bush, Jr., including Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage and Deputy Director of the National Security Council, Steve Hadley. Shortly after the visit, Ingrid Brocková who at the time worked at the Department of Analysis and Planning of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, wrote an article in which she discussed the status of V4 and how the region is perceived in Europe and the United States. Brocková labeled the Visegrad Four grouping as a United States' ally within NATO and its partner in trans-Atlantic relations. Regarding the process of EU enlargement and, especially, the trans-Atlantic economic agenda, Brocková wrote: "an opportunity is arising to create an open communication triangle of USA-EU-V4" (*Sme*, 3 May 2001). Similarly, Robert Škopec of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote an article headlined "The Future of the Visegrad Path" in which he discussed the position of V4 between the USA and Europe, accentuating even further the grouping's pro-Atlantic and pro-American orientation: "Visegrad's determinant feature is its unambiguous foreign political orientation to trans-Atlantic co-operation with the US and NATO. This characteristic is not likely to change in the future" (*Sme*, 17 July 2002). The analyst even assumes that due to its clearly defined Euro-Atlantic orientation, V4 may become a stabilizing factor in the united Europe and contribute its experience to enhancing co-operation within the triangle of NATO-EU-Russia.

VISEGRAD CO-OPERATION IN CITIZENS' PERCEPTION

People's opinions on issues pertaining to foreign policy reflect, more than anything else, the politicians' views and statements, media coverage of issues related to it and the nature of public discourse. At the turn of the new millennium, partly due to a favourable political situation in its constituent countries, the Visegrad group acquired the image of a model of regional co-opera-

tion that should serve as an example of stability and good neighbourly relations for the rest of Europe and the world.

Public opinion research⁹ confirmed that a majority of citizens in all 4 countries acknowledge the purpose and benefits of their countries' mutual co-operation. However, it should be noted that people's endorsement of this co-operation differs considerably from country to country. While co-operation finds strong support with Slovaks and Poles, Hungarians show the least enthusiasm for it. Interpretation of these public perceptions should be sought by closely examining the differing attitudes of particular countries' political representations and the economic and political situation in each respective country. After 1998, Slovakia became the true engine behind the revitalization of the Visegrad co-operation. This fact reflects a great interest of Slovakia's political representatives who took office in 1998 to nourish most intensive relations possible within the Visegrad grouping. The approach became a part of strategy of "eliminating" integration deficits. Furthermore, Slovakia is the smallest of all Visegrad countries and, consequently, it strives to achieve mutual support and solidarity, instead of generating mutual competition among its neighbours.

Poland is the country that places emphasis on V4 countries' regional co-operation, both before and after their EU accession. This fact can be perceived on two levels: Poland's problematic agricultural sector or it may be related to the feeling of responsibility for the entire region which ensues from its position as a "regional power". For a long time, Hungary has been profiling itself as a "rapacious solo player" that stakes on its own performance and is not willing to wait in order to join the Union together with economically less prepared candidates. In public perception, this fact was manifested in the lowest support of V4 countries' joint action during the accession process, and after acquiring EU membership.

In the mid-1990s, the Czech Republic basked in EU's favourable approach, relishing its "star pupil of integration" title. Statements of former Prime

⁹ A research project headlined "The Visegrad Co-operation as Perceived by Member States' Citizens" took place in November and December 2001 thanks to financial support of the International Visegrad Fund. The project was co-ordinated by the Institute for Public Affairs in Bratislava in co-operation with its partners in the Czech Republic (Gabal Analysis and Consulting), Poland (Instytut spraw publicznych) and Hungary (International Economic Institute at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences).

Minister Václav Klaus at that time evoked an impression that the European Union should join the Czech Republic, instead of the other way around. Klaus repeatedly labeled the Visegrad co-operation as an obsolete concept. Today, the situation is quite different. The Czechs' revived interest in co-operation within the V4 format is clearly legible on the level of political elites and, subsequently, it enjoys a rise in popularity on the level of individual citizens. Although the Czechs are somewhat restrained compared to Slovaks and Poles, they are considerably less skeptical than the Hungarians. The importance of regional co-operation was also evident in respondents' answers to other questions. Three out of four Slovak respondents, compared to only about one in two Czech and Hungarian respondents, considered the Visegrad co-operation important.

In response to the question "why should V4 countries co-operate?" the list of reasons was clearly dominated by their common goal of joining the European Union. Slovak and Hungarian respondents also emphasized the aspect of their countries' geographical location. Less frequently cited reasons included cultural proximity or the common past, which in the meantime, have paradoxically become a dividing, rather than a unifying factor. The research showed that the respondents consider the lowest common denominator of Visegrad countries' interests to be their economies and accession to the European Union – in particular, they view cooperation in negotiations with the EU or protection of national interests following their entry to be in the interest of their countries. The accession to the European Union is the crucial objective of all V4 member states. Throughout the region, integration enjoys a majority support of the public, although it varies in intensity from country to country.

In the long term, support for integration into the EU is the highest in Slovakia and Hungary.¹⁰ The joint entry of all V4 countries and co-ordination of accession positions has the most advocates in Slovakia (59%) and Poland (54%). The Czechs rather incline toward a solo advancement – 37% of Czech respondents would support a joint strategy, while 44% of them preferred a separate evaluation and accession of particular candidates. In Hungary, the preference of a solo approach to entry is substantially higher – only 17% of respond-

¹⁰ According to the Eurobarometer survey conducted in autumn 2001, if referendum on their country's accession to the EU was held, 70% of Hungarians, 66% of Slovaks, 54% of Czechs and 54% of Poles would vote "yes" (Applicant Countries' Eurobarometer, October 2001).

42 ents prefer the position of “a unified approach”, while the opposite opinion was expressed by 60% of respondents (Gyárfášová 2002).

A similar breakdown of respondents’ opinions could also be observed in response to the question of whether Visegrad countries should establish a more closely co-operating group following their accession to the European Union or maintain, among the four countries, the same quality of relations as with other members of EU. While inclination toward above-standard relations with V4 members prevails moderately in Poland (46% were for it, 38% against), respondents in the other three countries prefer maintaining equal relations between the V4 countries as with all EU member states. This tendency is the highest in Hungary (a more closely co-operating regional group enjoys support of only 14% of respondents) (ibid.).

ALLIANCES OF TRUST

What are the bilateral relations between particular Visegrad countries like? If we were to create a “sociogram of trust” for inhabitants of the Visegrad region, it would look something like this:

- The highest level of trust can be observed between the Czechs and the Slovaks – this applies mutually;
- The lowest level of trust can be observed between the Hungarians and the Slovaks – also a mutual phenomenon;
- Poles trust the Hungarians the most and vice-versa. It seems that the absence of friction areas, either historical or policy-oriented, has a positive effect on their mutual perception.

Mutual relations and stereotypes that have been accumulating for centuries are, no doubt, reflected in the above results. Moreover, it is a representation of national identity – that is, images people tend to keep about themselves and about the others. From the Slovaks’ viewpoint, it is safe to draw a conclusion that their relation to Hungarians remains reserved in the long term.¹¹

¹¹ The survey was conducted in November 2001, before tensions in mutual relations were escalated due to Hungary’s law on ethnic Hungarians living abroad and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s comments on the so-called Beneš decrees, or approving Slovakia’s NATO membership.

On the other hand, relations between the Czechs and the Slovaks are very favourable on the level of citizens, with feelings of trust, openness and mutual closeness prevailing. The trauma caused by the “velvet divorce” or mutual accusations that followed do not surface in the majority’s viewpoints. This naturally does not mean that these feelings are not exhibited to a greater extent in certain specific demographic areas. For Slovakia, Poland represents a problem-free partner. Still, both countries’ bilateral relations are definitely lagging behind their potential. Despite a remarkable dynamics recorded in their mutual relations in 1999–2001, the two countries continue to experience a relationship that was described by a commentator in the region as “two neighbours turning their backs to each other”. Consequently, both negative and positive emotions are largely missing.

CONCLUSIONS

History, out of many factors that can have an effect on relations in Central Europe, is not likely to play a determinant role in Central European countries’ decision to favor the United States or Western Europe. However, this attitude will be somewhat modified by each individual country of the V4 group. Perhaps Poles will attribute the most important role to history due to the negative standpoint of European superpowers in the country’s development. Consequently, the United States is historically perceived as Poland’s traditional ally. Moreover, most Central European countries seem to have a negative, history-based perception of their neighbouring Central European superpower – Germany. Nevertheless, even in this perception a slow turnaround can be observed.

Ideological orientation of their governing coalitions, rather than momentary “custodians of historical memory” will influence particular countries’ concrete attitudes in various situations” (Prizel 1998). What is determinant in this respect are attitudes of rightist or leftist governments, which may apply various interpretations of history in their argumentation. Deciding between the United States and Western Europe will represent a relatively new element for players from Central Europe, since most of them until recently perceived the West as a single entity, namely as a stronghold of democracy, prosperity and security. To political elites in Central European countries, recent frictions between Western allies represent not merely a moment of surprise

44 but also a moment of uncertainty, since they are faced with an often difficult dilemma of choosing between the United State and Europe. Opinions of ordinary people on issues pertaining to foreign policy will continue to reflect politicians' views and statements, media coverage of these issues and the nature of public debate taking place in each country. These factors will also influence the way citizens of V4 countries perceive Visegrad co-operation and future possibility of co-ordination of positions once within the European Union.

In our opinion, the region of Central Europe – provided it acts as a single political player – could help balance the currently shaken trans-Atlantic relations and calm the tensions by seeking and presenting conciliatory solutions. Although it may seem like an ambitious task, it is important for Central Europe to define its role as it is searching for its niche within the pan-European integration process as well as within the trans-Atlantic, and increasingly globalized world. Central European politicians should not approach or use history as “crutches”, or a reservoir of arguments in adversity – instead, they could use it as a cane, that is, an elegant accessory. They should not lean on it full weight when pressed into a corner, but rather use historical examples in sovereign decision-making to strengthen their line of argumentation. It will be up to politicians themselves to decide whether or not they consider the walking cane to be just an obsolete piece of accessory in their closets.

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Petr Drulák

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Chapter II

WHEN DOES REGIONAL CO-OPERATION MAKE SENSE?

Regional co-operation as such is rarely addressed as a topic of theoretical enquiry (for an exception see Hurrell 1995). Even though research on regionalism offers some conceptualisations of regional co-operation, these are often too general, while at the same time they omit important features of regional co-operation in Central Europe. This is the case with the political-economic approach of Stubbs and Underhill (Stubbs, Underhill 2000: 231–234 in Smith 2001: 57) who identify three central elements to regionalism: shared history and shared problems, intensive interactions between countries and societies, and similarities in institutions setting the rules of the game. Evans and Newnham (Evans, Newnham 1998: 472–473) offer a different view of regional co-operation based on geographical proximity and homogeneity. The homogeneity is understood (and defined) according to four categories: *social*, including race, religion, culture and history; *economic*, referring to the level of development and possibilities of integration; *political*, based on the same type of political system; and *external*, referring to foreign policy co-operation and development of common institutions. These definitions address some important features of regional co-operation, but they seem to be both arbitrary and incomplete and lack a systematic approach. Therefore, for the purposes at hand, I will develop a new framework anchored in theories of international relations (IR) that will allow us to think of regional co-operation in a more systematic way and to build on the existing theories.

International co-operation, together with international war are among the most researched topics of IR theories. In addition to general theoretical accounts of international co-operation, an abundant collection of more specific accounts, dealing with the topic of European integration is available. To account for the possibilities of regional co-operation among the Visegrad countries, I will employ both general accounts of international co-operation and

48 theories of European integration, while taking into account a significant degree of overlap between the two groups. For the purpose at hand, it would not make much sense to introduce the theories in their entirety, as such an encyclopaedic exercise would go beyond the scope of this chapter. Thus, I elected to structure the enquiry as follows: First, I will focus on select key concepts and mechanisms used in different theoretical approaches. Second, I will examine the theoretical and meta-theoretical embeddedness of those concepts in order to reflect on the possibilities of a potential division of labour among them. Third, based on the concepts, I will suggest possible conditions for evaluating the prospects of regional co-operation.

WHY IS CO-OPERATION POSSIBLE?

For our purposes, I will define co-operation in IR, based on Alexander Wendt's Social Theory of International Politics (Wendt 1999). This choice can be justified on at least two grounds. First, this major theoretical work strives for a synthesis between rationalist and reflectivist approaches in an attempt to bridge the gap between what can be considered the two most important streams in the current IR debate. Second, the cooperation among states is its main focus.

Wendt claims that relations between states start in a Hobbesian condition of mutual war, but gradually progress to the opposite condition of enduring peace and co-operation, where the exclusive and mutually hostile identities of the states give way to an inclusive collective identity. Leaving aside Wendt's contestable philosophy of history, I will focus on the mechanisms by which the transition from the condition of hostility to the condition of co-operation is explained. Next, I will employ these mechanisms as classifying categories for our discussion. To account for this transition, Wendt identifies four causal mechanisms: interdependence, common fate, homogeneity, and self-restraint. Our discussion of the mechanisms starts with their Wendtian definition and proceeds to their application within the landscape of IR theories.

INTERDEPENDENCE

Interdependence refers to the situation "when the outcome of an interaction for each depends on the choices of the other" (Wendt 1999: 344). Mutual inter-

actions bind the states to one another and lead to the sharing of profits and losses. The idea behind this theory is that overlaps in one state's profit/loss with the profits/losses of other states should be conducive to mutual co-operation.

Interdependence is traditionally a *liberalist* argument, which has within the liberal tradition been associated with *commercial and sociological liberalism* (Baldwin 1993: 4). The commercial liberals emphasize the link between international trade and international peace – as all states are expected to profit from free trade, and participation in international trade increases their interconnectedness. Norman Angell, a well-known proponent of the liberal theory argued at the beginning of the 20th century, that war cannot bring any advantages to anyone, for the disruption of economic ties through war hurts everyone (Angell 1912). From this perspective, increases in the intensity of economic transactions (mainly trade and investment) increases the dependence of states on one another, which consequently leads to the deepening of their co-operation. This perspective has been developed further by functionalist, transactionalist and neo-functionalist accounts of regional co-operation and European integration. David Mitrany's functionalist approach proposes that technical and economic co-operation between states brings immediate tangible benefits to the public (Mitrany 1944). In Mitrany's view, this kind of co-operation should be steered by technocrats who, unlike quarrelsome politicians and diplomats, are more objective in finding optimal solutions. Mitrany expects states to become integrated by stealth, i.e. without any cumbersome political or legal steps and expects that the ensuing strong interdependence will enforce political co-operation.

The transactionalist and neo-functionalist accounts of interdependence also use the arguments of commercial liberalism, but their main contributions are in the tradition of sociological liberalism of linking international co-operation and integration with transnational interactions in general. Karl Deutsch's transactionalism, for instance, focuses on cross-border transactions of various kinds, ranging from flows of goods to flows of tourists or phone calls (Deutsch et al. 1957). Co-operation, indeed integration, is then identified with a high intensity of transactions. Ernst Haas's neofunctionalism, for a long time a dominant theory of European integration, draws on functionalist and transactionalist views of interdependence, but it emphasizes interdependence on the level of perceptions of political elites (Haas 1958). The neo-functionalist concept of "spill-over" refers to the mechanism through which co-operation in one area leads to co-operation in another area, and whereby technical co-operation is conducive to political co-operation (Giering 1997: 88).

50 Interdependence has lately become a central concept of neo-liberal theories. Helen Milner considers it “a central feature of the international system”, in the sense of being as fundamental as anarchy (Milner 1993: 164). Unlike classical liberals who saw interdependence as an avenue to an international harmony of interests, neo-liberals stress that interdependence results in “a mix of conflicts and co-operation” (ibid.). Interdependence provides an opportunity for co-operation rather than necessitates it. This opportunity can be turned into reality by international regimes through co-operative arrangements within a group of states in a given area – these are most often defined as “sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area of international relations” (Krasner 1983: 2). As Keohane argues “there is likely to be increasing demand for international regimes as interdependence grows and policy spaces become more dense” (Keohane 1984: 80). Keohane also makes a distinction between (post) hegemonic regimes, which owe their origins (and existence) to the interests of a strong hegemonic power, and regimes created “*ex nihilo*”, i.e. supported by the collective action of roughly comparable states. Both of these presuppose the condition of interdependence.

COMMON FATE

Wendt defines common fate as a situation where “[actors’] individual survival, fitness, or welfare depends on what happens to the group as a whole” (Wendt 1999: 349). Unlike interdependence stemming from the interaction of two parties, “common fate is constituted by a third party that defines the first two as a group” (ibid.). Common fate is usually associated with a common threat and thus it is a favoured theoretical concept of *realist* approach to IR.

The realists, with their focus on the security dimensions of IR, understand international co-operation primarily in terms of military alliances. The idea of common fate lies at the heart of the balance of power theory, whereby “states form alliances in order to prevent stronger powers from dominating them” (Walt 1987/1990: 18). Thus, a common threat calls into being an alliance of the threatened states. On the other hand, a dissenting realist school takes an opposite view of alliance forming, claiming that states do not ally against a threat but that they rather try to accommodate the threatening power by joining it in an alliance. While the former behaviour is called bal-

ancing, the latter is referred to as bandwagoning (ibid.: 17–19). Both realist theories agree that interstate co-operation is motivated by the fear of extinction. However, balance of power theory, which has dominated realist thinking, argues that if states ally with the stronger side, i.e. the threatening power, their own future survival is at its mercy. Therefore, the threatened states prefer to ally with the weaker side of equally threatened states. Geographically, this sort of balancing results in alliance networks resembling checkerboards, in which immediate neighbours, usually posing immediate threats, tend to be enemies while neighbours’ neighbours tend to be allies (ibid.: 23). Supporters of bandwagoning claim that the more dominant a particular great power is, the more states it attracts. Thus, power concentration breeds even more power concentration. Geographically, bandwagoning results in spheres of influence encircling a great power.

Which behaviour prevails? Stephen Walt claims that balancing is more widespread, but he also identifies conditions in which bandwagoning is more likely to occur. States tend to prefer bandwagoning to balancing if they are too weak in comparison with the threat, if the allied support is uncertain, if the threatening power does not seem to be too aggressive (i.e. wishing the ultimate destruction of the threatened state), and if, during wartime, the threatening power is close to victory (ibid.: 33). These conditions provide us with expectations concerning the behaviour of small countries bullied by big neighbours, as such countries are more likely to appease the neighbouring bully than to stitch a “common fate” coalition against the threat. This would be the case especially if they cannot rely on an allied great power and the threat consists of just bullying, and not imminent threat of destruction.

HOMOGENEITY

Homogeneity can be understood as likeness between actors (Wendt: 353). Alikeness can differ with respect to the level of generalization we choose. Wendt distinguishes two levels: the likeness of all states as opposed to non-state actors, such as tribes or transnational corporations, and likeness within groups of states, based on their domestic organisation of political authority (such as liberal democracies or communist states). Wendt presents two arguments about how homogeneity can contribute to conflict reduction. First, many conflicts “stem from the transposition of domestic institutions

or values into foreign policies that conflict with the foreign policies of other states, because they have different institutions or values" (ibid.: 354). Therefore, if domestic institutions and values of the group of states are alike, the potential for conflict is reduced. Secondly, similar actors may develop an in-group feeling based on their shared common features and shared perception of "others" made up of other remaining actors.

The idea that homogeneity is expected to reduce conflicts and induce co-operation can be found in various intellectual traditions. It is again the liberal tradition that currently provides the most widespread interpretation of this idea. Baldwin speaks of *republican liberalism* linking domestic democracy with international peace (Baldwin 1993: 4). This link is elaborated further by the "democratic peace thesis" whose origin goes back to the writings of Immanuel Kant. According to the theory's current version, proposed by Michael Doyle, "even though liberal states have become involved in numerous wars with non-liberal states, constitutionally secure liberal states have yet to engage in war with one another" (Doyle 1983/1994: 106). The idea that liberal states form a community of friendly countries, which solve their differences by peaceful means, has only gained major influence since the end of the Cold War. It also underlies Francis Fukuyama's thesis about "the end of history" (Fukuyama 1989).

But liberalism is not the only tradition in which homogeneity has been subjected to theoretical analysis. Another example, also based on a similarity of institutions and values, is provided by Marxist-Leninist IR thinking. Marxist-Leninist theorists transferred their class-based analysis of society into IR by distinguishing between socialist and capitalist/imperialist states. Unlike the latter, the former are said to wish for a complete elimination of power politics from IR – socialist states use force only when defending themselves or defending world peace. The relations between socialist states are based not on a "correlation of forces", i.e. power distribution, but on "brotherly co-operation and complete equality" based on "Leninist principles of foreign policy" (Soják 1981: 52). Unlike the democratic peace thesis, the Marxist-Leninist claims have been refuted by the very conduct of communist countries (e.g. USSR against Hungary, China or Czechoslovakia).

Homogeneity, though, does not have to refer only to the political organization and institutions of the states – it can be based on purely societal factors such as culture, language, religion or ethnicity. A wide variety of concepts, rather than elaborate theories, referring to these factors is available. All of

these concepts are based on a premise that a particular societal feature present in several states forms the basis for close co-operation among those states. As an example, the religious perspective was very important during the Middle Ages in Europe when, for example, rules constraining warfare among the Christian princes were established, thus calling for, and indeed developing, friendlier relations among the Roman Catholic entities. Language and ethnicity, on the other hand, provided arguments for pan-Slavic theories calling for special relations among the Slavic nations, and later, Slavic states. The same factors appear in the special relations among the Anglo-Saxon countries as well. This hypothesis about the benefits of cultural homogeneity for co-operation also underlies Samuel Huntington's thesis about the "clash of civilizations" (Huntington 1993), according to which the issues of conflict and co-operation are expected to be determined along cultural fault lines.

SELF-RESTRAINT AND SELF-BINDING

Self-restraint has a special place in Wendt's theory. Unlike the three preceding mechanisms, it is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition of transition from a state of conflict to enduring co-operation. Wendt describes the way it functions as follows: "By holding ourselves back, in short, we make it possible for others to step forward and identify with us, enabling us in turn to identify with them" (Wendt: 359). Self-restraint implies one's respect for the differences of others, one's readiness to give others' needs standing alongside one's own" (ibid.: 357), but also one's belief in others' readiness to practice constraint. Self-restraint is conditioned by mutual trust. If states do not trust one another, they will expect that their self-restraint will only provide others with an opportunity to exploit them.

Wendt outlines three ways whereby self-restraint can be practiced. The first one refers to sociological liberalism, arguing that mutual trust can develop during intensive interstate interactions based on reciprocity. The second way refers to the democratic peace thesis, arguing that democratic states are predisposed to develop mutual trust. It is the third way, the so-called self-binding that reveals a new mechanism. Self-binding refers to unilaterally imposing visible sacrifices on oneself to the benefit of others without expecting any reciprocity from others (ibid.: 362). By self-binding the state recognises its contribution to the condition of distrust and makes a bold gesture

54 to others to overcome this distrust. Wendt concedes that such a strategy requires an unusually high degree of reflexivity on behalf of the self-binding state, but he argues that it is still possible – referring to German foreign policy after WWII or Soviet foreign policy in the late 1980s.

The concept of self-binding fits into the “idealist” tradition in IR thinking and is based on the idea that human reason is able to overcome unfavourable objective conditions to launch a co-operative project by a subjective and voluntary leap of faith. People are expected to conclude that the extant state of affairs is deeply dissatisfying and that they can improve it by committing themselves to its overhaul. Such a commitment may be aimed at creating international institutions, such as the League of Nations or later the UN, or at a new community of states such as a confederation, federation or single state.

WHY IS CO-OPERATION DIFFICULT?

So far, the mechanisms leading to co-operation have been discussed. Now we can ask the opposite question: what mechanisms prevent co-operation in IR, or even encourage international conflicts? The most obvious answer, based on the previous discussion, would be that the empirical absence of the above mechanisms could account for the absence of co-operation and could give rise to conflicts. But by itself, this postulation does not explain how a mere absence of mechanisms of co-operation could lead to conflicts. Obviously, there are some mechanisms that lead to conflicts, the workings of which are quite independent of the workings of the discussed mechanisms of co-operation. Instead of trying to address all of these, I will focus on two basic concepts seemingly hidden in most of these “mechanisms of conflict” – namely, the international system, and human minds.

THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM – ANARCHY

Realist scholars have traditionally promoted the concept of anarchy. Anarchy refers to the situation marked by the absence of a common government in the international arena. The international system is said to be anarchis-

tic, because, unlike domestic systems, it has no central authority which states and other actors would have to obey and to which they could turn if their rights are infringed upon by others.

Realist scholars consider anarchy to be one of the most important features of international politics (Bull 1977) and neorealists see it as the fundamental feature of the international system (Waltz 1979). This concept has important implications for international co-operation.

The concept of anarchy refers to the Hobbesian state of nature where an absence of government (Leviathan) is responsible for an eternal war of all against all. The idea is that if there is no central enforcer of rules and laws in the system, there are no rules and laws to speak of. In such a condition, no sustainable co-operation is possible and actors within the system depend solely upon themselves. Thus, anarchy leads to egoistical behaviour within the system in which others are potential enemies.

The very nature of the system of anarchy is inimical, since war can break out anytime. Thus, leading us to a conclusion that international relations are inherently conflictual, cases of co-operation are rare and hardly sustainable, and co-operative measures put the state at the mercy of others. This view of anarchy has traditionally been connected with a negative view of human nature, claiming that people and states are power-hungry, i.e. inherently bad, and if they are left to themselves they are doomed to eternal conflict. Even though neorealists argue that the negative consequences of anarchy are independent of the particular conception of human nature (Waltz 1979), it was shown convincingly that this is not the case (Wendt 1999). Therefore, the neorealist view of anarchy and the fallen nature of human beings can be considered as two sides of the same argument.

Anarchy as a prevalent feature in international relations also challenges the concept of interdependence. Accordingly, it is argued that the higher the intensity of contacts, the higher the likelihood of conflicts. Moreover, benefits arising from interdependence are unlikely to spread equally across states. Thus, some states profit less than others and their relative gains are negative, which brings them into a strategic disadvantage in relation to states with positive relative gains. The final effect of anarchy on interdependence is that it inhibits reciprocity.

The presumption of anarchy has been a dominant factor in modern IR thinking. Actually, the very concept of IR thinking, as distinct from political sci-

ence or sociology, makes sense only under the assumption that the anarchical nature of the international setting is a phenomenon distinct from domestic order. This presumption is present in theories of realism, geopolitics, federalism, neorealism or neoliberalism, as well as other approaches and theories. Therefore, anarchy is referred to in a host of explanations of interstate co-operation as an unfavourable background against which to explain co-operation, usually pointing out that international relations are actually much friendlier than assumptions of anarchy would have us believe. These explanations can be found in theories of neoliberalism, in European studies, or federalism (suggesting how to get rid of anarchy). In this sense, all the aforementioned mechanisms of co-operation can be understood as mechanisms for mitigating the negative effects of anarchy upon co-operation.

HUMAN MINDS – SUBJECTIVITY/IRRATIONALITY AND DIFFERENTIATION

On the other hand, a number of theories in the liberal and idealist tradition reject the assumption of anarchy as a defining feature of IR, arguing instead that interstate relations are inherently friendly and co-operative. To explain the discrepancy between the assumed harmony and the reality of conflicts, they place the blame on the subjectivity or irrationality of human conduct. Unlike anarchy, which refers to external conditions, subjectivity/irrationality refers to the minds of people. In the previous section, I have shown that subjectivity can work as an important mechanism of co-operation in the form of self-binding. Nevertheless, subjectivity/irrationality is also regarded as cause of conflict disturbing an objectively harmonious world.

One classic example is provided by the *liberalist* argument offered by Norman Angell. Angell claims that due to the objective conditions of interdependence, it is not rational for any great power to launch a war. Although war would be futile and absurd, countries could be foolish enough to get into one (Angell 1912). The most recent restatement of these arguments can be found in Wendt's constructivism, where he uses the argument that it is not enough for the identified mechanisms of co-operation, such as interdependence, common fate, and homogeneity to merely exist objectively and that they also have to be translated into the minds of people to have the desired effect (Wendt 1999). This claim implies that subjective factors can disrupt the beneficial

effects of objective conditions. This line of reasoning is also closely related to the natural law tradition, which holds that people as beings capable of reasoning are subject to a single set of objective laws generally recognisable by human reason. These “natural laws”, anchored in human nature, guarantee the fair and peaceful coexistence of mankind. Wars are then explained by the irrational desires of not yet mature minds. The role of subjectivity/irrationality is also emphasised by Huntington, who expects future conflicts to be caused by cultural factors (marked by subjectivity) – as opposed to objective ones.

Up until now, I have discussed subjectivity as an obstacle to co-operation in an objectively co-operative world. Now, I will focus solely on human minds, leaving out objective reality entirely. Proponents of reflectivism claim that the very definition of a state's identity is inherently conflictual (Campbell 1992), as positive delimitation of state's identity – one that stipulates what the identity stands for – at the same time implies a negative formulation of this identity, in terms of what the identity stands against. The state thus defines its “other” as a threat, which then legitimises the state's role as a protector against this threat. The identity construction is understood as a discursive practice, taking place in the mind, without any necessary relation to the “objective” world. This necessity for differentiation leads to a subjective construction of differences between states that is not grounded in any objective facts.

Strategies of differentiation particularly target homogeneity, which – in comparison with the other mechanisms – is in the eyes of the beholders. The very goal of differentiation is to cast doubt over homogeneity among states and to demonstrate the existence of differences between them so that their distinct identities could be confirmed. On the other hand, strategies of differentiation can reinforce – or even construct – common fate conditions by grouping states against the common “other”.

HOW ARE AVENUES AND OBSTACLES TO CO-OPERATION EMBEDDED?

Up to this point, avenues and obstacles to co-operation have been discussed without addressing the meta-theoretical assumptions underlying their con-

58 | struction. Why is it necessary to consider these at all? Whether we are aware of it or not, the meta-theoretical assumptions contained in ontology, epistemology and methodology, are influenced by a specific worldview. Consequently, if concepts grounded in differing meta-theories are used within one explanation, and if the respective meta-theoretical assumptions exclude one another (being from “different worlds”), then we run the risk of ending up with a self-contradictory account that can never be true. Therefore, when employing several concepts, it is worth examining their theoretical embeddedness to find out how applicable they are within a “single world”.

As I cannot do full justice to these concerns, I will focus on one issue, which seems to be most relevant to the above discussion: the role of human reflexivity and ideas. To provide as clear and simple a map of different meta-theories as possible, I will refer to Robert Keohane’s labels of rationalism and reflectivism (Keohane 1988). While *rationalist* approaches conceptualise social reality as independent of human minds and basically anchored in material reality, *reflectivist* approaches stress that social reality is constituted by the very ideas people have about it. Reflectivists also acknowledge a role for material forces in the construction of social reality, but they are claimed to make sense only within the social context defined by ideas, i.e. material forces *per se* either do not exist or they do exist, but we cannot say anything about them. Rationalists (the converged neo-realists and neo-liberalists), on the other hand, acknowledge a role for ideas, which clearly subordinates them to material reality. Ideas may serve for rationalisation of objective reality, which is reinforced by them (neorealism); they may serve as signposts for helping us orient ourselves in the objective reality (neoliberalism); or they may even bring about some short-term deviations from objective reality (again, neorealism).

All of the mentioned concepts, i.e. interdependence, common fate, homogeneity, self-restraint, anarchy, and differentiation, can be accommodated in both rationalist and reflectivist frameworks, but obviously each one of them is more at home in one, than the other. Behaviour marked by self-restraint, for example, can be explained in terms of necessary responses to the exigencies of material forces (internal decline, external threats) leaving out any reflexivity, but this can be accomplished only at costs of shifts in the original meaning of self-restraint. Similarly, when discussing a concept like interdependence, we can focus on its discursive construction leaving out economic ties among the states, but in the process we risk losing an essential feature of the concept.

Thus, there are three meta-theoretical options on offer. Two of them – relying on ideas of either rationalism or reflectivism – have already been hinted at. But each of them leads to gross distortions of the concepts, which are necessary for integration of these meta-theoretical assumptions within a single rationalist or reflectivist framework. The third option, favoured by some constructivists, prefers to seek “the middle ground” or “*via media*” in an attempt to reconcile the opposing meta-theories (Adler 1997; Wendt 1999). This option is our choice. No doubt, this approach also has its costs – connected with a loss of epistemological and ontological clarity. Nevertheless, it enables us to subject these concepts to scrutiny in both rationalist and reflectivist frameworks, depending on where they best fit.

REFLECTIVISM MEETS RATIONALISM

The most remarkable attempt to bridge the two meta-theories has been provided by Alexander Wendt, who suggested *scientific realism* as the bridging meta-theory (Wendt 1999). Still, the attempt seems to be too close to the rationalist framework to be able to reconcile the two meta-theories. Drawing on the richness of Wendtian insights, I will suggest an alternative means of reconciliation based on assigning the two meta-theories to different temporal layers (Drulák 2001). My argument is that rationalist approaches are best at addressing social reality in the short term, while reflectivist approaches are indispensable when dealing with the long term, or *la longue durée*.

Rationalists take ideas, which contribute to the constitution of social reality as a point of departure. This enables them to reify these ideas in the short term and to focus on the “play” of objective, material forces, which are amenable to rationalist accounts, such as neo-utilitarianism or rational choice. But in *la longue durée*, reification does not work anymore, and ideas generated by human reflexivity – which turn into social facts – have to be considered. To accomplish this goal, reflectivist meta-theories such as hermeneutics have to be employed.

This division of labour is based on two assumptions. First, ideas as social facts (e.g. in the form of identities) tend to be rather stable – reified in the short term and changing only in *la longue durée* – while material-based social facts, e.g. distribution of resources, are less stable. Even though human reflexivity keeps producing new ideas, this flow of constant change takes place on

an individual level only, and there are significant hurdles (see e.g. the concept of the tipping point in Finnemore, Sikkink 1998) preventing these ideas from turning into social facts. Secondly, even material-based social facts are *social facts* after all, and thus dependent on circulating ideas. Given the fact that changes in ideas as social facts are the fundamental changes to be dealt with in a reflectivist framework, short-term material changes embedded in an unchanging ideational setting can then be addressed in a rationalist framework.

The preceding conceptualisation of ideas and material forces goes very much against the usual rationalist views of the relations between the two. These approaches are based on Hegel's dictum: *what is rational is real, and what is real is rational* (Hegel 1820/1992: 30), but, at the same time, they reduce reality to the positivism of the observable, i.e. material-based facts. In this vein, ideas – in the shape of deviations from rational, material reality – may gain only a short-term social significance but at the end of the day *the reality* prevails. In *la longue durée* the rationalist reality takes the shape of either an equilibrium (neorealist balance of power in an anarchic world) or inevitable progress (liberal and neoliberal theses of democratic peace or strengthening of peace-making institutions). In other words, the longer the perspective is, the less influence ideas have and the less open our future is. I take an opposite view, whereby the longer our perspective is, the more ideas matter and the more open (for better or worse), is our future.

QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED ABOUT REGIONAL CO-OPERATION

Despite some inevitable flaws in our meta-theoretical framework (Drulák 2001: 371, 377), it can accommodate all the mechanisms of co-operation/conflict we have discussed without disrupting them too much. On the basis of these mechanisms, a list of key questions will be drawn up to evaluate the prospects for regional co-operation within a particular group of countries. The list is based on the assumption that regional co-operation is likely to flourish if the mechanisms of co-operation bring the participants together (internal cohesion) and if the participants are closer to one another than to the non-participants (external cohesion).

Therefore, each question has two parts. First, to evaluate the extent to which the particular concept characterises the state of affairs inside the investigated

regional group, such as the Visegrad Four. This extent can be measured and then compared with other regional groupings (such as the Benelux or Nordic countries). Second, it aims to answer the question to what extent the concept is relevant to the relations between the members of the investigated group (Visegrad countries) in contrast to the countries, which are not participating (e.g. Germany, Austria, Russia).

1. What is the degree of interdependence between the Visegrad countries (measured by flows of goods, services and investment, as well as by the presence of functionalist projects such as shared technical infrastructure) compared with other regional groups? Is the interdependence between Visegrad countries higher than the interdependence between Visegrad and non-Visegrad countries? To what extent are the two kinds of interdependence asymmetrical? *Growing interdependence in the group reinforces the incentives for further co-operation while interdependence with outside countries detracts from it (e.g. failure of the Petite Entente of Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia in the 1920s and 1930s, where mutual economic ties were weak and all three countries were overly dependent on Germany; similarly, economic ties inside the Visegrad group are weaker than is the case of e.g. the Benelux group and all the Visegrad countries have quite strong economic ties with the EU and Germany). The more asymmetrical the interdependence is, the more difficult it is to agree on a co-operative framework which would be accepted by all, and the easier it is to enforce the interests of the less dependent party (e.g. the Association Agreements of the Visegrad countries with the EC in the early 1990s).*
2. Do the Visegrad countries share a common threat that would unify them (hypothesis of balancing)? Do some Visegrad countries share such a threat with some non-Visegrad countries? Do the Visegrad countries include a clear regional hegemon toward which they would gravitate (hypothesis of bandwagoning)? Is there such a clear regional hegemon outside the group? *A common threat is a major incentive for regional co-operation (e.g. Hungary provoking the Petite Entente in the 1920s or the Soviet Union "contributing" to Visegrad co-operation in 1990-1991). On the other hand, having common foes with outside countries dilutes the co-operation. The presence of a hegemon in the group may encourage co-operation unless the hegemon is perceived as aggressive (e.g. Poland may have ambitions of acting as a non-aggressive hegemon in the Visegrad group). The presence of an external, non-aggressive hegemon dilutes the co-operation (e.g. the EU or Germany and the Visegrad group, or Austria*

proposing its concept of "Strategic Partnership", later renamed to "Regional Partnership").

3. Are the Visegrad countries similar (in terms of political system, history, culture, social system, and basically in terms of anything people find meaningful to refer to as alike, when deepening mutual contacts) compared to other regional groups? Do they consider themselves like one another? Is there more similarity and perceived similarity between some Visegrad countries and some non-Visegrad countries? *Mutual likeness inside the group increases the prospects for co-operation. On the other hand, likeness with outside countries dilutes such prospects (e.g. political systems and topical issues inside the Visegrad group are fairly similar, but there seems to be a particular cultural homogeneity between Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia (probably including Slovenia too) based on linguistic proximity and a similar reading of recent history, on the one hand, and Hungary and Austria based on a positive image of the Austro-Hungarian legacy, on the other).*
4. Does the behaviour of Visegrad countries to one another feature elements of self-binding? Are these elements present in relations with non-Visegrad countries? *Self-binding, as a selfless gesture towards others, such as giving up economic benefits for the sake of deeper co-operation, is a key step in developing co-operation. Given the absence of self-binding inside the group, self-binding towards outside countries or experiences of self-binding from outside countries dilutes the co-operation.*
5. To what extent are relations between Visegrad countries anarchic and to what extent institutionalised? To what extent does anarchy feature in the relations between Visegrad and non-Visegrad countries? *Anarchy inside the group gives rise to distrust, making co-operation difficult. On the other hand, outside anarchy may force the regional group into a common fate situation, encouraging intra-group co-operation. The reverse logic applies to institutionalisation (e.g. relations within the Visegrad group are more anarchic, i.e. less institutionalised, than relations between Visegrad countries and the EU, which is not supportive of regional co-operation).*
6. How are the identities of the Visegrad countries constructed? Are they based on the same image of the self? Do they agree on the same negative "others"? Are some Visegrad countries represented as "the others" in identity constructions of other Visegrad countries? What is the role of non-Visegrad countries in the identity constructions of Visegrad countries? *The*

presence of the same positive images of the self in identity constructions is a key long-term precondition of successful co-operation. We can distinguish two recent attempts at institutionalising common identity. First, there was the strategy to construct Central Europe as a unique cultural whole whose other is Russia (e.g. Kundera 1984), i.e. the positive image of the self is inside. Second, there was the prevailing strategy to construct the identities of the Visegrad countries as simply Western European, i.e. the positive image of the self is outside. While the former provides grounds for regional co-operation, the latter is rather indifferent to it. Strategies to construct intra-group countries as negative "others" are damaging to co-operation.

A tentative test of the outlook for the Visegrad group based on the six conditions would not be too encouraging. The inside interdependence is quite low, outside interdependence high; the countries do not face any clear external foe, external hegemony is more plausible than internal; homogeneity is dubious; self-binding has yet to come; there is less anarchy outside than inside; positive images of the self come from outside.

These conditions should not be read as determinants of regional co-operation in a positivist manner unless focusing only on the short term. With all the conditions, but particularly with conditions four and six (presence of self-binding; the way identities are constructed) the decisive role of reflexivity has to be taken into account. Even though reflexive changes turn into social facts only in *la longue durée*, they then impact on more material factors as well. Our framework is also quite state-centric, focusing on the Visegrad countries as actors and neglecting the autonomous role of, for example, social forces, minorities, business elites, individuals and other non-state actors. These omissions may distort the picture.

I hope to have offered a framework, which is parsimonious and easy to operationalise in empirical research. It may be considered an advantage that the very testing of regional co-operation prospects can point to alternative geometries of regional co-operation. In the case of the Visegrad group, these alternative geometries can include e.g. a Visegrad with Austria and Slovenia, or a Visegrad without Hungary, thus making the regional co-operation more flexible depending on the size of the area.

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Chapter III

PROSPECTS OF VISEGRAD COOPERATION IN AN ENLARGED EUROPEAN UNION

In the course of its modern, post-1989 history, the cooperation between the Visegrad states has experienced several ups and downs. By proposing to scrutinize the EU-compatibility of the so-called Beneš decrees, Hungary's Prime Minister Orbán effectively suspended the cooperation in February 2002 for the sake of domestic electoral politics and allying with the Austrian and Bavarian governments (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 25 February 2002). This meant the provisional end to a period of renewed and increasingly intense relations that had become possible with the Zeman government in the Czech Republic and Dzurinda government in the Slovak Republic. Both governments had committed themselves to the Visegrad idea and abandoned the indifference and negligence characterising the Klaus and Mečiar eras. These changes convey the impression that the intensity of cooperation among the four states is susceptible to the changing preferences and priorities of political leaders. However, leaders may have had the political discretion to use the Visegrad framework for various other, often situational and short-term purposes, due to the fact that the international environment has been non-conducive, or even unfavourable, to the Visegrad cooperation.

This chapter takes the salience of the international environment as a point of departure and asks whether a substantial change in the environment, namely the membership of the Visegrad states in the European Union, will modify the conditions for their cooperation and induce governments to develop a closer and more stable policy coordination.¹ Since EU institutions and political actors have, beyond general appreciation, said and done little to develop a specific EU policy towards the Visegrad group, I seek to explain

¹ Thanks go to Martin Banse, Claus Giering, Marek Stastny and Christian Weise for their helpful comments and suggestions.

68 the general rationales underlying the EU relations with regional groups of states. These may have implications for the Visegrad group after accession. In the second section, I ask whether participatory rules, distributional conflicts and increased heterogeneity of an enlarged EU provide incentives for a regional cooperation of the Visegrad states.

THE EUROPEAN UNION AND REGIONAL COOPERATION

To explore the EU's approach to cooperation among the Visegrad states after accession, this section analyses how the EU has related to regional cooperation of states, both outside and within the EU.

State groups outside the EU

The EU policy with respect to regional groups of third states has been guided by two policy rationales and key interests. First, the EU has encouraged third countries to develop good relations with their direct neighbours, since it considers good neighbourly relations a key building block to regional stability and security. This policy approach has been based on the rationale that a web of economic, political, cultural and societal relations between nations induces domestic political actors to re-evaluate their interests and avoid confrontational strategies if a conflict with a neighbouring state arises.

While not focusing on regional groups, the policy approach has seen regional cooperation to be conducive to good neighbourly relations. Such relations have increasingly become a part of the conditionality the EU attaches to deepening its cooperation with third countries. With respect to the Western Balkan countries for example, the EU set good relations between neighbours as a precondition to conclude stabilisation and association agreements. Second, the EU has re-oriented its foreign economic policy insofar as it has increasingly replaced and complemented its bilateral agreements with third countries by inter-regional agreements. For instance, with respect to the Mediterranean countries, the EU has combined the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements with the expectation that its Mediterranean partners would conclude free trade agreements among each other, aiming at creating a free trade area

by 2010. In its relations with Latin America, the EU has begun negotiations with the MERCOSUR countries (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay) on expanding existing cooperation agreements to EU-MERCOSUR free trade agreement. Laos, Kampuchea and Vietnam, were included by the EU in its cooperation agreement with the ASEAN states, instead of negotiating bilateral agreements with these countries. Finally, the Cotonou agreement, concluded with 77 developing countries of Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) regions, envisages the establishment of free trade agreements between the EU and sub regions of ACP to encourage, inter-alia, regional economic integration among ACP countries.

The EU accommodates these regional groups because it expects them to follow policies aimed at stabilising trade liberalisation and adopt organisational principles similar to those of the EU. Both, the support of good neighbourly relations and foreign economic policy, are aimed at fostering regional cooperation and linking the EU to existing regional groups, while respecting the cohesion, institutional identity and integrity of these groups. In contrast, the EU policy towards regional groups of countries in the accession process has been ambivalent.

State groups entering the EU

On the one hand, the EU prefers to conduct accession negotiations with groups of states that already have close economic and political relations with each other (Preston 1997). The assumption underlying this policy has been that, first of all, a state needs to be able to co-operate with its neighbours to fully participate in the EU and second, that a state learns, through regional cooperation, how to assume a bargaining role within the EU. This has led the EU to assess participation in the Visegrad and other regional cooperation frameworks in terms of achievement and progress on the way to EU membership.²

However, the EU has not translated this assessment into a policy of treating the Visegrad countries as a group when it developed its contractual relations with Central and Eastern Europe. The early trade agreements, the Europe Agreements and the accession negotiations have been characterised by a bilateralist approach of the EU which, in effect, functioned as a disincentive to regional cooperation and generated an 'accession competition'

² Cf. the Commission's regular reports, 'Common Foreign and Security Policy' Chapter.

(Beyer 1999, Bunce 1997: 275–276). On the other hand, the EU has subordinated cooperation agreements between third countries to the coherence of the Single Market in the accession process. The EU expects the accession countries to re-negotiate, or renounce any international agreement that is incompatible with the rules of the Single Market. This concerns, for example, the customs union between the Czech Republic and Slovakia that has to be abandoned if one state joins the EU prior to another state. The same rigid logic of superior Single Market rules applies to the free trade agreements Slovenia has concluded with Croatia and FYROM, although the trade consequences of applying EC tariffs are in clear contradiction with the integration objectives pursued by the EU in the Western Balkan region. In following this logic, the EU has expected the accession countries to apply the Schengen border and visa regime in their relations with neighbouring states. To comply with the access rules for the Schengen area, accession countries are forced to terminate visa-free agreements with Eastern and South-Eastern European countries, which embodied – not only a commitment to individual mobility as a key objective of the political transitions – but also a policy of regional cooperation on internal security issues.

Ambivalence has also characterised the EU's enlargement strategy. In July 1997, the Commission recommended to start negotiations with a group of six candidate countries whose composition was not congruent with the existing regional groups of the Visegrad and Baltic states. Faced with 13 applications for EU membership, the Commission gave priority to the internal coherence and governance of the EU, opting against parallel negotiations with, and a simultaneous accession of, all 13 applicants. This paradigmatic decision obviously reflected the approach of the Copenhagen criteria, i.e. to link accession to the political, economic and administrative readiness of the applicants and the institutional readiness of the EU, but it was not a necessary implication of the Copenhagen approach. Once the decision was taken, the Commission developed the Copenhagen criteria into a set of operational indicators and norms allowing to measure progress and to legitimise a sequenced accession with 'objective' differences in performance.

Pre-existing groups and the affinities or foreign policy interests of candidate countries expressed in these groups were not entered into consideration in the Commission's assessment. This group approach was modified in a way that illustrates the mediating role of the European Parliament (EP) and the European Council, and reinforces the political dimension of EU enlargement. The Commission's opinion was criticised by the EP that recommended com-

plementing the group negotiations with a 'reinforced accession and enlargement process' including all Central and East European countries and Cyprus. In December 1997, the European Council in Luxemburg essentially confirmed the Commission's opinion by deciding to invite five candidates to start the accession negotiations. However, the group approach was modified insofar as the EU involved the remaining five Central and East European candidates into the analytical screening of the *acquis*. This decision was motivated by the concern that the differentiation of a group based on merit might engender a group with an exclusive character and thus discriminate against the other candidates. To avoid forming a group with a potentially more powerful voice in the accession negotiations, the EU decided to negotiate with each accession country separately and simultaneously.

In December 1999, the European Council of Helsinki decided to start negotiations with six of the remaining seven candidates while acknowledging that some candidates would not be in a position to meet all the Copenhagen criteria in the medium term. This meant that the Helsinki Council reduced the requirements agreed upon in Luxemburg in order to include Bulgaria and Romania. This policy change was not necessitated by the incongruence between existing regional groups and groups formed by the EU accession approach. Rather, the Council wanted to demonstrate the European perspective toward South Eastern European countries in light of the Kosovo conflict and the ensuing destabilisation of the Balkans. The wider political perspective consequently led the European Council of Feira in June 2000 to classify the countries of the Western Balkan region as potential candidates for EU membership.

The creation, widening and redefinition of groups in the enlargement process suggest that the EU has difficulties in legitimising a process of differentiation due to its organisational identity as an institution comprising potentially all European countries. A differentiation may only be legitimised by universalistic arguments, which would apply to every applicant and can credibly state that every applicant can join a group by its own efforts. Alternatively, differentiation may be justified by political arguments that are highly evident for all EU member states as well as the outside World.

State groups inside the EU

Regional cooperation initiatives among EU member states belong to the scope of national sovereignty and there is no treaty basis for the EU to intervene

72 in matters of regional cooperation if the specific area of a cooperation does not fall under the exclusive competence of the EU, and as long as the member states facilitate the achievement of the tasks of the EU and abstain from any measure jeopardising the attainment of EU objectives (Art. 5 and 10 of EC Treaty).

The EU has flexibly accommodated regional cooperation initiatives of its member states and has, through the Amsterdam and Nice Treaties, developed a mechanism facilitating closer cooperation (see below). There are numerous examples of cooperation among subgroups of EU member states which may even involve third countries: the Economic and Monetary Union consisting of 12 EU member states, the Western European Union with 11 EU member states, the Schengen agreement initially concluded among five of the founding members. Whereas these three cases of cooperation have been institutionalised in, or linked with the treaty framework, other instances of cooperation have remained on a sub-treaty or informal level. Examples of these include the Weimar triangle between France, Germany and Poland, the Benelux cooperation, and the Northern Dimension of states bordering the Baltic Sea.

The Benelux cooperation seems to be most relevant from the perspective of the Visegrad states, since it involves smaller countries with open economies situated on the periphery of Germany. This cooperation consists of regular meetings on the foreign and prime ministerial level between Belgium, Luxemburg and the Netherlands. This cooperation has led to common positions on important EU agenda items, such as the Benelux memoranda on institutional reforms achieved during the latest Intergovernmental Conference (12/00) and on Justice and Home Affairs, struck prior to the European Council of Tampere (10/99). In defense policy, the Benelux states have created conditions for an informal concertedness of their permanent representatives at the NATO headquarters, and Belgium and the Netherlands have integrated their naval force commands. However, the scope and intensity of the Benelux cooperation should not be overestimated. In the past decades, the Benelux cooperation has been more relevant for Luxemburg, whereas Belgium and the Netherlands have attached less importance to it (von Dosenrode 1993: 407).

Rather than building coalitions with smaller EU member states, the Netherlands have recently pursued a strategy of improving their relations with Germany and France. This trend seems to be part of a more general pattern

that is also confirmed by a study on the EU policies of small member states that has found a lack of cooperation between them: "The more active members, like Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain or Sweden try to form ad-hoc coalitions with the larger states, while the smaller states, like Ireland or Greece, wait and see what the outcome is before settling for a compromise in exchange for some rewards. (...) Quite surprisingly, there are no stable coalitions among the smaller member-states. A potential coalition between like-minded states such as the Nordic members and the Benelux is almost non-existent" (Hanf and Soetendorp 1998: 192)

Yet another indication of the lack of support of cohesive and sustained groups of states inside the EU-15 is that the former member states of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) – Austria, Finland and Sweden, did not continue their cooperation after their entry into the EU. Although EFTA was created as an alternative to the European Economic Community and has served as a framework for cooperation among its member states since 1960, it has not been successful in generating closer ties among ex-EFTA members after their accession to the EU. Furthermore, the fact that Austria, Finland and Sweden are not member states of NATO, did not translate into any concerted effort on part of these former members to advocate a particular 'neutral' position within the Common Foreign and Security Policy, as was feared prior to the EU enlargement (Sjursen 1999). One explanation of this phenomenon seems to be that smaller member states can choose between allying with larger member states and entering into coalitions with smaller member states. The fact that they do not consistently opt for one strategy indicates that they evaluate both strategic options as advantageous. Another explanation is that the diversity and fragmentation of the EU agenda supports ad-hoc coalitions and prevents stable coalition patterns from emerging. Both explanations are elaborated in greater detail in the following section.

THE ENLARGED EUROPEAN UNION – A CONDUIT FOR VISEGRAD COOPERATION?

This section asks whether the enlarged EU is likely to provide incentives for cooperation between the Visegrad states. I will focus on the new voting rules and powers agreed to by the European Council in Nice, the distributional outcomes of reforms in EU cohesion and agricultural policy, and the conse-

74 quences of increased heterogeneity in the EU with 27 member states. By focusing on the future EU, I do not want to neglect the importance of cooperation (dis-) incentives originating from the wider international system and the domestic developments in the Visegrad countries (cf. Brusis 2000). Rather, I will confine myself to one important aspect of the Enlarged EU – the future opportunity for cooperation within it the actors of Visegrad cooperation will face.

VOTING RULES AND POWERS IN THE COUNCIL

What does the distribution of voting rights and the new voting rules in the EU Council of Ministers mean for the Visegrad states? Although the Treaty of Nice may enter into force later and in a somewhat altered version in case of a negative referendum in Ireland, it is highly likely that the voting powers and rules for qualified majority voting negotiated at the European Council of Nice will not be changed, either by the Convention or the Intergovernmental Conference of 2004.

To retain the governability of an enlarged EU with 27 member states, the Nice Treaty and the preceding Amsterdam Treaty have expanded the scope of qualified majority voting in the Council which now applies to most areas of the Internal Market legislation, to those Justice and Home Affairs rules that are part of the Treaty on the European Community, and to parts of the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

In force from 1 January 2005, the new system will assign 58 votes to the Visegrad states: 7 to Slovakia, 12 to the Czech Republic and Hungary each, and 27 to Poland, thus reflecting their respective size of population. This number of votes does not suffice to attain the threshold required for a blocking minority in the EU with 27 member states (91 votes). If the Visegrad states wanted to prevent a decision of the Council, they would require the support of at least two other member states in the EU-27 or the support of one big member state (Italy, France, Germany or the UK with 29 votes each) in the EU where Bulgaria and Romania have not yet joined.³ While the lat-

³ If ten states join in 2004, and Bulgaria and Romania join after 2005, the qualified majority threshold will temporarily be 235 votes (less than 73.4% of the total votes, as agreed in Nice) and, accordingly, the blocking minority will be 87 votes.

ter constellation seems to provide an incentive for entering into coalitions in policy disputes among the big member states, the scope for group initiatives to formulate proposals and influence positive EU decisions is more restricted.

If the Visegrad states wanted to rally a qualified majority in an EU-27 for their policy option (255 votes), they would need the votes of the four big member states and at least six additional member states – or, alternatively, one big member state and all of the remaining 19 small and medium-sized EU member states. They would fail to attain a qualified majority even if they formed a coalition of net transfer recipients together with the other accession and the cohesion countries (Lippert and Bode 2001). Moreover, the Nice Treaty requires that Commission proposals for EU legislation be supported by at least half of the member states (two thirds of the member states in case of member state proposals) and that the majority of votes and states must reflect at least 62% of the EU population if a member state demands this.

Such high thresholds have been rightly criticised as impeding positive integration and joint action in the EU (cf. e.g. Giering 2001). For the Visegrad states, these voting rules imply that their joint power position in the Council as such does not provide an incentive for cooperation since a pooling of votes will not be sufficient to effectively determine or change EU policies. Note, however, that the distribution of voting powers does not favour a strategy of defecting from the Visegrad group and joining other coalitions of member states. The relative weight of either of the two basic strategic options – allying with a larger member state or building a coalition with other smaller member states – has not changed. For example, Poland would not attain the blocking minority of 91 votes, nor of 39% of the EU population if it voted together with Germany and France. One can imagine other coalitions of individual Visegrad states together with other new and old EU member states gathering sufficient votes to block or enforce a decision, but there is no compelling rationale why such a coalition should be formed and sustained against other Visegrad states.

The preceding examples lead to an institutionalist interpretation of the voting rules and powers agreed to in Nice that also reflects the empirical experience with the Council's work. The new framework can be seen as necessitating and thus facilitating cooperation, since blocking a decision and getting a decision adopted requires building broad coalitions and creating platform positions that accommodate as many interests as possible. The Council has rarely used qualified majority voting in its practice of decision-mak-

ing, and the option of being outvoted has rather induced member states to compromise on their positions and invent package deals (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 1996). Institutional culture, whereby it is necessary to reach a high level of consensus clearly restricts the EU's ability and capacity to act, but seems to be conducive to policy initiatives which already reflect a consensus among member states. Such initiatives could well be prepared by regional groups of member states, such as the Visegrad group, that share more common features among each other than with other EU member states.

DISTRIBUTIONAL PATTERNS IN COHESION AND AGRICULTURAL POLICY

Joint initiatives of the Visegrad states in an enlarged EU presuppose that there are policy areas where the interests of the four states converge. In financial terms, the cohesion policy, including the Structural and Cohesion Funds, and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) are clearly the most important EU policies and will remain so after a prospective accession of the Visegrad states in 2004. The Visegrad states will be participating as EU member states in the debate on the Agenda 2007, i.e. the new multi-annual financial framework determining the allocation of EU expenditures in the period from 2007 to 2012. Researchers from the German Institute of Economic Research and the Institute for Agricultural Economics, Göttingen University, have performed model calculations to estimate the prospective budget positions of the EU member states under different assumptions concerning the future distributional rules for the CAP and the Structural Funds (Weise et al. 2001). The following considerations draw on these modeling exercises.

While it has been quite obvious that the new member states will belong to the beneficiaries of the Structural and Cohesion Funds due to their comparatively low GDP per capita, the distributional outcomes of different reform proposals have been less clear. The calculations show that the size of transfers to the Visegrad states is mainly limited by the threshold introduced for member states' absorption capacity (4% of GDP) and is not affected by a moderate reduction of the share of EU population eligible for support from the Structural Funds. Thus due to their disproportionate wealth, the Czech, Hungarian and Slovak capital areas have already lost their eligibility to receive these funds. This implies that the Visegrad states would have a com-

mon interest in abolishing the absorption capacity threshold and in achieving the allocation of Structural Funds support on a national basis, which would allow them to develop their capital areas with EU resources. A more far-reaching reform – that would focus support on the poorer EU member states, instead of poorer EU regions – would prove more disadvantageous for the Czech Republic as the wealthiest country in the Visegrad group, but would leave the support for the other three states largely unchanged (see annex). A Czech government could, nevertheless, join the other three Visegrad states in supporting a policy of the allocation of Structural Funds to poorer EU member states if it could expect that its own future contribution to the EU budget would decrease.

The distributional outcomes of different CAP reform scenarios are more diverse and tend to favour the two Visegrad states with the largest agricultural sectors – Hungary and Poland (see annex). A transfer of the system of direct payments to farmers in the new member states, as demanded by the accession countries in the membership negotiations, would entail substantial transfers to all Visegrad states, but Hungary and Poland would receive three times and twice the amount of transfers per capita respectively, than the Czech Republic and Slovakia each. If direct payments were not transferred to the new member states, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic would turn into net contributors to the European Agricultural Guarantee and Guidance Fund (EAGGF), the main financial instrument of the CAP. If direct payments were co-financed by the member states, all Visegrad states would remain net beneficiaries of the EAGGF, but the difference in per-capita transfers between Hungary and Poland on the one hand, and the Czech and the Slovak Republic on the other, would increase further. A similar, even more divergent distributional pattern that would be less beneficial to all four states emerges if direct payments are fully decoupled from agricultural production, and gradually reduced.

If these estimates reflect the distributional effects of different CAP reform options correctly, there is an incentive for all Visegrad states to jointly advocate the full inclusion of their farmers into the system of direct payments. Note that this conclusion assumes that Visegrad states would orient their policy towards maximising their payoffs from the CAP, which is an over-simplification of the conflictual situation within the structures of CAP. The Czech and Slovak governments are likely to support a full application of direct payments, although both countries would profit less since the reform alternatives would yield even less financial benefits to them. If the main contribu-

tors to the EAGGF, Germany, UK, Italy, and the Netherlands blocked the expensive inclusion of the accession countries in the direct system of payments, all Visegrad states could still opt jointly for a second best alternative in terms of EAGGF payoffs – i.e. the co-financing of direct payments. As the model calculation assumes, a national co-financing share of 50%, would mean that Poland and Hungary, as countries with large agricultural sectors, would have to mobilise substantial national budget resources to make full use of EU funds. This would induce both countries, but also the Czech and the Slovak Republic to argue for differentiating national co-financing rates according to economic wealth, as is practiced in EU cohesion policy. However, Visegrad unity seems fragile insofar as the different scope of financial transfers suggests that the Czech and the Slovak Republic might become interested in a package deal with member states trying to reduce agricultural spending.

HETEROGENEITY IN EU WITH 27 MEMBER STATES

The diversity of the EU's political agenda has been identified above as a causal factor hindering the emergence of stable coalitions among member states in the EU-15. Ad-hoc, short-term cases of cooperation and fluid, fragile alliances do not, however necessarily have to persist as the dominant pattern of intergovernmental cooperation in an enlarged EU. I argue that a Union with 27 or more members could become so heterogeneous that member states will be increasingly inclined to cooperate in smaller groups to ensure a coordination of their reform strategies.

Increased heterogeneity is likely to jeopardise the capabilities of the Council that needs qualified majorities to make decisions and of a European Parliament that needs legitimacy and cohesive action to claim its representative and control functions. If these core elements of the traditional Community Method become contested or dysfunctional, the institutions may become paralysed. In such a situation, sub-European cooperation among like-minded member states would not necessarily be destructive for the EU, as critics of 'core Europe' concepts hold, but could instead be the key to complement a failing or inadequate Community Method. This line of argument seems to contradict the observation that many smaller EU member states, such as the Benelux states, fervently support the Community Method as opposed to inter-governmentalism. Their rationale has been that reasserting the balance

among, and the role of EU institutions has successfully avoided their marginalisation in EU decision-making.

Smaller EU member states tried to be loyal allies of the Commission and expected their particular interests to be respected by it (von Dosenrode 1993). However, it is not certain whether the side effect of small state protection embedded in the Community Method will materialise in a wider EU. The wider EU will have to cope with greater structural and economic heterogeneity: member states will vary in size and will embody varying administrative traditions and national institutional arrangements, e.g. their welfare state models or their territorial organisations. Economic wealth will differ more widely, which implies that member state economies are characterised by very different cost factor relations and competitive positions. As a consequence, governments will continue to be drawn into 'regulatory competition' and will not be able to agree on more than minimum social and ecological standards (Scharpf 1999).

One strategy to address this diversity and the ensuing blockage of integration is the so-called Open Method of Coordination (OMC) launched by the Lisbon European Council in March 2000 and first applied in the 'Lisbon Process' on the modernisation of social and employment policies. The method is aimed at encouraging cooperation, the exchange of best practices, and agreeing on common targets and guidelines for member states. It relies on regular monitoring of progress in meeting those targets, allowing member states to compare their efforts and learn from the experience of others. Contrary to the traditional harmonisation approach that relies on EU legislation, OMC does not require detailed and formalised agreements between member states, which allows for circumvention of the increased consensus requirements posed by the Nice Treaty. OMC has not been specifically designed to support the cooperation of regional groups of states inside the EU, but it may catalyze cooperation among states whose national institutional arrangements and economies are more similar than those of other member states.

The wider EU will also be faced with more heterogeneous security concerns: The threat perceptions and political priorities of member states bordering the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) differ from the states situated in South-Eastern Europe and those states with Mediterranean neighbours, particularly because the kind of neighbourhood is determinant of new security risks, such as organised crime, drug trafficking, ethnic conflict and forced migration. This suggests a move toward coordination of security policies

80 among the most concerned and interested states, which may favour regional cooperation. The Visegrad group could thus play a major role in developing the 'Eastern dimension' in an enlarged EU. In addition, the increasing role of the EU as an international security actor tends to differentiate EU member states according to the willingness and capacity to participate in international military actions, while the legitimacy requirements of such actions exclude the option of majority decisions in the Community approach. The big member states have already reacted to this challenge by coordinating their policy in groups that are smaller and more manageable than the Council of Ministers.

For example, the British Prime Minister invited French and German leaders in November 2001 to a private dinner to discuss Afghanistan. Leaders of smaller EU member states were invited only after spectacular diplomatic lobbying took place. Moreover, in January 2002, an alleged British government idea of a Security Council-type inner body that could take executive decisions outside meetings of the EU Council surfaced, and was quickly renounced by UK officials (*Financial Times*, 20 January 2002). A predecessor of such moves and proposals towards a directorate has been the Contact Group on the Balkans that proved to be a fairly successful format for coordinating US, EU and Russian positions on the former Yugoslavia, but involved only France, Germany, Italy and UK among the EU member states. Whereas individual smaller states are marginalized in these largely informal frameworks of cooperation, they could get their interests represented by coordinating, or even integrating their positions on security and defense matters. This could be an important field of joint action for the Visegrad group and would represent a more constructive approach than just criticising the tendency towards directorates and insisting on a Community Method, that has reached its limits.

An EU with 27 member states will have to accommodate more political heterogeneity: member states frame their policies on different levels of domestic EU support that will vary even more after enlargement, and governments will represent increasingly different political priorities in Brussels. With the Amsterdam and Nice Treaties, the EU has already developed the instruments of 'enhanced cooperation' to manage diversity and enable a differentiated integration (Janning 2001; Janning and Weidenfeld 1997). The Nice Treaty establishes a detailed system of rules for launching and managing enhanced cooperation initiatives in each of the three pillars of the EU. According to the new provisions agreed to in Nice, eight member states constitute a sufficient quorum for initiating an enhanced cooperation, cooperation initiatives must

be open to all member states, and the veto right of member states in the Council has been weakened.

These provisions would, on the one hand, require the Visegrad group to gain the support of other member states in order to start an enhanced co-operation. On the other hand, they would allow the Visegrad states to join an initiative if they are willing and able. Since they will belong to the smaller and poorer member states of the EU, it will be important to ensure that the launching of enhanced cooperation initiatives entails EU support mechanism (Nikolov 2002). Such an instrument would support the participation of states that have the political will, but lack the resources and capacities for joining an initiative. The treaty framework of enhanced cooperation provides the basis for such an instrument since it envisages the Commission as the institution to propose an enhanced cooperation in the first and third pillar and seeks to exclude enhanced cooperation initiatives harming socio-economic cohesion. Enhanced cooperation must respect the competences, rights and obligations of non-participant member states and the Community legislation must concern only areas belonging under the EU or EC mandate and may not pertain to areas under exclusive Community competence, the Schengen acquis and CFSP issues with military or defence implications. Moreover, enhanced cooperation may neither disturb the functioning of the Internal Market, nor trade and competition among member states. While restricting its scope and utility, these rules frame the enhanced cooperation as a treaty-friendly and pro-integrationist instrument.

There has been a tendency to identify certain, usually more integrationist member states, the founding members of the European Community, or the EMU participants as potential participants in enhanced cooperation initiatives. However, enhanced cooperation could be a well-suited instrument for the Visegrad states that would facilitate a further development of their co-operation in a way that would be compatible with the objective of reinforcing the Community Method.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has found that the EU is likely to accommodate and facilitate cooperation among the Visegrad states after enlargement. While the EU has generally supported regional cooperation of third countries, it has organised

the enlargement process in a way that created disincentives to the deepening of the Visegrad cooperation. There are numerous cases of working cooperation between EU member states in sub-European groups, but the existing literature has pointed to their weakness. The chapter has argued that

Annex

Estimated net benefits from the Structural Funds and the Common Agricultural Policy

	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Slovak Republic
Net support from the Structural Funds (millions of €)				
1. Status quo EU-27, absorption threshold of 4% of GDP, 2007	1 639	1 526	5 046	691
Status quo EU-27 in 2013	2 835	2 629	8 695	1 188
2. Eligibility threshold 90% of <i>national</i> GDP p.c.; per capita support reduced to 80% of status quo-p.c.-support; absorption threshold of 4% of GDP, 2007	1 244	1 434	5 097	698
National eligibility threshold, 2013	2 163	2 464	8 745	1 195
% of status quo, 2013	76	94	101	101
Net support from the European Agricultural Guarantee and Guidance Fund				
1. Direct payments (+ set-aside of agricultural land) transferred to CEE, 2007	580	1 436	4 451	296
direct payments transferred to CEE, 2013	346	1 303	3 443	195
2. No direct payments in CEE, 2007	-152	423	1 651	-53
No direct payments in CEE, 2013	-273	420	1 061	-103
% of (1.), 2013	0	32	31	0
3. Co-financed direct payments (50% share of member states), 2007	295	1 004	3 349	151
Co-financed direct payments, 2013	115	935	2 532	74
% of (1.), 2013	33	72	74	38
4. Decoupling of transfers from production, 2007: no direct payments in CEE but transfers for agricultural policy amounting to 50% of hypothetical direct payments, gradually reduced	259	921	3 130	131
Decoupling, 2013	7	713	2 031	13
% of (1.), 2013	2	55	59	7

Source: (Weise et al. 2001); tables 4.2.1-9, 4.2.1-10, 4.2.2-3 – 4.2.2-6, 4.2.2-8 – 4.2.2-11 and author's calculations. The scenarios assume nominal p.c. GDP growth rates of 4.06-4.63 % p.a., depending on the country. Net support is the gross support from the funds reduced by the member state's EU budget contribution. This contribution corresponds to the share of a member state's national GDP in total EU GDP. The Structural Funds reform scenario 2 implies that only Greece from the EU-15 and the CEEC are supported. The CAP reform scenario 4 assumes that decoupled agricultural transfers for CEE are gradually reduced from 2011 onward and that decoupled agricultural transfers to EU-15 are reduced by 8% p.a. from 2005 onward.

an enlarged EU will provide incentives for such cooperation between groups, and specifically for the Visegrad group.

First, the new voting rules and powers of the Nice Treaty will necessitate broad coalitions that could be well prepared by *nuclei* of state groups with strong commonalities. Possible coalition options do not favour defection from the Visegrad group. Second, the estimated distributional outcomes of reforming the EU's cohesion and agricultural policies create sufficiently common interests for the Visegrad states to act jointly on these important items on the agenda of an enlarged EU. Third, the challenges of structural, economic, security and political heterogeneity in an EU with 27 member states can be effectively addressed by cooperation of EU member states on the subgroup level.

These incentives originating from the changed international environment of an enlarged EU constitute the necessary, but by far not the only preconditions for a revival and deepening of the Visegrad cooperation; they will fail to have the desired effect if the domestic constellation in the Visegrad states is inauspicious, or if the political leaders of the group lack commitment.

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Serena Giusti

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Chapter IV

VISEGRAD – BALANCING BETWEEN UNITED STATES AND EUROPEAN UNION?

INTRODUCTION

The impact of Central European countries (CEC) on trans-Atlantic relations primarily depends on the position and role of these countries within the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the cornerstones of the Euro-Atlantic system. The allure of both “clubs” is proportional to the concrete benefits and opportunities they can offer to the newcomers in terms of modernisation of their economies and power politics, i.e. the ability to influence the international system. In order to assess the implications of CEC's membership in both the EU and NATO from the perspective of the US-Europe relations, it is first of all necessary to clarify the differences between them. These differences have to be analysed in terms of objectives, benefits and accession criteria of each organization after the dramatic geo-political changes following 1989. Therefore, any evaluation in this study will be made having taken into consideration changes and adjustments in these organizations over the period of time, while keeping in mind the nature and scope of influence of each organization. Second, attention will be devoted to the role the CECs have, or might assume within these organizations.

The status CECs are to enjoy in NATO and the EU will impact on the way they interact with the US and Europe. As a matter of fact, the organisation, that not only treats them on an equal footing, but also offers the possibility of improving their domestic conditions and international standing will be the favourite. The overall impression is that CECs see NATO as the main link with the US, which they perceive as the most reliable actor in the international arena. Due to the fact that the EU has not yet succeeded in extending

86 its system of security to any of the CECs, NATO has affirmed its position as the most inclusive and flexible Euro-Atlantic organisation. Understandably, the CECs are willing to get closer to the US to increment their power politics and also to gain more visibility vis-à-vis the EU. On the other hand, any EU candidate that enjoys a special entente with the US may hope to receive a better treatment within the enlarged EU. There are two reasons for this: 1) the US carries a certain influence in Brussels concerning the inclusion of an applicant country; 2) individual EU member states respond to special relations between the US and any applicant country or countries. Accordingly, for instance, it is quite unfeasible that Poland would be excluded from the first wave of EU enlargement. CECs are thus aiming at getting closer to the US through their membership in NATO, and utilize this membership for their successful accession to the EU.

The preferences in the candidate countries for membership in the two organizations, not only correspond to the competences and tasks of the two organizations, but also to their power differentials. The United States, having made the first wave of NATO enlargement possible, has more leverage than the EU. As a result, the CECs tend to lean more towards the US. What we can thus assume is that after accession to the EU, the CEC's pro-Atlanticism will affect, first of all, the European system and the EU internal assets, as well as its future configuration, which is presently being debated at the European Convention. The standpoint of the CECs will also be defined on the basis of Russia's regional outlook. If the special *entente* between the US and Russia continues, CECs will have the opportunity to play a "bridge role" between the West and the East.

The CECs' proclivity toward the US is not only motivated by the traditional security concerns, but also by the economic and social model this country epitomises. The United States and NATO epitomize, in an extraordinary way, both symbolic and real motivations behind CEC's willingness to overcome the legacy of the Cold War. Additionally, the CECs generally perceive the US economic and political system as an ideal of hyper-modernisation and technological advancement. Similarly, since the beginning of transformation the EU has been viewed in a positive way in the CECs. It has been identified as an anchor of democratisation and a vehicle that would secure former communist countries a rapid re-integration into the European market economy. The EU was simply regarded as the framework for building up a security community in Karl Deutsch's sense – whereby trust is seen as a precondition for better predictability of the actors' behaviour, and, thus as an aspect

of expectations rather than a synonym or a dimension of security. As for security matters, achieving NATO membership remained (and for some still remains) a top priority for CECs. The CECs in essence take the position that the EU should continue to function as a civilian power, leaving to NATO and the US the "dirty and tricky" work of hard security interventions. Such a division of labour corresponds to the holistic conception of security as perceived by the countries in the region, whereby the EU and NATO co-operate, but use different instruments in order to preserve stability on the European continent as a whole. Consequently, CECs take unified stance in the opposition to the building of a Common European Security and Defence Policy (CESDP) separate from NATO. CECs are for historical, 'rational', and even financial reasons against a defence decoupling.

As was pointed out by C.A. Kupchan, "Europe's drive for a common defence stems not just from a desire to be more responsible and autonomous, but also from a yearning to become a world-class power. French references to the "importance of replacing unipolarity with a multipolar world and thus creating a counterweight to America's *hyperpuissance* have helped to fuel this particular brand of anxiety, if not consternation" (Kupchan 2000: 16–32). This interpretation of the EU defence and security dimension clearly contrasts with CEC's vision of Europe's mission and role. CEC's co-optation into the Euro-Atlantic system will certainly affect the EU-US relations, the European strategic vision and the EU's ontology itself. The enlargement to include US-inclined countries is likely to strengthen the role of the United States in Europe, and thus puzzle the EU system as a whole. In addition to the friction that will arise due to increased diversity, the EU will have to face the CEC's minimalism, similar to that exhibited by the UK since its entry into the EC. Such an attitude will make the re-engineering of the EU more difficult and will hinder the decision-making process and the path to European integration.

As for the future role and nature of the EU on a teleological level, Great Britain, France and Germany have already proposed diverging visions. These range from a Westphalian Super-state model (Federation) to a neo-medieval Empire model with different levels of power and integration. So far, EU accession front-runners have avoided siding with any particular vision of Europe in order not to weaken their position vis-à-vis potential EU-15 allies. However, preference for a differentiated integration within a loose and weak institutional framework emerges from political discussions and opinion-leaders' statements regarding the future of the European Union. In the short term, the admission of newcomers is also likely to alter the internal balance

of the organisation: CECs might well choose to side with the UK and form a Euro-skeptic group impeding the “communitarisation” of important policies. Germany as well can aspire to become the centre of a Mittel-European group eventually backing interests promoted by the Mediterranean and the Northern lobby. In this way, Europe will certainly find it more difficult than has been the case before to arrive at a consensus on foreign policy and to assume and project a strong role in the world. It may in fact be quite feasible that the opposite happens – that the European Union, intended as the group of EC original founding member states, will progressively register a decline in importance.

In comparison with Western European members, CECs have the advantage of a robust link with the US and Russia. After September 11, Vladimir Putin launched what on the surface looks like a transformation of his country's foreign policy, placing it firmly with the Western coalition against global terrorism. Similarly, there has been a re-flourishing of contacts between CECs and Russia, which should soon yield positive effects on the economic side, in particular for the energy supply of the region. Much of Europe's future position will depend on its economic relevance in the global arena. If regionalism consolidates as a permanent aspect of globalisation, then Europe has a better chance of amalgamating and competing with the other conglomerates. From this perspective, Russia would be progressively integrated into the European architecture. Such a scenario could be facilitated in case the US opts for a self-centred standpoint and a bold unilateralism.¹ As was the case before, an “external enemy” (the other) would have a unifying effect on Europe. But if instead of regionalism, the international system will develop in a way characterized by a number of functional networks with a composite membership, the likely result will be the specialisation of the EU. Under this scenario, any European power politics project is due to vanish.

If we consider the way the EU has approached its enlargement eastward, we can argue that the inclusion of the new countries is going to represent more of a problem than an opportunity for augmenting cohesiveness and expanding the EU's role. In more than ten years, the EU has not been able to reform itself after the dramatic upheavals of 1989. The Treaty of Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice (that still has to be ratified), have not helped to shape a new EU in anticipation of enlargement. Furthermore, as the prospect of

¹ The method of negative community building – negative in the sense of defining Europe's commonness as a function of an outside threat, a strategy that worked during the existence of the Soviet Union and could be reproduced now with the US.

enlargement is taking more concrete roots, it is also turning into a controversial process. On the other side of the enlargement discussion, the candidates are less willing to compromise with Brussels, especially those that have already achieved endogenously good economic results. The dissatisfaction with the principle of conditionality² is growing. Originally, conceived as a policy that was intended to create “compatible” members, it is increasingly being viewed by the accession candidates as an instrument of control in the hands of Brussels. Parallel with the negotiations, the behavior of some EU member states was marked by attempts to exploit this process for the promotion of specific national interests by transposing their national claims into European requirements. Germany is, for instance, using the European context to solve a historical dispute with the Czech Republic over the Sudetenland region formerly settled by a majority German population that was expelled in the aftermath of World War II.

Since the EU is an entity still “in the making”, CECs also fear becoming victims of the EU's most powerful countries. Widespread is the idea that the Union is a “conservative” organisation whose collectivist tradition might obstruct the expansion of their nascent liberal economies. CECs feel they are less dependent on the EU for their existence as “normal” states. Famous is the sentence “there is life outside the EU”, uttered by Viktor Orbán, former Prime Minister of Hungary (*RFE/RL*, 8 July 2000). As for the modality of accession, the EU member states fluctuate between a selective approach (regatta model) and a group approach (big bang model) that would include all the candidates with the exclusion of Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey. The choice between big bang and a regatta approach is not without consequences for the future of Europe. If the enlargement is diluted, new lines of divisions of institutional-economic nature are likely to come up, while a group entry will definitely pose a challenge to the whole EU construction. In the first scenario, the EU needs to reflect on how to cope with a different development “outside Europe”. The “ins” and the “outs” have to be bridged together and this implies considerable economic effort.

² The main and most powerful instrument for “Europeanising” the aspirant members is the extensive application of the principle of conditionality. This form of external influence entails attaching specific conditions to the distribution of benefits to the recipient countries on the part of the EU. The hitherto vague prospect of eventual membership for all former socialist countries provides a powerful incentive to strengthen democracy and market economy and to adapt legislation, regulations, and institutions in an EU-compatible fashion.

All the aforementioned considerations bring us to the conclusion that the participation of CECs in the EU will probably weaken its decision-making process, cohesiveness, and capacity to deepen the integration. As a consequence, the leverage of the EU on the international scene is likely to decline. Some new and old EU member states may hope to gain a greater leverage by establishing special relations with the US and become its referees in Europe. NATO will continue to be in charge of hard security tasks and co-operate with the EU to secure a lasting peace in Europe. The Central and Eastern European countries's role in an enlarged Union should help to mend any "rough spots" in relations between the European Union and the United States and to be a bridge connecting Russia to the Euro-Atlantic system.

EU, NATO AND VISEGRAD 4

Since the collapse of the Soviet system, most Central and Eastern European countries have, in terms of security needs, oriented themselves toward strong relations with the US. The pro-Atlantic orientation on the part of the CECs and the resulting preoccupation with maintaining a trans-Atlantic link stems mainly from these countries' historical experience and from the lack of faith in the support and effectiveness of the European security policy. History has made CECs sceptical of Western Europe's willingness to defend the "other Europe" without material help and moral pressure from the US. Only a permanent and solid link with the US reassures the people of Central Europe as was testified by Polish President Kwasniewski: "With Poland's history in mind, in particular the historical experiences connected with the causes and the courses of both world wars, we oppose attempts to marginalize the presence of the United States in the process of Europe's unification. It is in this spirit that we shall pursue our policy within the region and outside it" (Kwasniewski 1997).

The policy of the United States has been perceived as consistent and effective in realising the CEC's post-communist agenda. There is certainly a strong psychological component in this appreciation of the United States. Polish President, Kwasniewski, affirmed that the "the two world wars proved to the peoples of Europe and America that without a US presence in Europe, European security is unlikely to be achieved and that this presence has become a lasting factor in the international balance of armed forces and economic

power (...) Poland stands alongside those countries which perceive the future system of security in Europe as a system of Euro-Atlantic security based on the lasting political and military presence of the US" (ibid.). The US was in the past considered the only reliable actor able to keep in check an eventual German *Lebensraum* aspiration and for dissuading Russia from imperialistic ambitions in Central Europe. Therefore, by their admission to NATO, the CECs finally felt released from the Soviet tutelage. The fact that Russia was very sensitive to the issue of NATO enlargement was in itself the proof of the meaningful significance of such a membership.³ In the early 1990s, NATO was thus, together with the EU, ranked as a top priority in the process of normalisation and Westernisation. Because of its prevalent military nature, NATO has never been conceived as an alternative to the EU, but rather as a complement to it. From the point of view of the CECs, NATO was to be in charge of hard security, while EU should play a significant role in the consolidation of their democracies and after joining, assure an adequate economic development to bridge the gap between the community members' standards.

In effect, the December 1994 NATO summit in Brussels made it clear that "the enlargement of NATO will complement the enlargement of the EU – a parallel process which also, in its part contributes significantly to extending security and stability to the new democracies of the East" (*Communication...*, 1994). Although from the outside it seemed that the two organisations were acting in co-ordination, in reality they have been proceeding quite separately. As NATO took the decision in 1997 to admit new members (the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland), it became clear that there was a certain disconnection between the two processes and that the two organisations followed different reasoning and dynamics. Such a de-coupling promoted the newcomers to the status of "normal and mature states" and transformed NATO membership into a strong argument in the EU admission strategy. On the occasion of the second anniversary of the Czech Republic's admission to NATO,

³ The Russian position on NATO enlargement has been characterised by ambivalence. Official declarations of President Yeltsin affirming that Russia would not have opposed, for instance, a Polish decision to join NATO (ITAR-TASS 25/9/93) were followed by negative appraisal of the whole process. Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev repeatedly opposed the expansion of the alliance and declared: "Partnership yes, expansion no!" For an accurate analysis of Russia's interests in Central and Eastern Europe and its position on NATO enlargement see E. Otto, *Foreign Policy Conceptions in Russia and Their Influence on Foreign Policy Decisions*, College of Europe Working Papers No.25, Brussels, European Interuniversity Press, 1997.

92 President of the Czech Republic, Václav Havel stated: “for the first time in history, the Czech Republic is firmly anchored in Europe” (CTK, 12 March 2001). Bronisław Geremek, Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs has gone as far as to compare Poland’s entry into NATO to the acceptance of Christianity 1,000 years ago.

Although NATO requires from its applicants less adaptation than the EU and because it is a military-political alliance, rather than a supranational organisation with multi-level governance – it was clear that NATO was determined to take more concrete steps toward Europe’s unification than the EU. The fact that NATO was able to open for membership before the EU was generally attributed to the role of the United States within this organisation. With the American support, CECs could return not only to Europe, but also to the Euro-Atlantic community. Since then, the US affirmed its leverage in the whole region, which was further reinforced by operations in Bosnia and Kosovo. The two major European crises highlighted the fact that the post-Cold War Europe was not likely to “rally” around a balance of power principle but rather around American hegemony. As a result, NATO was acknowledged as the only reliable “security manager” of the whole international system. NATO’s flexibility and capacity to elaborate a wide-ranging new strategic concept consistent with the shifting international context thus served to increase the expectations attached to the organisation and its power profile. If initially the CECs excluded the prospect of linking the process of transformation to alliances with other states, or of making this process dependent on the benevolence of superpowers, this reluctance disappeared in respect to the United States. As a result, they began to view the US increasingly more as a model for the process of transformation, as well as for a greater assertivity on the international scene.

Even in a world that is post-modern and interconnected, relations with some individual states seem quite profitable from a multilateral perspective. In line with what has been pointed out so far, I have tried to summarize some of the main characteristics of NATO and the EU as seen from the CEC’s perspective. NATO, in comparison with the EU offers the following advantages: 1) presence of the United States; 2) active and inclusive organisation; 3) lack of any formal equivalent of the *acquis communautaire*; 4) the newcomers can take part in the re-engineering of the continent; 5) it is based on “moral values”, rather than pure economic interests; 6) the CEC’s bridge position is retained to a greater extent; 7) if the EU succeeds in shaping a truly European common defence force, NATO will constitute the only protection for the dis-

criminated European states not yet members of the EU⁴; and 8) it has a more global role, especially after its involvement in the Kosovo conflict. Similarly to the EU, NATO: 1) epitomises the return to “normalcy” 2) promotes democratisation; and 3) membership in it attracts foreign investors.

Among the first concrete benefits of membership in the Alliance was protection granted to ethnic Hungarians in Serbia during the conflict in Kosovo. According to former Prime Minister of Hungary, Viktor Orbán, Hungary’s membership in NATO prevented Serbia from carrying out ethnic cleansing in Vojvodina (*Freedom-House...*, 1999). Moreover, within NATO, CECs have started to modernise their military structure and armaments. Otherwise, as the former Polish Minister of Defense, Piotr Kołodziejczyk emphasised “We would have no alternative to using only Russian military technology and that would obviously raise doubts about the credibility of our sovereignty. A country doomed to procure equipment and weapons from only one source has its hands tied. This is something we cannot accept” (Kołodziejczyk 1994). Re-conversion of the military industry was perceived by all the CECs as a continuation of a process of definitive detachment from the Soviet umbrella (Brzica, Poláčeková, Samson 1997). NATO also contributed to the democratisation process of the CECs, as it represented a formidable incentive for bringing armed forces under civilian control.⁵ To enter NATO it was necessary to formulate new military doctrines, to establish the civilian control of the armed forces, to execute armament and manpower reduction according to the CFE agreement, and finally, to plan the modernisation of armed forces.

The study on the enlargement, undertaken by the member states and adopted by foreign ministers of NATO countries in December 1995, suggested that the new members “conform to basic principles embodied in the Washington

⁴ US Secretary of State Madeline Albright expressed American concerns about European defence in terms of the three “Ds”: no decoupling, no duplication, and no discrimination. Her point of view also reflects the CEC’s fear of exclusion from European defence plans. See M. Albright, *The Right Balance Will Secure NATO’s Future*, Financial Times, 7 December 1998.

⁵ Civilian control of the armed forces is extremely important on account of the fact that in the former Warsaw Pact states the training of the officer corps was under the strict control of the Communist Party. On the civilian control of the armed forces see L. Pastusiak, *Threats to the Security of Central and Eastern Europe: Security Options for Poland*, University of Essex, Occasional Papers in European studies, No.11, 1995, pp.17-26 and, *Democratic Control over Security Policy and Armed Forces*, Institute of International Relations, Prague, 1995.

94 Treaty: democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law". The Alliance also invited new members to prepare themselves for accession by establishing appropriate and civilian control of their defence forces (NATO..., 1995). In Slovakia, the inadequate democratic and civilian control over intelligence and internal security services has been at the origin of a hard political confrontation between President Kováč and Prime Minister Mečiar, which was one of the factors determining the country's exclusion from the first wave of EU and NATO enlargement.

President Clinton suggested that membership in NATO would have an incredible cascade effect on the CECs, not only by providing the stability needed for economic development, but also by generating new trade and jobs at home (Cambone 1997). Foreign investor confidence was also expected to increase since capital is invested in countries where it is safe. CECs were also aware of the economic benefits of NATO membership. Former Hungarian Deputy Secretary of State for Defence, Tibor Toth, remarked that "Hungary's bid for membership of NATO and the EU is not driven just by security perceptions, it is a part of a modernisation policy" (*Jane's Defence Weekly*, 7 February 1996).

Table 1
Differences between EU and NATO

EU	NATO
Comprehensive organisation	Military alliance, collective security
Soft security	Hard security
Cessions of consistent parts of sovereignty	State sovereignty weakly affected
Partial/second class membership?	Full membership
First adaptation, then entry	Entry, followed by adaptation
Russia has a more benevolent attitude	Russia has a more opposing attitude
Loose co-operation with Russia	Tight links with Russia (NATO-Russia Council)
The CEC's bridge role is not so much appreciated	The CEC's bridge role is highly appreciated
Little hope for power politics ambitions	More possibilities for power politics projection
Prospects of Federalism	Specific/sectoral objectives

According to some CEC politicians' statements, it can be alleged that NATO has a higher moral reputation than the EU as it is evident in the words spoken by Czech President Havel: "NATO membership in my view is not a mere trade or market relationship. Rather, it is the manifestation of a certain spirit:

the spirit of the love of freedom, the spirit of solidarity, the spirit of the will to protect together our common cultural wealth, the spirit of the alliance which is not opportunistic but which, if I may use the expression, – is moral" (Havel 1999). Implicitly, the EU is accused of being egoistical and self-centred. Moreover, the former Polish Defence Minister, J. Dnyszkiewicz, affirmed the preceding view of NATO: "By becoming a NATO member Poland joined an alliance whose objective is not only self-defense, but also building peace in Europe" (*RFE/RL*, 30 April 1999).

As transition periods for agriculture subsidies and the structural funds are to be introduced, along with the probable exclusion of the newcomers from the EMU for a certain period, the CECs fear that once in the EU, they will not enjoy the status of full members. They are weary of the possibility that the EU will thus re-create inside the same centre-periphery asymmetries that characterise now the relation between insiders and outsiders. In contrast, within NATO they take part in activities on equal footing, without discrimination. CECs, in particular, lament that the principle of differentiated integration, so popular among the EU leading member states, may result in the new institutional division of Europe, and in the worst-case scenario, even call into question the survival of a broader Union. CECs see the real possibility of being excluded from the "European vanguard", whereby they would be bound to occupy, together with some Mediterranean countries, low intensity power loops.

The attitudes of the general population towards NATO in the CECs after only one year of membership were generally positive. However, some concerns still remain over the excessive dependency on foreign powers. Dissimilar assess-

Table 2
Which of the following statements is closest to your view of the membership of Czech Republic/Hungary/Poland in NATO (%)

	Czechs	Hungarians	Poles
A guarantee of independence	38	41	56
A new form of submission to a foreign power	47	44	29
Difficult to say	15	15	15
Guarantees peace and security	45	56	60
Increases the possibility of involvement in an armed conflict	40	29	25
Difficult to say	15	15	15

Source: Georg 2000

ments among the CECs mainly rest on different ways they perceive security. Poles, for instance, are the least worried about subordination to foreign power and the most convinced that NATO is a guarantor of independence, peace and security.

Since the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland joined NATO, public opinion has remained stable. The support for NATO was the lowest in the Czech Republic in 2000 (see Table 3) where the highest number of opponents has also been registered. The belief that membership in NATO reinforces the international leverage of a country and preserves peace and security is significantly weaker in the Czech Republic than in Poland and Hungary. Compared to the other nationalities, the Czechs expressed greatest fears over their membership in NATO increasing the chance of the country's involvement in an armed conflict (see Table 2). In the case of Poland, there has been a slight shift of people's attitude regarding the implications of the membership in the Alliance. In 1999, Poles were divided between those who believed that membership in NATO represented a guarantee of their independence and those who considered it a new form of dependency on foreign power. A year after Poland gained full membership in the Alliance (2000), most respondents converged on the first position. A similar shift of opinion, although to a more limited degree, was recorded in Hungary, while in the Czech Republic the evaluations were even more polarised a year after joining than before. The evolution of opinion in Poland and Hungary seems to be related, first and foremost, to the perception of Russia's probable course of action. The majority of Poles (60%) and a large proportion of Hungarians (44%) think that Russia will try to gain influence over Central Europe again. Slightly more than half of Slovaks support their country's entry into NATO. At the end of 2000, polls showed that 41% of the population was in favor of accession, while 40 percent was against it (CTK, 22 March 2001).⁶ As this book is going to print, approximately 60% of Slovaks support their country's entry into NATO (SITA, 6 May 2002).

If we compare these results with the data on the EU support (October 2001), it emerges that EU membership is perceived more favourably than membership in NATO. Only in Poland does preference of NATO prevail significantly over the EU (cf. Tables 3 and 4). It is evident that in all CECs people find it difficult to evaluate the possible benefits/costs of EU membership, while the significance of NATO is more comprehensible to them. The initiation of the

⁶ Opinion poll was conducted by the private *Polis* Institute.

Table 3

Do you personally support the membership of the Czech Republic/Hungary/Poland in NATO? (%)

	Czech Republic		Hungary		Poland	
	1999	2000	1999	2000	1999	2000
Yes, I do	49	50	61	61	60	63
I do not care	17	18	22	23	23	18
I am against it	22	26	11	10	11	12
Difficult to say	12	6	6	6	6	7

Source: Ceorg 2000

EU membership negotiations has certainly helped make the people more aware of the implications of accession, but accession itself still appears far away and due to be postponed at any time.

Table 4

Support for EU Membership in Applicant Countries

Country	A good thing	Neither good nor bad	A bad thing
Romania	80	11	2
Bulgaria	74	14	3
Hungary	60	23	7
Turkey	59	18	14
AC13	59	22	10
Slovakia	58	28	5
Cyprus	51	31	13
Poland	51	27	11
EU15*	48	29	13
Czech rep.	46	31	9
Lithuania	41	35	11
Slovenia	41	42	11
Malta	39	25	31
Estonia	33	38	14
Latvia	33	39	17

Source: Applicant countries Eurobarometer 2001.1, October 2001

* Source: Standard Eurobarometer 55.1, April-May 2001

The gap in public support between the two organisations has narrowed since the early '90s. In 1997, across all the CECs, people were more willing to join the EU than NATO. Joining NATO also met with higher opposition. The explanation could be that respective populations in CECs perceive their inclusion in the Union as a positive stimulus for the processes of transition underway and for narrowing the gap between much richer countries to their west. NATO, in contrast, is seen more in hard-security terms. It represents the means for projecting stability in the Eastern post-communist area.

Among the populations in CECs that are already NATO members, the Poles are the strongest supporters of further eastward expansion of NATO – over half of respondents support the admission of other former communist countries. The admission of Slovakia and Lithuania enjoys the widest support among Poles. Hungarians, on the other hand, are less enthusiastic than Poles about the prospect of further enlargement, but the number of supporters still exceeds the opponents. The Czechs are the least in favour of the admission of other countries in Central and Eastern Europe to NATO, with the exception of Slovakia, which enjoys a broad support.

CEC'S ATLANTISM

As has been pointed out, membership in the EU remains the top priority of the CECs, but NATO is definitely becoming the most important strategic organization to join. This is due to the fact that NATO can deliver some services and benefits that have been previously expected from the EU and that the CEC's endogenous progress in modernisation has made these countries less dependent on the Union. However, thus far it seems that there is no alternative to the EU on their way to full integration into the world economy. Especially if regionalism is affirmed as a form of globalisation, the EU will perform the role of an attracting nucleus for all European countries. Furthermore, the EU will have to become bigger to compete with other regional conglomerates. From this perspective, Russia may be progressively integrated into the European market. The feasibility of this scenario, however, depends on the degree of intensity and pervasiveness of the US-Russia entente. At the moment, the US-Russia rapprochement rests on mutual convenience and it is difficult to predict if it will have substantial economic consequences besides the so-called "energy alliance".

The competition between the US and Europe – which comes to the forefront as a result of decisions to introduce import taxes on certain products, agricultural subsidies and other trade issues that are bound to also come up in the future – is instead likely to work as a catalyst for the processes of widening and deepening of the EU. Following this logic, the CECs would be entering a Union with an integrated and developed market and not succumb to pressures of globalisation. If, on the other hand regionalism falls under the spell of global dynamics – which by definition acts beyond states and regional groups – the CECs may become more reluctant to stick to the EU's discipline and might be tempted to seek closer alliances with the economic superpowers (US for trade, Russia for energy), thus lessening their interest in the EU. If this scenario should materialize, the European architecture and the EU would be characterised by a number of functional networks with a composite membership, and the EU – under the pressure of newly-admitted members – would probably turn into a sort of "specialised" agency. Such a development would also mean that the EU would have to give up any aspirations to a power politics project.

The capacity of NATO to respond to the end of the Cold War has not been without consequences for the European architecture and for the EU itself. As Adrian Hyde-Price argues, "...the phased enlargement process has exposed some of the antinomies of European security" (Hyde-Price 2000: 140). The decoupling of NATO and EU enlargement is creating uncertainty in the division of labour in security matters and roles and responsibilities within the Euro-Atlantic community. The CEC's admission to the EU will presumably impact on the development of the EU's second pillar and, in particular, on the whole conception of the Common European Security and Defence Policy (CESDP). On the occasion of the first anniversary of their accession to NATO, foreign ministers of Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic reiterated their interests "in the successful development of the Common Security and Defence Policy" and "potential contribution" to European security, but they also reiterated that such endeavor must be based on co-operation between NATO and the EU.⁷

The CECs back a Europe with Euro-Atlantic orientation and disapprove of building a stronger EU as a counterbalance to the US. Therefore, in strict defence terms, they accept the incorporation of the WEU into the EU and the

⁷ Please see: www.mfa.gov.hu

institution of a defence pillar (the fourth after the Community, Common Foreign and Security Policy, Justice and Home Affairs), but *only* under NATO umbrella. Polish Foreign Minister Bartoszewski, in his address to the Sejm on 6 June 2001 affirmed that the US is among Poland's "most important partners" and that Warsaw is "consistently in favour of an active political and military presence of the US in Europe" (*RFE/RL*, 7 June 2001). The CECs also fully endorse the NATO Berlin declaration, which defines European Security and Defence Identity as "separable but not separate from NATO" (*Final Communiqué*..., 1996). The idea that any European/EU crisis management should not go beyond the scope of Petersberg tasks (humanitarian and rescue missions, tasks of peacemaking and those involving combat forces in crisis management operations, including peacemaking) and preventive diplomacy is prevailing among the CECs (*WEU*..., 1992). Among the CECs, the establishment of European armed forces enjoys support only as far as it will not affect the Euro-Atlantic order. Therefore, the view from Central and Eastern Europe holds that NATO should remain the main organization for military planning, even for operations involving strictly European forces. CECs promote NATO-first policy while the so-called "autonomous option" (an exclusive EU-led operation) should be kept as the second option (Sedivy 2000). Thus, the division of labour in defence matters, as the CECs advocate, would keep the role for EU as a civilian power with occasional functions of sub-contractor to NATO.

The development of a truly European defence identity as a counterweight to America's superpower status is also considered to be too expensive, divisive and even hazardous in terms of cohesion, coherence and efficacy. CECs seem to fear that European emancipation can fuel a trans-Atlantic de-coupling and act as a disincentive for the US, preventing it from intervening in crucial situations. The CEC's standpoint matches, again, the American vision of Europe (see Kupchan: 16–32). The extraordinary US investment in military capabilities has produced a situation in which the European allies are more of a hindrance than help when actual military operations are required, although Europe's involvement may be desirable or necessary from a political point of view. The view of the CECs concerning Euro-Atlantic relations is very close to the British standpoint, and consistent with the American perspective on European integration. Tony Blair during a visit to Poland stated: "There is absolutely no doubt in my mind, that our strength with the US is enhanced by our strength with the rest of Europe and vice-versa" (Blair 2000). According to the US, the inclusion of the CECs within the EU will automati-

cally extend the scope of American influence, increase the number of states with American proclivity (the metaphor of the Trojan horse) – and reduce the risk of a Europe politically so integrated as to geostrategically compete with the US. CECs also share with the US the goal of a staunch *Ostpolitik* aimed at gradually involving Russia.⁸ However, an eventual American inward posture might reinvigorate CEC's attachment to European integration. In general terms, it is understood that CEC's loyalty to Brussels is due to increase as substantial benefits are perceived while, on the contrary, it is likely to decline in case trade relations with the US and other external partners are required to be reduced, and if negotiating countries are excluded from vital policies, such as agriculture.

September 11 showed that there was an imminent need for enlargement of NATO. In the aftermath, the new Central European members of the Alliance stressed the importance of a compact Euro-Atlantic community, along with a new wave of enlargement. While within the EU the sense of solidarity ("We are all Americans") has lasted few months, it seems that CECs were more in tune with the US – and remained so following the launch of war against terrorism. The EU members have soon become critical of the American unilateralism (the US was dubbed unilaetarist hyperpower). Thus, the anti-terrorist campaign that could have been the impetus to the consolidation of the trans-Atlantic alliance around common values and interests, instead become a source of deep divisions. Although CECs share some of the same concerns with the EU, they are also even more convinced that a special entente with the US is unavoidable if they want to retain a degree of their international leverage. The Europeans had already come to a painful realization during the Kosovo crisis of how little influence they have within NATO – over what to strike, when and how to do it, and over the deployment and use of ground troops.

Some of the key players within the European Union, however, espouse a markedly different approach to solving crises than that often pursued by the United States. Despite the gap in military spending between the US and the EU, the French Foreign Minister, Védrine affirmed that the American approach was overly simplistic. In his view, there is a sort of labour division in

⁸ On the US strategic conception of European integration see Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*, New York, Harper Collins Publishers, 1997, p.199 and on the American view on European defence see C.A. Kupchan, *In Defence of European Defence: An American Perspective*, *Survival*, Vol.42, no.2, Summer 2000, pp.16–32.

102 issues pertaining to security. This is entirely in line with the generally shared conviction in Europe that a holistic approach is necessary when it comes to security issues. Europe traditionally backs long-term interventions based on a broad range of instruments (economic, diplomatic, political). Chris Patten, the EU External Relations Commissioner affirmed that the US with its allies must tackle “the darker sides of globalisation” – poverty, human trafficking and autocratic regimes if the world is to avoid creating new Osama bin Ladens” (*Financial Times*, 15 February 2002). On the other side of the Atlantic, the United States tends to approach intervention in military and hard security terms. Europeans, by contrast, stress the need for fairness in a world of disparities and concentrate on the roots of inequality and the resultant despair. To them, the development aid and the resolution of the Middle East conflict are the best long-term tools in the fight against terrorism. In short, EU – a civilian power more than ever before – sees the challenge in political and economic terms.

The United States’ early concerns about the ESDP were replaced by the hope that it might serve as a useful tool for a more equitable burden sharing by the EU in the international arena. To accomplish this task, however, the development of a rapid reaction force should have been pursued with interoperability with US forces in mind. The EU member states did not engage too much on this challenge. Instead, the debate on ESDP concentrated on concepts, doctrine, and policies. Moreover, little attention was in fact paid to the costs that the rapid-reaction force would entail if this project were to be seriously pursued. According to preliminary analysis drawn up by RAND Corporation, the military costs (i.e. development and procurement) of the force would be in the range between \$24 billion and \$56 billion – an amount about twice that of current annual military investment outlays in the four biggest EU countries: Germany, France, Britain, and Italy.⁹ The abandonment of the ESDP would have an impact on the interests (in economic terms “externalities”) of the US, Turkey and even the EU candidate countries, and would shed a light, once more, on how far the European members of NATO lag behind America, as well as expose the weakness of the EU in defence terms. American unilateralism can be thus partly seen as a consequence of the EU’s inability to build a force complementary to

⁹ According To Ambassador Guenter Burghardt, Head of the Delegation of the European Commission to the US, the new US defence budget will mean that the combined spending of EU member states will amount to less than 50% of the American defence budget.

NATO.¹⁰ Moreover, the fact that the EU seems reluctant to engage in *Realpolitik* plays against any groundbreaking shift in its capabilities in the area of security and defence.

Much of the way CECs perceive NATO depends on the relations with Russia. The NATO-Russia Council, replacing the Permanent Joint Council (PJC), was created to provide “a mechanism for consultations, co-ordination, and where possible, joint decisions and joint action”. The appointment of Vladimir Putin as president of Russia paved the way for a new and more constructive relations with EU and US. Russia’s main objectives have not changed, however. It still wants, above all, to be treated as a mature, influential partner and to have a voice in key Euro-Atlantic security institutions, as well as in defence and security decision-making. By deciding to join the US in the war against terrorism, Putin could achieve two main goals: Russia’s return to the top table with the US and the evaporation of American criticism of Russian actions in Chechnya.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The EU, in comparison with NATO appears weaker, fragmented and unable to efficiently respond to epochal changes. NATO has come forth as the truly receptive and strategic European club, absorbing a number of tasks, which were originally attributed to Brussels. As a consequence, the leverage of the EU has decreased dramatically. Later, due to the EU’s increasingly dampening consensus on European integration, some incompatibilities started to be formulated in terms of alternatives.

The image of the US offered by Dr. Brzezinski in the book *The Grand Chessboard* as a universal empire, constructed on superiority acquired in all fields – economic, technological, cultural and military – is entirely shared by the CECs. In the words of Samuel Huntington “Given the benefits that the United States can distribute, the sensible course for other countries may well be, in international relations lingo, not to “balance” against the United States but

¹⁰ The idea that American unilateralism is also a consequence of Europe’s abandonment of the European Security and Defence Policy has been proposed by C. Wolf Jr. in an article *Europeans are Unilateralists too* published in the Wall Street Journal Europe, May 19, 2002.

to 'bandwagon' with it" (Huntington 1999: 45). The US is seen by the CECs, not only as a hegemonic power, but also as a model of hyper-modernisation that is superior to the EU. However, due to its status as a complex supranational organisation based in Europe, the EU can supply CECs with a variety of benefits, and ultimately, with the political dimension of "Europeanness". To the CECs, the EU somehow represents an entity, which cannot be eluded if a state is European or desires to be so. Similarly, the US is the best ally for a country seeking a prestigious rank in the international system and within topmost multilateral organisations (NATO, WTO, UN, IMF, the World Bank, OSCE).

America's resurgent prestige and utter dominance stems from the acknowledgement that it is the main arbiter in a series of conflicts, either real or potential, in a wide-spanning arc stretching from the Adriatic to the Caspian Sea (Pfaff 2001: 221–232). America has successfully demonstrated its power after the end of the Cold War in the air campaign against Serbia, which also reassured former communist countries of the US commitment to the European continent. America is also seen as the only actor on the international scene able to effectively put pressure on Russia as far as its domestic affairs are concerned, as it in fact tried to do with Chechnya and the Caucasus region.¹¹ The lively American domination is experiencing what G. John Ikenberry calls "the phenomenon of increasing returns" (Ikenberry 1999: 140). As its system of institutions has grown, it has become increasingly difficult for potential rivals or alternative actors to introduce a competing set of principles and institutions – leading to a development whereby "American hegemony has become highly institutionalised and path-dependent" (ibid.).

The position of Central European countries on the development of ESDP may be decisive for the division of work between NATO and the EU in security and defence matters. CECs still do not share some EU members' worries regarding US efforts to discourage them from establishing a European security system separate from NATO. CECs generally believe that the EU should continue to evolve as a civilian power, while NATO should remain the pillar of European security. Moreover, CECs seem more inclined to view United States' presence in Europe as legitimate, and indeed, desirable because their perceptions of security are still to a degree influenced by the Cold War period. Although the US is willing to accommodate CEC's power politics goals, it is geographically remote, while in Europe it is the EU that pro-

¹¹ See the debate during the Istanbul summit of the OSCE, November 1999.

motes a comprehensive process of integration that can bring many concrete advantages to the CECs, including a secure community.

The degree of "loyalty" felt by candidate countries toward the EU will also depend on the extent to which their inclusion implies a reduction of trade relations with the US and adoption of protectionist measures. Ultimately, from the CEC's point of view, the economic balance between the US and the EU is also influenced, to a large degree, by economic competition of regional blocs, of which they are a part. By their process of accession, the CECs are in some ways directing a spotlight on the old continent's traditional fears of decline. Nevertheless, it is becoming increasingly clear that Europe must take up America's challenge if it does not want to be disengaged from the dynamism of the world economy.

After the end of the Cold War, NATO, an organization with a strong presence of the US, was far more trusted by the CECs in the area of hard security than the EU. The impact of NATO was formidable, both on a symbolic and psychological level, despite the lack of a deeper-rooted tradition or a "sense of belonging" – as were the case with the EU. This was due especially to the historical events of the last century, which have divided Europe into two enemy blocs. After the disappearance of the old division of Europe, EU membership weighed far more heavily on the consciousness of the people in CECs, representing the return to Europe – the symbol of the original civilisation and an absolute value beyond all contingencies. Moreover, a sense of Europeanness was, above all, a constitutive element of CEC's identity long before the emergence of the EU; nevertheless, to the populations of the CECs the Union became synonymous with this sense.

The EC/EU conveyed more existentialist, ontological, and emotional compulsions for inclusion by the CECs, that was quite different from membership in NATO. Admission into the EU was perceived by the CECs as something connected to their identity, while NATO was related to the concrete survival of the state and to power-politics aspirations. The fact that joining the EU emerged as a priority immediately after the fall of communism mostly rests on the conviction that NATO would have been – given the strategic implications – more reluctant to admit new members. Compared with the other European organisations, the EU, aside from promising consistent economic improvements, was also expected to preserve peace in Europe and to contribute to an amalgamated community where centre-periphery divides could be progressively overcome.

Having turned into “normal” countries endogenously, without the support of the EU membership, the CECs can reasonably imagine a future outside the European club. Other organisations or intense special partnerships may foster such a process of autonomisation. Tasks in principle ascribed to Brussels may possibly be divided among allies and sectoral organisations so as to create a valuable synergy of resources and capabilities (functional fragmentation) to replace the EU. What may emerge are not alternatives in the true sense of the word, but rather makeshift/hybrid solutions to remedy the EU’s inability to respond to the CEC’s more urgent expectations. It was not in the original intentions of the CECs to look for other paths, but they have been forced into doing so by the EU’s relaxed approach. In this context, the CEC’s inclination toward America may be reinforced. If this were the case, some of the skepticism concerning the process of regional development within an Enlarged Union – which implies a certain dose of sovereignty erosion and national identity dispersion – would be unfounded.

Aside from a process of institutional imitation, the inclusion of CECs in the EU also implies the absorption of a value-system not always shared by the recipient societies. Moreover, because of their experiences with Soviet domination, CECs remain uneasy about a supranational system whose final form and aims remain unclear. EU’s progress in deepening and enlargement is in fact regarded as being framed by contingency, ambiguity and disagreement. Furthermore, the process of CEC’s return to independent statehood (i.e. from Soviet domination) has been paralleled by resolute anti-federalist attitudes, and cautious scrutiny of multilateral organisations. Former Czech Prime Minister, Václav Klaus affirmed, for instance, that Europe should be based on a “nation state principle” (*Lidové Noviny*, 3 June 1999). He based his statement on the observation that the post-Westphalian system of states has survived catastrophic wars, mass migrations and several border modifications. Thus, stability and prosperity can be assured if – like atomized units of classical liberal theory – independent states keep on seeking and pursuing their own interests. Klaus does not envisage any advantage in embarking on hazardous experimentations such as the EMU and the Social Chapter, which he claims, would be economically counter-productive and politically illegitimate, lacking the necessary popular support (*TOL*, 17 September 1999).

Klaus is against the development of a social dimension and his overall conception of European integration is very close to the British minimalism. In his view, intergovernmentalism, rather than communitarism, should be employed to govern the EU of the future. Similarly, in Poland, the Roman Catho-

lic clergymen are against the EU developing into a federation, and instead, support looser forms of political association. This is confirmed by the large support (80%) for the idea of a “Europe of Nations” that respects individual national identities and preserves the sovereignty of the EU member states.¹² Such a choice is evidently justified by the preoccupation of defending some more traditional values, which Western Europe is accused of disregarding.

The protection of state sovereignty is also connected with the protection of national identity as it is apparent from Klaus’ words: “We do not want to become Euro-Czechs or Euro-Germans, Euro-French or Euro-Italians. We want to enter a community in which, as sovereign citizens of the Czech Republic, we will be able to defend our own way of life, habits, interests, and national prosperity.” Klaus also raised another key question connected with the enlargement: CEC’s sense of inadequacy, which could lead to “self-underestimation and servility toward stronger countries and allies” (*RFE/RL*, 12 June 2000). Moreover, both, the proponents of individualistic values, and those advocating a society based on “community first”, *anti-political politics* approach consider the EU to be a tricky construction. The proponents of the individualistic approach are quite skeptical of the construction of a European-scale civil society where they feel national characteristics would be dispersed. Liberalists, on the other hand, also resist the idea of representation of interests as a form of corporativism that can stand in the way of a genuine free market economy. In addition, CECs are afraid of being incorporated into a conservative organisation shaped by an attenuate form of socialism and collectivist tradition, which might obstruct the expansion of a liberal economy. They fear that the on-going process of modernisation can somehow be reversed or restricted and state efficiency reduced by a rigid European entrenchment.

In effect, on the domestic level, the CECs have entered upon a profound process of “de-estatisation” with the aim of disengaging the state from all domains where public intervention was not absolutely necessary while dismantling all forms of over-regulation and interventionism (Perron 2000). Thus, they now expect the EU to pursue a similar liberally-oriented path. Moreover, the EU is reproached for having an elite-dominated character compounded by scarce institutional accountability and poor attention for the European “demoi”. The

¹² For further data and information on the Polish Catholic priests and the European integration see Instytut spraw publicznych, *Polish Catholic Priests and the European Integration*, Report, March 1998.

process of European integration is blamed for being constructed in a top-down fashion and thus being barely receptive of the inputs from below.

In regard to the Convention on the Future of Europe, CECs believe that the implementation of its recommendations would certainly give them a degree of protection against abuse of power and render the internal dynamics of the Union more transparent to their populations at home. In a speech to the European Parliament, Havel upheld the formulation of a European constitution as “a single, crystal-clear and universally understandable political document” and stated that the European constitution should help citizens to ... “understand that the EU is not just an anonymous bureaucratic monster to limit, or even deny their autonomy, but simply a new type of human community that actually significantly broadens their freedom” (Havel 1994). The constitution should exemplify to the citizens “what the EU stands for, to help them understand it better, and, consequently, to identify with it” (Havel 2000). In this phase, due to their scarce experience with the EU dynamics, CECs are willing to enter a transparent, readable and democratic Union, rather than an efficient but obscure organisation. Consequently, they privilege an input-oriented legitimisation of the EU, as opposed to an output-oriented one. Nevertheless, CECs are conscious of the fact that the drafting of a European constitution will re-ignite arguments in each country about the significance and implications of membership with likely negative effects on the pace of enlargement. The constitution CECs champion should be a simplification of the existing norms, policies and procedures, it should not be a basis for undertaking radical reforms of the policy-making and should not disrupt the existing institutional balance.

FINAL REMARKS

Mainly due to Brussels’ difficulty in conciliating the processes of enlargement and internal revision, the CEC’s assessment of the future of the European Union has also ceased to be intrinsically ambiguous. On the one hand, CECs hoped that the EU would transform itself into a more coherent whole before enlarging; on the other hand, they now fear that decision-making and power sharing re-distribution could harm their position once in the Union. At present, it is thus still too complex of a task to spotlight what kind of Union the CECs wish to enter and predict into what kind of Union they will be effectively incorporated.

Taking into account the nature of CEC’s fears of entering the EU, along with previous negative experiences of subordination, it can be deduced that they want to integrate without being subjugated to any hegemonic schemes, and aspire to join an inclusive and democratic Union with a solid international profile. Nevertheless, the anxiety of being relegated to an outer core – back to the “other Europe”, is what now shapes the most the CEC’s vision of an “ideal” Union. Instinctively, in order to avoid dependency on potential directorates, the better solution for the CECs would be the one whereby the EU would take the form of a patchwork of overlapping authorities with a complete system of multi-level governance (so-called neo-medieval model), where various authorities coexist and co-operate in a mutually supportive network. The Union would thus be without a core and a periphery, albeit with aggregation of sub-systems that would deal with specific areas of policy (functional fragmentation). A Union of this kind would embody a more welcoming regime to newcomers, allaying any concerns about instant relegation to second-class status. This structure would also provide the CECs with the possibility of choosing those policies that are more consistent with each country’s structural characteristics. The final effect would be in fewer awkward trade-offs for their governments to explain to voters.

An integration on policy-by-policy basis might also reveal discriminating – this would be so if the newly joined states would not be able to participate in most of the areas. The construction of a looser Union with the features of a post-modern conglomeration is also in contrast with the CEC’s traditional idea of the state that can in their view definitely be better preserved within a Westphalian type of Union. Among the objectives of the CECs in entering the EU was the reinforcement of sovereign statehood, which would be endangered after accession by the emergence of various non-state polities and networks along geographical and functional lines (territorial and functional communities).

CECs have already demonstrated that they are unwilling to go along the line of creation of Euroregions, which they fear would lead to the “disruption” of territoriality and thus to the decline of authority. They principally oppose administrative proposals other than nation-states because, in their perception, they can be exploited by individual EU member states (Germany for instance) by their gaining influence over the area. Therefore, if a networking model of integration can streamline the functioning of the Union, CECs are likely to foster strengthening of the Union as a cohesive actor, and in the name of efficiency would be likely to accept less democratic and transparent

110 practices. They may also convert to a negative stance concerning future waves of enlargement, however, a neo-medieval model seems to better match the CEC's current exigencies, while a Westphalian pattern will presumably be appreciated after a certain period of effective membership.

Presently, Central Europeans seem less in tune with France and Germany's vision than with Britain's idea, according to which Europe should be made up of independent nation-states united mainly for economic ends. Moreover, the CECs hold the view that all members should adopt internal market rules, while membership in other spheres should be made optional.¹³ Nevertheless, in stark contrast to Great Britain, CECs still ascribe to the EU the function of managing redistributive and solidarity policies, since some regions and economic sectors still need financial intervention from Brussels. A European Union based on overlapping circles may also be weak in terms of coherence and international leverage. However, a looser and more fluid Union perhaps stands a better chance of affirming as an "exporter of stability" around the world. This role is to be developed through economic, rather than military means. This format will also encourage the CECs to cultivate and develop – parallel to the existing EU – bulk of external relations, particularly, an articulated and variegated circuit of bilateral relations with Eastern countries and Russia. Traditional power politics aspirations would thus have to be satisfied in the context of NATO.

The second wave of NATO eastward enlargement will further strengthen the role of this organisation in the European architecture, but in particular, it will provide the US with extraordinary leverage. As NATO enlarges further, the consensus over US-led campaign against terrorism is expected to gain in strength. Also, the more Russia will be involved with NATO, the less plausible will be its opposition to the organisation's second enlargement. Furthermore, as US troops are allowed to use bases in territories formerly belonging to the Soviet Union, it will be increasingly difficult for Moscow to use the argument that former USSR territory is untouchable.

The admission of the CECs to the EU will definitely affect trans-Atlantic relations. If September 11 has on one hand strengthened the relations between

¹³ According to the Polish document on the Treaty of Nice, rules governing the internal market will have to be adopted by all members: "closer co-operation must not lead to a limited application of important internal market principles to the citizens and businesses of the future member states. Polish Foreign Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Treaty of Nice - The Polish Position*, op.cit., p.49.

the US and Europe on a symbolic level, emerged American unilateralism may detract from Europe's role and future ability to project its global role. Such a loss of role for the EU is likely to be protracted if Russia enters into a strategic alliance with the US. On the other hand, the transformation of NATO into a loose security organisation is likely to weaken the role of multilateral organisations and to favour the principle of bilateralism. If this trend affirms, CECs could be tempted even more to seek direct relations with the US without the mediation of organisations such as NATO. The US, after the start of the anti-terrorism campaign, seems to have preferred the combination of maximum allied political support with the greatest possible freedom of action (Gnessotto 2001). If this trend continues, the EU's institutionalist approach will probably soon not be able to effectively address many of the challenges connected with its ambition to influence world affairs; instead, a more realistic stance may be desired.

In conclusion, CECs do not show a downright preference for any of the proposed visions of the future form or arrangement of the European Union. They seem, however, to share many of the British views, especially regarding the role of the state and the opposition to a Union with a nucleic structure, made up of lopsided circles and forged by a hierarchical logic. In Central Europe, the tendency is to boost liberalism, while supranational building is perceived with a degree of skepticism as T.G. Ash's description of what European integration should be about perfectly grasps: "The extraordinary achievement of a liberal order is now under threat precisely as a result of forced march to unity. What we should be doing now is rather to consolidate this liberal order and to spread it across the continent. Liberal order, not unity, is the right strategic goal for European policy in our time" (Ash 1998: 52).

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Gunther Hauser

Chapter V VISEGRAD AND AUSTRIA – COMPREHENSIVE RELATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The Visegrad states and Austria have always had close political and economic relations. For centuries, Austria – an essential part of Central Europe – shaped and determined the history of the Central European peoples. These close ties with the states and cultures of Central Europe were maintained even after the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy and the turmoil of World War II. The division of Central Europe into East and West seriously impaired these economic relations and interpersonal contacts between the Central European peoples for forty years. After 1955, when it became fully independent, Austria "was forced to develop a strong profile on the political map" (Kreisky 1998: 195). Austrian politicians such as Josef Klaus and Bruno Kreisky took initiatives in developing friendly relations with "communist" Central European countries like Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. One of the most important elements of Kreisky's foreign policy in the early sixties was to normalise relations within the Danube region and to create a "feeling of affiliation within this region" – a neighbourly relationship based on geographical and historical mutualities according to the motto: "As much trust as possible to the West, as little mistrust as possible to the East" (ibid.: 195). The most decisive goal of Austrian foreign policy was to shape this region to be free of restraint and any influence of the superpowers (ibid.: 239). Josef Klaus explained: "... regarding the successor states of the Danube monarchy, not restoration, but co-operation and integration should determine our relations. An active, constructive Ostpolitik is vital for Austria" (Ettmeyer 1986: 347).

Austria's role of mediator, or "bridge builder" to its former communist neighbours was emphasised in the process of Austria's application for admission

to the European Union. But during Franz Vranitzky's chancellorship, Austrian foreign policy was principally focused on the European Union. In December 1989, he explained that Austria should not give the impression of being the representative of its Eastern neighbours during its accession process to the European Community (Marjanovic 1998: 115). Vranitzky did not express any sympathy toward Central European co-operation projects like the "Pentagonale" – from which the Central European Initiative (CEI) emerged. His successor, Viktor Klima, seemed to have recognized a specific role for Austria in Central Europe when he underlined, during Austria's EU presidency in 1998, that Austria should strengthen and improve its mediator role toward Central and Eastern European states when preparing EU enlargement (Klima 1998: 7–8). In 2001, Austrian Foreign Minister Benita Ferrero-Waldner initiated a "regional partnership" which was created as a non-institutional comprehensive co-operation forum between the Visegrad states, Slovenia and Austria. Furthermore, various forms of regional and national co-operation, e.g. in the field of economics, tourism and environmental protection, between what are now the Visegrad countries and Austria had existed in the early 1970s.

The collapse of the communist regimes in 1989 changed international relations overnight. Austria, the Eastern regions of which extended like a Western democratic "balcony" into its former communist neighbours, was one of the states most affected by the collapse of communism in the region. Austrian Foreign Minister Alois Mock and his Czechoslovakian and Hungarian counterparts, Jiří Dienstbier and Gyula Horn, symbolically cut through the Iron Curtain and thus Austria once again became the centre of a continent that is gradually growing back together. The transition of the Visegrad countries and Austria's other Eastern and Southern neighbours to democracy and market economies, not only removed latent threats along the 1,256 kilometer-long border between Austria and its Eastern neighbours, it also released significant economic impulses. The liberalisation of the economies in Central and Eastern Europe, the development of functioning democratic institutions and infrastructural progress seem to have eliminated the political reason for Austria to act as a mediator between East and West. The political West is now enlarging itself to include the East.

The individual Visegrad states now negotiate directly with EU institutions and try to win supporters for their interests. Austria and Germany are the most important partners for the Visegrad countries on their path to the EU, both politically and economically. As Austria's primary political and economic

interests in this region show, its role of mediator and initiator will remain a necessary and important one for the integration of Central and Eastern Europe into the EU. Austria is the only country that shares borders with four candidate states. It therefore follows that Austria will benefit like no other state from the opportunities created by EU and NATO enlargement, but that it will also be directly confronted with the social and economic challenges during the Visegrad states' transitional period.

POLITICAL CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE VISEGRAD STATES AND AUSTRIA

In the early seventies, Austrian politicians started initiatives to found regional co-operation forums with neighbouring countries. Now the Visegrad countries and their regions are, partly or fully, engaged in such forums. For example, the provincial government of Burgenland first institutionalised regional co-operation by organizing the *International Symposium Moggersdorf*. In 1978, *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Alpen Adria* (Working Group Alps-Adriatic) was founded as an initiative of the then Styrian provincial governor Josef Krainer together with the Yugoslav republics of Slovenia and Croatia. Ten years later, the Hungarian Comitatus Vás and Zala-Sopron joined this co-operation. In October 1984, the then provincial governor of Lower Austria, Siegfried Ludwig initiated *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mittlere Donau* (Working Group Central Danube). The main issues these forums of co-operation were designed to address were environmental protection and nature conservation, as well as issues relating to traffic, culture, economics, agro-economics, health and tourism (Ettmeyer 1986: 340). In November 1989, the foreign ministers of Austria, Italy, Hungary and Yugoslavia created the so-called "Quadrangle" of regional co-operation that was in 1990 enlarged to include Czechoslovakia and in 1991, Poland. On 18 July 1992 this forum of cooperation was renamed the Central European Initiative (CEI).

The working groups institutionalised within the CEI deal with the following issues: environmental protection, transportation and traffic, telecommunications, cultural, educational and youth exchanges, tourism, science and technology, migration, as well as the production and transport of energy. In the field of environmental protection, the participating states agreed in 1990 to exchange environmental data and to draw up joint standards. Subse-

quently, two intermediate groups – “waste management” and “nuclear security” were set up. Furthermore, two cross-border national parks at Lake Neusiedl and in the Alps of Tarvisio were also realised (Staffelmayer 1991: 714). In the meantime, CEI has grown to include 16 Central, Eastern and South-Eastern European states. Its mission is to promote comprehensive co-operation between member states as well as their participation in the process of European integration and by supporting political and economic transformation. Regular meetings between ministers of foreign affairs, the interior and economics should further accelerate and deepen this integration (*Bundesministerium...*, 2000: 119). The CEI, which includes all Visegrad countries and Austria, is fully engaged in the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, initiated by the German EU presidency in 1999. Significant progress has been achieved on behalf of this Stability Pact that provides a genuinely regional approach: “This is extremely important for the Danube region, as all countries in this region are linked to South Eastern Europe. The Danube region is therefore crucially important, if not the key, to future stability in Europe” (Busek 1999: 5).

In 1996, the Davos Economic Forum launched the “Central and Eastern European Economic Summit” that has since been held each year in June in the City of Salzburg under the patronage of the Austrian President. Presidents, ministers and economic experts from Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) meet at this forum to “build bridges” – both between business and political elites, as well as scientific and cultural communities – within the pre-accession process. Additionally, presidents, prime ministers, cabinet ministers and provincial governors from the CEECs, and especially, the Visegrad states gather for summit meetings every year to discuss EU enlargement and different forms of regional economic co-operation. Many of these meetings are organised by Austrian politicians.

To take advantage of the synergy effects of comprehensive co-operation in areas including the economic sector, internal security issues, science and culture, Austrian Foreign Minister, Benita Ferrero-Waldner initiated the “regional partnership” with Visegrad countries and Slovenia in June 2001. The purpose of this regional partnership is to form a community of interests with the Central and Eastern European states and provide opportunities for a deeper dialogue with the EU candidate states and Austria. This partnership consists of two phases. In the first phase, a review of the current status of cooperation will be carried out and concrete plans for deepening of Aus-

tria’s traditional policy towards its neighbours in preparation for their EU accession – both in a bilateral as well as an EU context – will be made. In the second phase, the regional partnership should identify those areas which could form the basis for a community of interests of Central European states after accession, similar to that of the Benelux group or the Nordic states.

To support the Visegrad states in their path to EU membership is one of the principal goals of Austrian foreign policy. It is therefore necessary to support these countries in their efforts to strengthen their foundations based on democracy and market economy, to help them to achieve prosperity and security and thus strengthen the stability in the region. Austria has a major stake in the stabilisation processes in the CEECs as well as the EU. Since the enlargement of the EU is a gradual process, it is in Austria’s fundamental interest to focus on fostering co-operation with its Eastern neighbours.

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE “VISEGRAD 4” AND AUSTRIA IN THE FIELD OF SECURITY

The Visegrad initiative was originally based on security issues. In June 1990, the Hungarian Prime Minister József Antall informed the Soviets of the Hungarian parliament’s desire to leave the Warsaw Pact. During this period, the structures of the Warsaw Pact were in dissolution. In the early 1990s, three states collapsed along Hungary’s borders: the Yugoslav Federation, the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. This produced 22 new states – almost a continent! The Hungarian decision to leave the Eastern bloc security system became the basis of the trilateral co-operation involving Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. In 1991, those countries with the goal of jointly pressuring the Soviet Union to withdraw its armed forces from this region, and aligning themselves with Western foreign, economic and security policies, founded the Visegrad Initiative (*Sicherheitspolitische Umfeld...*, 1996). Since 1991, the security landscape has undergone rapid changes, whereby confrontation was replaced by co-operation. In 1999, three Visegrad countries became members of NATO. Slovakia, a participant in the NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) program stands a good chance to receive an invitation at the Prague Summit at the end of 2002.

Security policy co-operation between the Visegrad states and Austria is primarily co-ordinated within the frameworks of the EU, OSCE and NATO/PfP.

118 Typical tasks of military security policy in Europe today are conflict prevention and overall peacekeeping. Due to the fact that Austrian troops have gained remarkable reputation as peacekeepers since 1960s, valuable in-depth practical cooperation with the Visegrad countries in this field is taking place. It includes NBC training between the Austrian and Czech armies, while Hungarian and Slovak soldiers train in Götzendorf, near Austria, where they are together with Austrian troops prepared for international peacekeeping missions.

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN VISEGRAD STATES AND AUSTRIA WITHIN PfP – THE ROLE OF AUSTRIAN NEUTRALITY

With its Partnership for Peace Program (PfP), NATO has developed into a comprehensive security organization beyond its original defensive mission – with reach of the whole of Europe, North America and also parts of Asia. Today, the PfP includes a total of 46 states and stretches from Vancouver to Vladivostok. Out of these countries, 19 are NATO members and 27 are partner nations. The Planning and Review Process (PARP) is of central importance for the entire spectrum of PfP operations, including measures for the support of peace and in the process of consultations and multinational military planning of the partner states. PfP is the platform for comprehensive co-operation in security issues between the three Visegrad NATO members, Slovakia and Austria within PARP and the Euro Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), which serves as the political consultation and co-operation forum of PfP. The cooperation takes place in the following areas: science and the environment, joint operations of NATO and non-NATO states aimed at overcoming problems in the areas of security and defence policies, application of confidence-building measures, armament control, disarmament and the prevention of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, conflict prevention in the Euro-Atlantic region, prevention of migration, as well as measures against “non-state actors” including international terrorism.

Since 1995, Austria has participated in over 70 NATO-PfP exercises and other activities with over 5,000 troops. Furthermore, regular PfP exercises have been held in the countries of Central Europe, starting with the multi-national field exercise *Trimigant 95*. The Austrian focus is on training, standardisa-

tion (with regard to leadership and logistics), as well as civil emergency planning. In this latter area, Austria now plays a pioneering role. Above and beyond active co-operation with NATO, Austria's role as a host nation and transit area for peace support operations in the Balkans deserves particular mention. Thus, in the past six years

- 115,000 soldiers in more than 40,000 transporters have passed through Austria,
- 90,514 foreign military aircraft have flown through Austrian airspace,
- Over 38,000 international troops were accommodated in Austrian barracks (*Austrian Ministry of Defence Press and Information Service, August 2001*).

However, states participating in the PfP have no weight and no influence on the political and military organisational structure of the alliance. These states are also excluded from the inner circle of the NATO Council, where, in the final analysis, decisions about Central Europe that also effect PfP states are confirmed.

Co-operation with NATO will be indispensable for the Visegrad countries: Owing to the military equipment deficit in the EU member states – especially in the fields of air transport and satellite intelligence – in the near future it will only be possible to implement EU's CFSP using forces and resources that are only available to NATO. Due to the fact that 11 EU states are members of NATO, close co-operation with NATO and a standardisation of procedures of the Euro-Atlantic armed forces therefore remains extremely important. Furthermore, together with EU enlargement, the process of NATO enlargement will lead to a new order in the crisis region that stretches in an arc between the Baltic and the Black Sea. The security vacuum that existed after the collapse of the communist regimes has been filled by NATO membership, and in the case of Slovakia, by the presence of the North-Atlantic Alliance and the prospect of admission.

In the case of Austria, neutrality in the classical sense of “standing aloof” from international alliances and obligations, is no longer possible. No state is able to live autonomously today, and those states that do not contribute to international security are regional egoists. After 1955, the state of perpetual neutrality had been the prime instrument of Austrian foreign and security policy, and even a symbol of the emerging Austrian identity after World War II, but since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the material, legal and political aspects of neutrality have changed. The purpose of perpetual neutrality was

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to protect Austria from possible conflicts between the military blocks during the Cold War. A few months after the declaration of neutrality, Austria became a member of United Nations Organisation. In connection with its accession, however, we have to keep in mind that the UN Charter makes no provision for neutrality in the case of armed conflicts as evidenced by Article 2 (5): *"All Members shall give the United Nations every assistance in any action it takes in accordance with the present Charter, and shall refrain from giving assistance to any state against which the United Nations is taking preventive or enforcement action."* Thus, Austrian neutrality was interpreted "dynamically" within the legal framework and resulted exclusively from the Cold War. Neutrality today – especially in a security alliance, such as the EU – has extremely limited value and is possibly even superfluous. With its "dynamic interpretation" of neutrality, and especially its status as an EU member, Austria is a non-aligned state. At present, Austria is focusing on the "Petersberg and PfP" formula.

At the Capabilities Commitment Conference, held at the end of November 2000 in Brussels, Austria agreed to contribute 2,000 soldiers to the 60,000-troop joint crisis-response force that should be made ready for operation by 2003. According to diplomats of the Visegrad states which are not yet members of the EU, the Czech Republic intends to contribute 1,000 soldiers, Slovakia 450 and Hungary 350 to the crisis management force as of 2003 (Klingl 2001: 347). Furthermore, Visegrad countries and Austria work intensively together within the UN in the field of crisis prevention missions. For the purpose of EU or NATO-PfP crisis response operations, Visegrad nations and Austria could intensify their military co-operation and training in order to prepare missions together within the framework of a "Central European brigade", similar to NORDCAPS¹ in Scandinavia.

¹ NORDCAPS stands for: Nordic Coordinated Arrangement for Military Peace Support. Its purpose is to develop the existing co-operation in peacekeeping field between Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden for today's needs in both, political and military consultation and co-operation. In ongoing peace support operations, each Nordic country is responsible for national matters of the operation. NORDCAPS usually discusses subjects with common interests and those needing co-ordination between the Nordic countries.

THE AUSTRIAN INTERNATIONAL PEACE SUPPORT COMMAND – A PILLAR OF MILITARY CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE VISEGRAD STATES AND AUSTRIA

The International Peace Support Command has been based in Götzensdorf, near Vienna since 1999 and is responsible for the training and deployment of Austrian contingents abroad. There has been an Austrian infantry battalion stationed on the Golan Heights in Syria for 30 years. Since 1999, Slovakia has provided a troop contingent to this unit. Every six months, this Slovak contingent is sent for a week's training in Götzensdorf and flown to the Middle East from Vienna-Schwechat. The situation was similar in Cyprus, where until June 2001, the Austrians, together with the Hungarians and the Slovenes provided an infantry battalion for the United Nations. An Austrian infantry battalion is currently serving with a company of Swiss soldiers and a platoon of Slovak soldiers under the command of the German Bundeswehr in Kosovo. The Austrian International Peace Support Command specialises, above all, in training civilian and military personnel and units for peace support operations. On location, the armies from Visegrad countries are trained and prepared for peace missions.

THE GAMING INITIATIVE

The goal of the 1990 Gaming Initiative (named after Gaming, a small town in Lower Austria) is to strengthen security and co-operation in Central Europe. The participating nations include Austria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia and Switzerland. Each year, high-ranking officers and politicians gather at the Carthusian monastery in Gaming, where the Austrian Officer's Society has created a platform to enable the countries of Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe to overcome more easily and more successfully the challenges posed by the difficult transformation processes, particularly in the area of security. Moreover, the International Working Group of Associations of Central European Officers and Reservists – made up of the member states of the Gaming Initiative – was established for this reason. This initiative has created the necessary condi-

tions to start co-operation with the Inter-allied Confederation of Reserve Officers (CIOR). CIOR has over 900,000 members, including officers from Germany, which is a full member, the Austrian Officer's Society and the Swiss Officers' Society as associated partners.

Many important military and security policy initiatives have been launched at this forum. One such initiative was the meeting of chairpersons of the defence committees of the national parliaments from the member states of the Gaming Initiative in 1997. Moreover, in 1999 the Training Department B of the Austrian Armed Forces proposed the creation of uniform training criteria and opportunities for officers, non-commissioned officers, reservists and enlisted personnel in Central Europe. As a result, an Austrian, for example, should be able to complete part of his/her military training in Croatia, a Slovene in Switzerland or a German in Hungary. One of the objectives of the initiative is also to allow soldiers to learn foreign languages. Recently, the Gaming Initiative discussed the mutual relations between the armed forces and business and political sectors in Central Europe.

CENCOOP – CENTRAL EUROPEAN BRIGADE OR CENTRAL EUROPEAN CONSULTATION FORUM?

CENCOOP (Central European Nations Co-operation in Peace Support) is a regional co-operation initiative of states in Central and South Eastern Europe that was originally intended to prepare the participating states for joint operations to provide international assistance under a UN or OSCE mandate by means of joint use of resources, harmonisation of positions on fundamental issues and operational concepts. This regional co-operation was initiated by Austria. The preparatory meeting for the creation of CENCOOP was held in early December 1997. On 19 March 1998, the defence ministers of Austria, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia signed the letter of intent and the framework document in Vienna. On 19 March 1999, the Swiss Ministry of Defence signed the documents, while the Czech Republic has so far an observer status within this framework. It was planned that CENCOOP forces would have available at least a brigade (5,000 men) by the end of 2000. For Switzerland, the perspective offered by CENCOOP was a crucial factor behind the decision to participate in KFOR, as Switzerland itself had no previous ties to the Balkan region and thus to the other partners.

In the meantime, CENCOOP could not be developed in the way that had originally been intended because the political conditions in relation to it had undergone far-reaching changes, affecting Austria and the other partners. The Declaration of St. Malo from December 1998, which called for the much faster development of ESDP within the EU, required Austria – the only EU member state in the CENCOOP – to concentrate its resources on a credible contribution to the development of European crisis management forces (2,000 troop strong) to carry out the Petersberg tasks. NATO's Membership Action Plan Programme (MAP) also forced participating states, such as Slovakia, Slovenia and Romania to direct their already short defence resources toward relevant MAP programmes. Thus, for five out of six partners, the practical possibility of participating in modules for CENCOOP operations, some of which still had to be created, had been reduced (Wosolsobe 2001: 243). It is possible, however, that in the future CENCOOP could have the following role that is both realistic and politically feasible:

- Establishment of an information exchange about peacekeeping operations;
- Provision of modules for humanitarian aid;
- Provision of a joint observer pool;
- Provision of joint military police modules.

Furthermore, the partners intend to strengthen co-operation aimed at facilitating exchange of ideas on security policy issues. This goal can certainly be seen in connection with the "strategic partnerships" with some Central and Eastern European states – including those of the Visegrad co-operation – that should in the future be a regional priority of Austrian foreign policy. For many years, the National Defence Academy in Vienna (NDA) in co-operation with military academies and defence universities of Visegrad states, has been organising seminars and workshops on Central European/Visegrad security and defence issues as a part of a "strategic and regional partnership".

INTERNAL SECURITY IN CENTRAL EUROPE

Common Justice and Home Affairs policy of the European Union

Co-operation in the fields of justice and home affairs within the framework of the EU is a reaction to the dismantling of internal borders and was an-

124 | chored in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty. This co-operation had already been anticipated in the Schengen Agreements and, after the gradual abolition of controls at the joint borders, should help the EU to realise its goals, particularly with regard to the free movement of people. Joint measures will be taken in the following areas: asylum policy, control of external borders, immigration policy and policies relating to foreigners, the fight against drug addiction, the fight against international fraud, judicial co-operation in civil and criminal cases, co-operation in customs matters, police co-operation in the fight against terrorism, drug trade, and other serious forms of international crime.

A European Police Office (EUROPOL) will also develop an EU-wide information system. EUROPOL was created on 1 October 1998 in The Hague. The Treaty of Amsterdam has made the Schengen Agreement a part of the European Union Treaty that must be adopted in full by the new members of the European Union. Early and effective reforms in the states aspiring for EU membership should therefore be taken to guarantee effective compliance with the EU standards. Although tough border controls and full implementation of the Schengen Agreement seem to be the ultimate answer, there are still valid concerns regarding the abolition of borders.

Schengen's external borders are secure, but not impossible to cross and there are fears that the Visegrad countries' eastern borders will be even more permeable as these states lack the necessary experience and resources to secure border crossings. The Schengen Information System and co-operation between Schengen members and non-members needs to be developed still further. In the Visegrad countries, considerable progress has already been made in terms of managing border systems by, for example, the introduction of computerised border control information systems and the establishment of control systems for the future external borders. Improvements have also been made in methods of combating cross-border and organised crime, including organised smuggling, drug and human trafficking.

Rapid privatisation in the "Visegrad 4" has provided white-collar criminals with ample opportunities to commit economic crimes and these states were soon targeted as host countries by eastern mafia groups. Economic crime and corruption can deter investments and slow down economic growth. However, international police co-operation is the most effective tool for combating transnational crime. It is therefore essential that the Visegrad countries' police forces and border patrols reach Western standards. The EU and Aus-

125 | tria are not yet in a position to turn a blind eye to these problems. International co-operation agreements, some of which were initiated by Austria at a ministerial level, are extremely important for the implementation of the necessary measures in the areas of justice and home affairs. Furthermore, very close international co-operation between intelligence services will be necessary to lead an effective fight against terrorism.

MEETINGS OF CENTRAL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES' INTERIOR MINISTERS AND OTHER FORMS OF CO-OPERATION

Co-operation in the fight against organised crime and human trafficking is especially strong between Austria and Bavaria. In the long-term, Austria wants to develop similarly successful co-operative relationships with its eastern neighbours. One step in this direction was the "Forum Salzburg", where high-ranking officials from the interior ministries of the "Visegrad 4" and Slovenia met in mid-August 2000 to discuss their countries' experiences in this area. Many specific measures were agreed upon in Salzburg, such as the joint monitoring of borders with the Czech Republic. Furthermore, Vienna and Prague will draw up regular analyses of the current situation in all areas of border crime and the deportation agreement with Poland will be revised. As a part of the "regional partnership" initiated by Austria and including all the Visegrad states and Slovenia, interior ministers will meet at least once a year to discuss their experiences and take joint action to combat human trafficking, drug crime and car theft – also with the help of Austrian know-how.

POLICE CO-OPERATION IN CENTRAL EUROPE

The Central European Police Academy (CEPA) was created to strengthen Central European countries' capabilities in the police sector and to co-ordinate approaches to new threats facing these countries. All further targeted training measures are planned and carried out as necessary by the participating states, acting as equal partners. In addition to the practical benefit

126 of the police forces in the Visegrad countries in the operational and analytical fields, active and continuous training also creates a shared perception of the role of the police and a professional philosophy that is absolutely crucial for the establishment of internal security in all the states of Central Europe. This internal security environment is one of the basic preconditions for achieving, in the Visegrad countries, living and security conditions comparable to those in the EU. The Central European Police Academy is financed and run by Austria, Germany, Slovenia, Switzerland and the countries of Visegrad 4.

Each year, the CEPA board of trustees plans seminars for specialists tailored to meet current needs and developments, for example in the area of witness protection, combating organised crime and international criminal groups, data protection, white-collar crime, cross-border surveillance, trade in children, computer crime, and “Schengen”. The individual participant states are responsible for organising the seminars, so they have been held in places as far apart as Budapest, Prague, Legionowo and Szczytno, Wiesbaden, Gotenica and Ybbs an der Donau. Furthermore, CEPA organises exchange programmes for senior police officers in CEPA member states, with the aim of improving international police co-operation in Central Europe.

IMMIGRATION AND MIGRATION

EU enlargement will lead to increased immigration pressures. The former representative of the EU Commission to Austria, Wolfgang Streitenberger fears that the population in the European Union will fall to 6 percent of the global population due to migration flows. The best method of dealing with this pressure, according to Streitenberger, is to develop a common asylum and visa policy (*Der Soldat* Nr. 15/2000: 10). On the other hand, the EU has announced that 47 million new immigrants are needed to maintain the population level within the community (*Die Presse*, 14 August 2000). According to the head of the EU Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia in Vienna, Beate Winkler, “Europe has to get used to immigration. An estimated 50 million people will immigrate in the next five decades.” The question has long ceased to be whether immigration is necessary or desirable, but how this process should be managed (*Die Presse*, 18 January 2001: 6). Furthermore, the independent International Organisation for Migration (IOM) forecasts that 500,000 people would enter the EU illegally each year (*ibid.*). In Aus-

tria alone, the number of illegal migrants caught in 1999 rose by 117 percent. As these recent trends and future predictions indicate, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the authorities to deal with this flood of illegal immigrants – men, women, and an increasing number of children, who are also used as tools in the drug, weapons and cigarette trade that is in the hands of unscrupulous criminal organisations in the Balkans and Italy.

Some 450,000 people who said they were victims of persecution in their own countries fled to the EU member states in 2000. A significant number of them came from countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran, where ethnic groups are still persecuted (*Die Presse*, 24 February 2001: 11). There were still 42,250 asylum seekers from the former Yugoslavia in 2000, the same year Slovenia had the highest number of refugees in relation to its population, followed by Belgium, and Austria, that received, 38,590 applications for asylum. In per-capita terms, Austria accommodated far more refugees than Germany. Since guarding the Austrian EU external border costs almost 210 million Euros annually, to prevent the costs spiralling completely out of control, Austrian Bundesheer has been stationed on the Austrian eastern border as part of an assistance mission since 1990; however, Austrian policymakers do not consider this a viable option in the long term. In the words of Ernst Strasser, the Austrian Minister of Interior “A Bundesheer assistance operation is certainly practical and to be advocated as temporary support, but it cannot be a permanent solution. I do not see why we should have to pay for all of that just because we have the misfortune of a long EU external border.” The EU, therefore, has “an obligation to make a contribution toward border monitoring of its member states” (*Die Presse*, 21 August 2000: 2). Otto Schily, German Minister of Foreign Affairs proposed to concentrate on a joint safeguarding of the EU external borders “in the distant future”, in order to help future EU member states fulfil this difficult task (*Die Presse*, 16 March 2001: 7). Furthermore, in the document approved at the Laeken Summit held on 14-15 December 2001, the European Council stated its intention “to work out arrangements for cooperation between services responsible for external border control and to examine the conditions in which a mechanism or common services to control external borders could be created” (Point 42).

Better management of the Union’s external border controls will help in the fight against terrorism, illegal immigration networks and the trafficking in human beings. It could also allow for the creation of a joint European border police force. The Laeken document urges EU ministers of justice and the interior to conclude a common asylum and immigration policy within a short

period of time that would maintain the necessary balance between the protection of refugees and protecting its borders, in accordance with the principles of the 1951 Geneva Convention. The establishment of common standards on asylum procedures, reception and family reunification, should take account of the need to offer help to asylum applicants (see Point 40, Laeken Declaration).

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN THE COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Environmental protection is one of the pillars of comprehensive security. One of the great challenges for the CEECs is the adoption and implementation of EU environmental legislation as part of the accession process. The topic of nuclear safety deserves closer attention. It is identified as a priority area of the PHARE programme and is regarded as the most pressing environmental problem in the transition countries. However, the EU has not developed any single standard for the safety of nuclear power plants. The adoption, implementation and execution of EU environmental legislation are proving to be a complex and expensive processes. It is estimated that the total costs in this particular area in the transforming states will amount to 140 billion Euros (*Euromove-Infoletter* 04/2000: 2). Most of this money is required for wastewater management projects, reduction of air, soil and water pollution and the reduction of toxic waste. Rapid and complete adoption of EU environmental legislation is important because the bilateral free trade zones with the CEECs that are due to come into effect in 2002 could otherwise result in a serious distortion of competition. However, the implementation of EU regulations and the elimination of different environmental standards is an important precondition for ensuring fair trade and competition in the common market.

NUCLEAR ENERGY IN CENTRAL EUROPE

The nuclear energy sector raises a lot of points of contention between the CEECs and the EU – especially nuclear power plants in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia – most of which were built in the Soviet era with lower safety standards. Nuclear power provides a considerable share

of these countries' electricity supplies and this reliance on nuclear power is expected to continue. The two nuclear power plants, Mochovce and Jaslovské Bohunice in Slovakia are among the oldest and least safe reactors in the CEECs. The US Department of Energy has classified Bohunice as one of the nine most dangerous nuclear power plants in the world and has called for it to be closed. In Mochovce, the first reactor was switched on in 1998 and the plant still remains a risk today (*Euromove-Infoletter* 04/2000: 4).

Since the first Dzurinda government was voted into power, Slovakia has involved the EU in the question of the hazardous nuclear power plants, and on June 1 1999, a joint EU-Slovak nuclear energy group was founded. The aim of this group is to collect data on all areas of nuclear energy, to discuss them, and to draw up a plan for the closure of the Bohunice V-1 power plant, as well as to prepare a draft of a plan to financing this closure (Figel 1999: 42). In the summer of 1999, the Slovak government drew up a draft proposal on "Slovakia's Nuclear Energy Strategy" that also included the closure of the nuclear power plant Bohunice V-1 between 2010-2012 and the decision not to continue construction of Mochovce 3 and 4. The closure date for the Bohunice power plant – Units 1 and 2 – has been brought forward to between 2006 and 2008.

The problem of radioactive waste management in the Visegrad countries also causes great concern. Until 1988, the waste was returned to the USSR after five years of cooling, but Russia no longer accepts it.

The Austrian government, especially the Upper Austrian Provincial Government, started years ago to protest against the construction of the Temelin nuclear power plant, located in the Czech Republic. The Temelin plant, located approximately 100 kilometers from Linz, is a Soviet-type reactor that has been upgraded with Western technology. Due to technical problems, the start of operations at the nuclear power plant was initially delayed. Thus, the *Freiheitliche Partei* (Freedom Party), together with the most influential Austrian newspaper, *Kronen Zeitung*, in January 2002 initiated a referendum to close the Temelin nuclear power station. This referendum was supported by 15 percent of the Austrian population – about 915,000 persons.

In light of the aforementioned disparities in nuclear safety standards and the fact that these also exist within the present member states, ample room remains for the EU to act – namely in the way of introduction of standardized conditions for the operation and safety of nuclear power plants – as was demanded by Austria. In the annexes to the Presidency Conclusions of the Eu-

130 ropean Council Meeting in Laeken, held on 14 and 15 December 2001 (Point 59), the European Council only “undertakes to maintain a high level of nuclear safety in the Union. It stresses the need to monitor the security and safety of nuclear power stations. It calls for regular reports from Member States’ atomic energy experts, who will maintain close contact with the EU Commission.”

The United Kingdom and France do not agree on common safety standards for nuclear power plants. Also, Loyola de Palacio, Vice-President of the EU Commission, does not advocate abandoning atomic energy production in the EU – as this would mean the EU would be unable to fulfill the treaty goals of the Kyoto Declaration to minimise the effects of greenhouse gasses (*Die Presse*, 16 January 2002: 7). Thus, this issue is due to be of significance in the future. At present, there is no alternative to atomic energy – nuclear power plants supply 34 percent of all energy produced within the EU. In four of Austria’s neighbours, the percentage is even higher, – with the exception of the Czech Republic.

Austria now imports atomic energy – mainly from France and Germany. In France, 76 percent of all energy is produced in nuclear power plants (*Die Presse*, 12 January 2002: 2). Realistically speaking, nuclear power stations will not be abolished within the EU. The introduction of common nuclear safety standards will therefore be essential, as will be co-operation in this field.

Austria has concluded “Nuclear Information Agreements” with Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Switzerland, Slovenia, Hungary, Poland and Ukraine. The main purpose of these agreements is an early exchange of information and experiences regarding nuclear safety and radiation protection. These agreements provide for regular conferences where experts can exchange information about legal requirements, energy supply, radiation monitoring, emergency planning and nuclear energy programmes. Such meetings have already been held and were attended by Visegrad states and other countries taking part in this agreement (*Bundesministerium...*, 2000: 121).

ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION BETWEEN VISEGRAD COUNTRIES AND AUSTRIA

Due to its geographic location and historic ties, Austria enjoys close economic co-operation with the Visegrad countries. Austrian exports to Central and

Eastern Europe (Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia) more than quadrupled between 1989 and 1997, rising from Euro 1.37 bn in 1989, to Euro 5.62 bn in 1997 (*Der Standard*, 18 July 1997: 23). Total Austrian exports in the same period rose “only” by 65 percent. In 1999, 62.6 percent of total Austrian exports were destined for EU nations, 10.5 percent for the Visegrad 4. The share of Austrian total exports to Central and Eastern Europe rose from 4.4 percent in 1989, to 11 percent in 1998. This figure already comes close to that from 1947 (16.2 percent). By comparison, this share was even larger a decade earlier – in 1937, as much as 20.7 percent of Austrian exports were destined for Central and Eastern Europe (Stankovsky 1998: 51).

Between 1918 and 1938 Austria’s economy had a strong Central European orientation. Only after World War II and the establishment of communist rule in the neighbouring Central European states, this share has shifted toward the West. The trade patterns have shifted dramatically since then. Nowadays, the EU represents to all Visegrad countries the largest export market, with at least 60 percent of their total exports going to the current member states. Imports from Central and Eastern Europe to Austria have also risen sharply. Between 1989 and 1998 they rose by some 162 percent, from Euro 2.69 bn to Euro 7.05 bn (Winkler 1999: 77). Out of all the Visegrad countries, Hungary recorded by far the largest surplus during this period. Overall, due to its proximity and good infrastructure, the share of former Eastern block states in Austrian foreign trade is two to three times greater than for other Western countries (*WIFO-Monatsberichte* 4/2000: 720). In 1998, Austrian companies were the leading foreign investors in the neighbouring states of Hungary, Slovenia and Slovakia (Breuss 1998: 27).

WAGE LEVELS AND TRANSITION PERIODS

The workforce of the Visegrad countries is generally recognised as highly skilled. Despite this fact, the wage levels in most CEECs were very low in 2001: Average wages amounted to USD 300-400 a month, which represents only 15-20 percent of the Austrian average. Although wage levels in the CEECs attract many companies from the EU states, the Deputy Director of the Vienna Institute for Economic Research, Peter Havlik thinks that the economic gap between the EU member states is unlikely to close significantly in the next few years. (*Salzburger Nachrichten*, 24 June 2000: 17).

132 The enormous wage differences will certainly encourage commuting in border regions. According to the Economic Research Institute, hourly industrial wage costs in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia are only 13 to 14 percent of those in Austria. While a construction worker in Austria currently earns 2,088 Euro a month, the monthly wage of a construction worker in the Czech Republic and Hungary is only a tenth of this sum. The difference in wage levels is, in fact, likely to increase, but delaying the accession of Austria's neighbours until wage levels have risen to 80 percent of the EU average, as the Austrian Federation of Trade Unions demands, would postpone their membership for years. In comparison, according to projections, Polish incomes are estimated to reach 50 percent of the Austrian levels (in purchasing power parity) by 2005 (Walterkirchen 2000: 72).

In some EU member states, especially those in the vicinity of the Visegrad countries, the possibility of the free movement of labour after the accession of new members has raised fears that, with the existing unemployment situation in these countries, migration could lead to social tensions within the enlarged Union. So is this going to represent a serious problem, or are the fears largely exaggerated? It lies within the competence of the individual EU member states to regulate the immigration of labour and persons from the CEECs. Thus far, the share of citizens from the CEECs in the total population of the EU-15 represents 0.2 percent, and of workers, 0.3 percent. Out of this number, some 80 percent of migrants from the CEECs live in Austria and Germany (Brücker 2000: 53).

The majority of migrants from the CEECs immigrated before 1998. Since 1993, net immigration from the CEECs has been very low, due to the passage of restrictions on immigration by the EU countries. In December 2000 IG Bauen-Agrar-Umwelt – one of the largest trade unions in Germany – called for a transitional period before citizens of the candidate states would be granted full freedom of movement, in order to prevent workers from these countries flooding EU labour markets. The trade union demanded the suspension of freedom to provide services in the areas represented by it (construction, cleaning and management, waste disposal, agriculture, forestry and gardening) for at least 10 years after accession of new members (*Die Presse*, 21 December 2000). According to the estimates of the European Commission, four fifths of the migrating workers will come to Germany and Austria. In order to prevent this from happening, immigration would have to be actively steered by quotas for each member state.

German Chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, right from the outset of the discussion on this sensitive issue put forward a five-point programme that would restrict freedom of movement for workers for a seven-year period (*Die Presse*, 21 December 2000). Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson reacted positively to Mr. Schröder's suggestion, as did Social Democrats in Denmark. Austria also indicated that it "could live" with a seven year transitional period for workers from the CEECs, although Austrian Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel said this period could be shortened to five years for individual states. Finally, on 30 May 2001, at EU ambassador's conference, all EU member states agreed to a single transitional period of seven years.

Freedom of services will bring disadvantages for Austria, at least for labour-intensive industries in the border regions. The construction industry and other sectors will have difficulty competing with the low wages in the neighbouring states. The greatest beneficiaries of EU enlargement will be industrial and financial service companies that offer specialized know-how that is not as readily available on the other side of the border. These companies will employ top managers from Austria in the CEECs, but will recruit most of their employees locally. Agriculture will be one of the big losers in the EU enlargement process. Problems will not only result from greater competition with strong agricultural producers (Hungary, Poland), but also from cutbacks in payments from Brussels. The Hungarian Ambassador to Austria, Etelka Barsi-Pataky says that Austria need not worry about agricultural dumping. In 1990 agricultural goods accounted for 30 percent of total Hungarian exports to Austria, in 1998 the figure had dropped to 3.4 percent. At the same time, the percentage of industrial goods exported to Austria had risen from 5 to over 50 percent (*Compress Newsletter*, 4/2000: 6).

EU-ENLARGEMENT: ECONOMIC BENEFITS FOR AUSTRIA

Most of the approximately 500 companies that specialise in trade with Eastern Europe are concentrated in eastern Austria, in particular in and around Vienna. This has produced a concentration of know-how and experience in developing east European markets that is hard to find anywhere else in the West. Many companies from Western industrial nations have taken advantage of this fact, and an estimated 700 foreign companies cultivate the mar-

kets of Central and Eastern Europe from their Austrian offices. All Central European capitals are within easy reach of Vienna and there is an excellent infrastructure connecting Austria to its neighbours. In addition, Vienna offers managers and their families a high standard of living.

The Austrian economy has certainly profited from the opening up of Eastern Europe. According to a study conducted by the Economic Research Institute, it has led to an additional 2.4 percent surge in growth for Austrian economy between 1989 and 1994 alone, creating between 50,000 and 60,000 jobs (*Institut für den Donauraum*..., 1999). Hungary figures as Austria's most important trading partner among the CEEC and Visegrad states, accounting for around 5 percent of total Austrian exports and 3.1 percent of imports. It is followed by the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia (Wessig 1998: 5). In global terms, Hungary even overtook Switzerland as Austria's third most important export market in 1997; it has since settled in fourth place. Slovakia ranks 17th and thus has, in economic terms, even surpassed Japan in importance. In 1999, Austria was the second largest foreign investor in Slovakia with investments totaling 479 million Euros, behind Germany with 523 million Euros (*Die Presse*, 28 December 2000: 22).

Investing in the economies of individual transitional states and the resulting creation of jobs prevents migration, i.e. those living there no longer feel the need to come to the EU in search of jobs. According to the Economic Research Institute in Vienna, the number of jobs created by direct Austrian investment in the CEECs rose from 70,000 in 1990, to 190,400 in 1997. Thus, outsourcing the wage cost intensive production processes by shifting these to the CEECs improves the international competitiveness of the overall product, safeguarding and creating new jobs, also in Austria (*Der Standard*, 26 February 1999: 24).

CONCLUSIONS

EU and NATO enlargement and the position that Austria takes within these processes have a decisive influence on Austria's geopolitical situation. Eastern enlargement of EU and NATO will determine the real balance of power within Europe. The political West is expanding eastward and Austria's interest in extending its political and economic sphere of influence will be

strengthened through these enlargements. In this sense, the Visegrad states and Slovenia represent a priority for Austria.

Co-operation between the Visegrad states in the fields of policing and internal security, as well as in the fight against human trafficking is essential. Other spheres of cooperation, such as nuclear energy, military, security policy and crisis management, are also of importance to Central European states, but will have to be addressed also in a broader context after the Union enlarges. The Austrian army co-operates and trains intensively with the armies of the "Visegrad 4" for peacekeeping missions within the framework of crisis management operations. Hungary serves as the engine in this area, especially as it is a member of NATO and primarily due to its strategic interests – namely peace and stability – in what is still an unstable region.

While Hungary will soon set up two crisis management and disaster protection units together with Croatia, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine, CENCOOP, that was based on an Austrian initiative, has not thus far, developed into an effective organisation for co-operation between the small Central European states and Poland. This is partly due to the participating states' obligations within NATO (PfP in the case of Slovakia) and the EU. Although the nature of the threat to security has changed since 1989 due, among other factors, to the rise of international terrorism and globalisation, in foreign and security policy, great importance is still attached to preventative measures designed to counter the threat of the rise and spread of military conflicts, as well as to overcome the inner security problems of illegal migration and human trafficking.

Austria could, in theory, become a member of the Visegrad Initiative if Visegrad were to take on an integration policy function after all the participating states have been integrated into European and Euro-Atlantic structures. In 2000, the Czech Prime Minister Miloš Zeman suggested that Germany be included in the Visegrad Initiative, as it has experience with the integration of a former communist state. To what extent the "regional partnership" (which has not been institutionalised by the participant countries) including Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary affirms as a comprehensive form of co-operation framework – at least in the areas of justice and home affairs in the enlargement process – remains to be seen.

Whether lasting co-operation in certain areas comes about depends on the political will and interests of the participating states; the depth of such co-operation will depend on the political framework conditions. Due to common

136 interest of the Central European states in the area of security policy, deeper and more comprehensive coordination is desirable. Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland became members of NATO in 1999 and are now significant players in the area of security policy as well as important contributors to the stability in this region. In order to achieve maximum-security co-operation in the region, however, the three NATO Visegrad states and Slovakia as a NATO candidate country, should also be joined by Austria in membership.

More than ten years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, the Visegrad countries are still undergoing a process of economic and political transformation. Austria's direct neighbours and Poland have made considerable progress during this restructuring period that started in 1989. Due to its central geographic location at the crossroads of important east-west and north-south traffic routes, Austria continues to be directly affected by all the developments, challenges, risks and opportunities in Central Europe. In this connection, it is important for Austria to develop its traffic routes to the Slovak and Czech borders, as the existing ones will not be able to cope with the increasing volume of traffic in the future. Due to its proximity to Bratislava, Vienna International Airport in Schwechat has become the most important airport for western Slovakia and serves on a symbolic, as well as a practical level as a model of European integration.

In economic terms, EU's Eastern enlargement means the complete deregulation of trade. In the years since the collapse of communism, Austria has profited greatly from the impressive increase in its exports and considerable investments made by Austrian businesses in the Visegrad countries. In per-capita terms, it has benefited more from the opening up of East European markets than any other Western country. Most of the benefits that the EU can expect from any enlargement are long-term. Although the accession of the Visegrad states may not bring significant economic benefits to the current EU states in comparison with the risks associated with it, they will gain indirectly in terms of increased security and stability on the continent. The Visegrad countries in turn will benefit more in the immediate term from joining the Union due to budgetary transfers (Sziveri 1999/2000: 127–162). The EU can expect to benefit from trade gains due to the advantages of low production costs of the Visegrad countries and their high intra-industry links with the EU. Politically, both EU and NATO enlargement represent a unique historic opportunity to achieve lasting peace in Europe through the stabilisation of the Central European region. After all, the benefits of peace cannot be expressed in figures.

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Tamás Réti

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Chapter VI VISEGRAD ECONOMIES – HEADING FOR EUROPEAN UNION

INTRODUCTION

Various regional economic co-operation initiatives that have emerged since 1990 in Europe are a part of a process of constructing the European economic area. Preferential trade arrangements established in this context intend not to be inward looking, but instead to facilitate the participation of their members in the world economy. The initiatives are part of a strategy to liberalize and open national economies and implement export and foreign investment-led policies. For the participating transition economies, regional economic co-operation represents a useful support for their accession to the EU.

During the twentieth century, economic co-operation between Visegrad countries has gone through several radical changes. These generally small-sized economies concluded economic partnership agreements in the shadow of big powers (Germany, and later the Soviet Union), which had strong political and economic interests in the region. Mutual economic relations were established on a bilateral basis and regional trade developed within this framework. Despite geographical proximity, mutual historical experiences and potential economic benefits stemming from regional co-operation, intra-regional trade tended to decrease. Political considerations were given priority, and comparative advantages remained under-utilised. The declining and limited scope of intra-regional trade has strengthened the conviction that small economies could not become natural partners and their relations could only be guaranteed through the intermediation of major economies in the region.

The changes in the political systems of former socialist countries in 1989 resulted in an external opening and liberalization of foreign trade and capi-

tal flows. At the beginning of 1990s, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) was abolished and – following the emergence of customs tariffs and non-tariff barriers – trade among the Visegrad countries decreased considerably. The Central European economies sought to promote economic connections primarily with the European Union. With the entry into force of the Europe Agreements (EAs), trade barriers between East and West started to be dismantled and the pendulum has largely swung to the benefit of the relations with the West.

In order to influence these trends, the so-called Visegrad Agreement was concluded in February 1991 among former Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. The Agreement emphasised the existence of mutual economic and political interests, underlined the necessity for co-ordinating integration policies with the West, and stressed the need to further develop regional economic relations. In a town of Visegrad in Hungary, signatory countries expressed their common interests in relations with the West and agreed that their efforts would be more efficient if pursued jointly. Subsequently, their interest in mutual intra-regional trade was also clearly confirmed.

The Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) was signed in 1992. In the beginning, the creation of CEFTA was spurred on by two major factors. The EU promoted the idea that associated countries also needed to establish a free trade zone within the region, thus providing external impetus to its creation. The second major factor was the economically unjustified low level of eastern trade relations and the fact that developing intra-regional trade would enhance the economic recovery of the transition economies. The CEFTA relied essentially on the trade part of the EA and set goals of creating a free trade zone for industrial products in ten years and reducing trade barriers for trade in agriculture. The major difference between the two Agreements is that the EAs are based on the notion of asymmetry, while CEFTA seeks to exploit mutual benefits. The objective of the CEFTA was to create at least the same preferences as those provided by the EAs.

The relationship of regional trading arrangements to the multilateral trading system is an important issue in trade policy. Today, the intensification of regional integration initiatives has affirmed itself as a clear trend and regionalism emerges as an integral part of the trading environment. Regional trading blocs, however, should not be seen as alternatives to multilateral trade liberalisation and to global free trade. Regional trading arrangements are developed as “building blocks” and not as “stumbling blocks” to multilateral liberalization.

What are the major driving forces behind regionalism? The prospects of enhanced economic growth resulting from the exploitation of scale economies, better regional specialisation, and increased FDI flows attracted by expanding regional markets are important economic factors. The non-economic objectives of regionalism include strengthening of regional political cohesion, enhancing regional security and better control of immigration flows. Other objectives are to sustain domestic economic policy reforms, in particular trade liberalisation. In transition economies, regional trading arrangements are expected to complement and solidify shifts toward market-oriented reforms. Regional initiatives should not be inward-looking; instead, they have to be associated with a strong outward orientation. If regional trading arrangements are properly conceived and implemented, they may contribute to the long-term goal of global free trade. Therefore, rather than to consider regional initiatives and the multilateral trading system as inevitably antithetical, these initiatives should be approached as complementary. Multilateralism and regionalism are in contradiction only if liberalisation is exclusively associated with the global trade perspective, while regional trade is linked with protectionist tendencies.

A former Director-General of the WTO proposed open regionalism as a possible solution. Such an approach would comply with the basic legal requirements of the WTO and allow for a gradual convergence of regionalism and multilateralism. Regional initiatives can help the WTO accomplish its goals, as regional agreements involving fewer countries with similar conditions may be more flexible and encourage liberalisation in areas not yet covered by the WTO (Rétí 2000a).

ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE VISEGRAD COUNTRIES

Prior to the 1989, political and economic changes in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), the relationship with the European Community progressed in a slow and hesitant manner. The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) and the European Community (EC) were very different trading organisations. The CMEA had no common commercial policy and external tariffs. Economic relations between the two groupings began to improve by the second half of the 1980s due to the economic reforms and the start of politi-

142 cal liberalization in CEE countries. By mid-1988, diplomatic relations had been established between the EC and several CEE countries.

Hungary concluded a co-operation agreement in September 1988 that eliminated quantitative restrictions in the trade of industrial goods over a period of four years. Similar agreements were signed in 1989 and 1990 by former Czechoslovakia and Poland, respectively. These Trade and Co-operation Agreements provided for mutual MFN treatment in accordance with the GATT, eliminated prohibitive trade barriers and abolished quantitative restrictions. The Community granted the General System of Preferences (GSP) to the former socialist countries as a unilateral advantage, leading to more favourable export terms for their agricultural products and increasing their opportunities for exporting textiles. The transition period for phasing out quantitative restrictions was abolished. As a response to the democratization in CEEs, the European Community has opened up its markets and provided aid to support market reforms.

The Visegrad countries rapidly liberalized their trade regimes and abandoned their state regulated, bureaucratic trading systems, in particular by abolishing the state monopoly of foreign trade and moving to foreign exchange convertibility for current account transactions. External liberalization was a necessary supplement to internal price liberalization. Exposure to world market prices helped in de-monopolising the economy, supported competition and improved allocation of resources.

The most important instruments in establishing close relations with the European Community have been the Europe Agreements (Association Agreements). The first agreements were signed with Hungary, Poland, and former Czechoslovakia in December 1991 (see Table 1). The Europe Agreements, which followed the model of Association Agreements signed with some other countries, substantially modified mutual relations. They established a formal legal basis for a closer political relationship and dialogue and led to the creation of several common institutions, such as the Association Council, Association Committee and the Association Parliamentary Committee.

All the EAs concluded by the CEECs have the same structure. The preamble considers the EA as a step towards establishing a system of stability in Europe based on co-operation. It also acknowledges that the final goal of these countries is membership in the EU. Among the objectives, the EAs mention the gradual establishment of a free trade area that will cover substantially all trade between them. In general, the transition period is fixed for ten years,

Table 1
Europe Agreements

Europe Agreements are entering into force		
	Interim	Final
Hungary	March 1, 1992	February 1, 1994
Poland	March 1, 1992	February 1, 1994
Czech Republic	March 1, 1992a	February 1, 1995
Slovakia	March 1, 1992a	February 1, 1995

Notes: a stands for Former Czechoslovakia

Source: Stankovsky, J., Plasser, F., Ulram, A. P., On the Eve of EU Enlargement. Economic Developments and Democratic Attitudes in East Central Europe. Signum Verlag, Wien 1998.

though the latest agreements define different transition periods. The articles of free movement of goods are divided into three separate sections: industrial products, agricultural goods and fisheries. The free trade arrangement applies only to industrial goods and not to agricultural products (Mayhew 1998).

The EA provisions for agricultural goods were not initially very far-reaching. The concessions included lowering of levies and duties on quantities of a wide range of products and some increases of quotas. Further liberalisation in mutual agricultural trade took place by mid 2000. The Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia have concluded new agreements; the negotiations with Poland were interrupted, but finally concluded. Hungary is the only V4 country that keeps recording a surplus in its agricultural trade with the EU. In response to this development, in July 2000, Hungary and the EU signed the so-called double-zero agreement that calls for reduced tariffs and an end to export subsidies for 72 percent of Hungary's exports of unprocessed agricultural products to the EU and 54 percent of the EU's agricultural exports to Hungary (*US Department...*, 2000).

MAIN TRENDS IN FOREIGN TRADE OF VISEGRAD ECONOMIES

The political and economic changes have substantially altered the geographical and product structures of foreign trade in the V4, in particular, in terms

144 of their trade relations with EU partners. Although the EAs led to a rapid growth in mutual trade, with EU exports to the Central European states developing less dynamically than EU imports from these countries (see Table 2), considerable trade deficits were recorded

Table 2
Growth of foreign trade between the European Union and the Visegrad countries 1998-2001 (% based on current dollar price)

	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia
Export to the EU	138	135	130	127
Import from the EU	125	118	99.5	112

Source: CESTAT Statistical Bulletin 2001/4, Hungarian Central Statistical Office, Budapest, 2002.

by Central European countries in their trade with the EU including the Czech Republic (1996), Hungary (1994), Poland (1998), and Slovakia (1998). Assessing the reasons and the consequences of this trade situation is a complex task, as several aspects need to be considered. On the one hand, it is understandable that the transition countries have considerable import requirements related to their modernisation needs. In addition, pent-up demand in private consumption, backlogs in the infrastructure and restructuring of enterprises have also contributed to import surges. Fixed exchange rate policies led to currency appreciation that added strong upward pressures on import demand. FDI inflows have entailed further imports. On the other hand, restrictive policies on the EU side adversely affected several sensitive sectors in which the V4 still enjoyed some comparative advantages. Moreover, the external opening and trade liberalisation have intensified competition on the V4's domestic markets. Central European countries have also succeeded in considerably improving their export capacities. The most remarkable development occurred in the exports of machinery and equipment by the V4. It's share in total exports increased substantially reflecting mostly the impact of FDI (see Table 3).

After the collapse of the former CMEA markets, the *Czech Republic* experienced a rapid reorientation of trade. The EU and, within it, Germany became the largest export markets. Czech export growth has been limited by a number of anti-dumping measures against Czech exporters. Large FDI, in particular in the motor vehicle industry, allowed for a rapid development of high-value added products. Since 1992, strong real wage growth, industrial

Table 3
The share of machinery and transport equipment in total exports (%)

	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2001
Czech Republic	25.4	25.9	32.7	41.3	44.5	47.3
Hungary	21.2	25.6	36.3	52.0	59.8	57.6
Poland	19.2	19.8	23.4	28.4	34.2	36.2
Slovakia	17.4	19.0	23.2	37.4	39.5	38.5

Source: CESTAT Statistical Bulletin 2001/4, Hungarian Central Statistical Office, Budapest, 2002.

recovery and fast appreciation of the national currency caused rapid import growth, largely outstripping the increase of exports. The Czech government was committed to nominal exchange rate stability between January 1991 and May 1997, which resulted in a real appreciation. In reaction to the growing external and governmental deficits, austerity measures have been introduced to lower these imbalances. Currency devaluation and establishment of floating exchange rates, coupled with reduction in domestic demand, have resulted in improvement of the external trade balance, but the economy entered into a recession, which lasted until the end of 1999.

Hungary has traditionally been a more open economy. After 1990, a substantial part of the foreign trade with CMEA countries was redirected towards Western markets. Starting in 1993, the trade balance turned into large deficits resulting from a dramatic decline in exports and a fast increase in imports. Several measures were undertaken, in particular the devaluation of the currency, introduction of an import surcharge and restrictions of the domestic consumption. These measures and considerable FDI inflows helped to overcome external imbalances. The developments of FDI and related export capacities have also been facilitated by the creation of industrial customs-free zones.

Re-integration of *Poland* into Western European trade proceeded rapidly. By the mid-1990s, the EU has well established itself as the country's most important trading partner. Between 1998-1999, the trade deficit expanded from \$13.7bn to \$14.5bn, in large part due to the high import sensitivity of the manufacturing industry (for balance of trade see Table 4). The crash of the Russian market contributed to the decline in Polish exports. The volatility of the Zloty's exchange rate has also affected the country's trade performance.

Table 4
EU share in Polish trade (% of total)

	1991	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2001
Exports	55.6	57.9	62.7	66.2	68.3	69.9	69.2
Imports	49.9	53.2	57.5	63.9	65.7	61.2	61.4

Source: CESTAT Statistical Bulletin, 2001/4.

Slovakia has rapidly reoriented its trade to the West. Despite the creation of the Custom Union, the economic linkage with the Czech Republic has continuously decreased. Slovakia's overall trade position began to deteriorate in 1996 due to exchange rate appreciation, strong import demand, low export competitiveness and high dependence on exports of price-sensitive intermediate goods, such as basic steel products, refined fuels and base chemicals. Exports have developed in the transport equipment sector, which benefited from FDI inflows. A deterioration of the trade balance, which accelerated in 1998, prompted the government to initiate an austerity package in 1999, devalue the currency and re-introduce the import surcharge. Following these measures, economic growth has slowed down and the trade balance improved considerably. In particular, the country managed to generate a trade surplus of US\$ 220 mn in its trade with the EU (Reti 2000b).

SUB-REGIONAL TRADE ARRANGEMENT: CEFTA

The Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), concluded by the former Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, was based on the Visegrad Declaration of 15 February 1991 and the Cracow Declaration of 6 October 1991. The Agreement was signed on 21 December 1992 in Cracow and was applied from 1 March 1993, entering into force on 1 July 1994. Slovenia acceded to CEFTA in 1996, Romania in 1997 and Bulgaria in 1999.

In the Preamble of the Agreement, the parties express their wishes to participate actively in the process of economic integration of Europe, and to foster the intensification of mutually beneficial trade relations among them. They also agree to gradually establish a free trade area in conformity with Article XXIV of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in a transitional

period ending on 1 January 2001, at the latest. For industrial products, the Agreement stipulates that no new customs duties on imports shall be introduced and the current duties be abolished. The basic duty to which the successive reductions are to be applied is the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) rate, applicable on 29 February 1992. This means that CEFTA introduced a so-called standstill clause, which defined the maximum level of protection, and the parties committed themselves not to raise it. Moreover, the participant countries agreed to abolish all charges other than customs duties on imports and exports. The CEFTA also envisages the complete abolition of duties, charges and non-trade barriers on trade in industrial products by the end of the transitional period. There are some exceptions, such as Polish car exports to Hungary and Hungarian exports of paper products to Poland, for which the transitional period was to end only on 1 January 2002.

Article XXIV of GATT defines the conditions to be met by a free trade area. The CEFTA meets the provision that requires a reasonable timetable for setting up a free trade area. A major feature of the CEFTA is that tariff concessions are included in bilateral protocols that form an integral part of the Agreement. The liberalisation in industrial products is based on the principle of balanced concessions and by setting up timetables for tariff reductions that are very similar in individual schedules. The goal of the parties involved is to reach a balance, and symmetry in granting concessions reciprocally.

The liberalization of trade in industrial products has been accelerated three times. The first adjustment happened in 1994, when the timetable for reduction of tariffs was shortened for the most sensitive goods, liberalisation for products of medium sensitivity was accelerated, and several goods were shifted to lists with shorter periods of liberalisation. A second acceleration occurred in 1995 and it included a great number of industrial goods. The last amendment accelerating liberalization of trade in industrial products took place in 1996. As a consequence of the successive acceleration rounds, only a small share of industrial products remained subject to customs tariffs by January 1997. These included the most sensitive goods such as vehicles, textiles, steel products and some chemical products. The full elimination of customs tariffs was to take place in the years 2000-2002.

For the agricultural sector, the agreement does not contain a standstill clause. Concessions are granted to limited groups of products and a complete elimination of tariffs is not envisaged. The respective countries exchange the concessions on a bi-lateral basis, modifying the original Agreement in view of

148 larger specific liberalisation. Some CEFTA have also been known to apply trade restrictions especially in the form of increased tariffs. For example, tariffs were raised on Hungarian chicken exports to Poland, Romania and Slovenia.

In order to facilitate the accession of new countries, the original Agreement was amended on 11 September 1995. Formally, the applicant had to be a European country and the application had to be accepted by all CEFTA members. There are now two new conditions – membership in the WTO and an EA signed by an applicant country with the EU. Following these amendments, CEFTA membership was expanded to include Slovenia, Romania and Bulgaria. As a free trade agreement, CEFTA does not deal with the free movement of capital, labour and services, has no permanent institution and its members enjoy full sovereignty in their decision-making. The co-ordination of its activities falls under the authority of the Joint Committee composed of the ministers responsible for international economic co-operation. The Joint Committee works by common agreement and may establish sub-committees or working groups for special tasks.

During the first years of CEFTA between 1993-1997, trade liberalisation in member countries led to a rapid expansion of foreign trade. Dynamism of regional trade was due to the cumulative effect of several positive factors. First, dismantling of customs and other non-tariff barriers led to the increase in trade. The first years of CEFTA corresponded to a reconstruction period, since the starting trade levels were very low. Second, intra-regional trade also benefited from the end of the so-called transformation recession and the subsequent economic revival in most CEFTA member countries. Economic growth was primarily based on the development of domestic demand – both personal consumption and investments – which created a strong demand for imports. Third, growing trade imbalances vis-à-vis the EU recorded by most CEFTA countries also encouraged the search for new alternative export markets. Between 1993-1997, trade balances of individual CEFTA countries differed significantly. In the case of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, trade within CEFTA has led mostly to export surpluses, while Poland and Slovenia posted import surpluses. Hungary was in an intermediate position: it achieved trade deficits vis-à-vis the Czech Republic and Slovakia, but achieved trade surpluses with Poland and Slovenia. CEFTA's total intra-regional imports increased from US\$ 7.4bn in 1993 to US\$ 13.8bn in 1998 and to US\$ 17.3bn in 2001 (for structure of intra-CEFTA exports, see Table 6).

Table 5
Share of CEFTA-trade in the total trade of CEFTA countries (%)

	Export				Import			
	CZE	HUN	POL	SVK	CZE	HUN	POL	SVK
1995	21.4	5.9	5.4	44.3	16.3	6.4	5.6	33.1
1996	22.8	7.4	5.9	42.1	14.6	6.9	5.8	29.7
1997	22.0	7.3	6.7	38.7	14.0	6.5	6.3	28.9
1998	20.3	8.9	7.2	32.3	14.0	6.9	6.3	25.2
2000	16.9	8.1	8.4	30.2	12.8	7.5	7.1	21.4
2001	17.0	9.0	8.7	30.0	12.6	7.9	7.4	22.6

Source: CESTAT Statistical Bulletin 2001/4, Hungarian Central Statistical Office, *author's own calculations*.

Over the period 1995-2001, the share of trade within CEFTA in total trade increased in Hungary and Poland. The shrinkage in this respect for the Czech Republic and Slovakia was mainly due to the trade decline within the Customs Union (see Table 5). As an export market, the CEFTA plays an important role for the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

Table 6
Structure of intra-CEFTA exports in 2001 (%)

	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia
Czech Republic	-	11.1	30.5	47.3
Hungary	20.1	-	22.1	14.9
Poland	45.5	24.0	-	16.4
Slovakia	55.4	17.9	19.3	-

Source: CESTAT Statistical Bulletin 2001/4, Hungarian Central Statistical Office, Budapest, 2002.

Table 7
Trade balances within the CEFTA (USD mn)

	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia
1996	962	-91	-680	368
1997	970	9	-926	320
1998	1 299	273	-948	211
2000	785	-129	-800	848
2001	1 096	85	-595	466

Source: Author's calculations based on the CESTAT Bulletin 2001/4

150 One major obstacle to further development of intra-CEFTA trade is the low amount of foreign capital flows. Enterprises in the CEECs have so far participated to a limited extent in acquisitions and green-field investments in other regional economies. This phenomenon can be explained by the shortage of domestic capital, lack of foreign-investor friendly privatisation policies and resistance to selling domestic enterprises to neighbouring countries. The low volume of foreign direct investments inhibits expansion of regional trade turnover.

Despite the fast increase in trade turnover among the CEFTA countries, the volume of intra-regional trade is modest and therefore might have a considerable expansion potential, due to geographical proximity, complementary production structures, balanced economic relationship and the level of development for member countries. The establishment of a number of transnational enterprises has already had a positive impact on intra-regional trade flows. These enterprises often establish affiliates in other CEE economies and, by developing specialised production, encourage intra-industry trade within CEFTA.

The V4 have made remarkable progress in the process of trade liberalization that has led to greater international openness and an increased level of integration into the global economy. A more liberal trade regime allowed for a rapid development of exports and a greater outward orientation. Liberal trade regimes encouraged economic development in the region and contributed to economic growth. However, several major policy problems related to trade liberalization had to be considered, such as the timing of currency convertibility, the level of protection and the speed of liberalization. In particular, the task of liberalization of trade was difficult because it was necessary to weigh the trade-off between protection of less competitive industries and the importance of strong competitive pressures.

Following the collapse of the CMEA, which seriously disrupted regional trade flows, regional agreements sought to revive and help in developing economically rational trade relations. The EAs and the CEFTA established the basic framework for comprehensive regional economic co-operation. These agreements called for the gradual introduction of free trade in industrial products and concessions to be made in trade of agricultural goods. They facilitated the inevitable process of re-orientation of trade, especially the shift to trade with the EU, which became the most important trading partner. Trade liberalization in the CEFTA was rapid, and to some extent went fur-

ther, compared to the EAs. However, protectionist tendencies in CEFTA agricultural trade indicate a certain deceleration in the trade liberalization process.

The initial rapid increase in trade among CEFTA members reflected very low initial levels of intra-regional trade. It is doubtful that these high growth rates could be pursued in the future. The future dynamism of intra-regional trade relations will very much depend on economic developments in partner countries, their economic convergence and their individual progress in integration within the EU. Simultaneous balanced and sustainable growth of the whole region appears to be an important condition for the development of regional economic co-operation (Rétí 2000a).

VISEGRAD COUNTRIES' ECONOMIC ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE PROCESS OF TRANSITION

In the former Czechoslovakia, the first democratic government applied stabilization and liberalization package intended to liberalize prices, export and import regulations, introduced cuts in subsidies to enterprises, restrictions in fiscal expenditures, devaluated currency and unified exchange rates, as well as introduced partial convertibility of currency. This policy-package was broadly in line with the standard IMF stabilization program. The aim of the fiscal policy over the first half of the 1990s was to maintain a balanced budget. The start of the economic reform coincided with a rapid decline in the output, incomes, purchasing power, exports and investments. Recovery started in 1993, and by 1995 the Czech Republic (one of the two successor states of Czechoslovakia) produced high growth, falling inflation, and low unemployment. The break-up of the federation helped the Czech government to keep the budget in surplus until 1996.

By 1997, the Czech government was faced with a growing fiscal deficit, which was not only due to the economic slowdown, but also several economic policy mistakes. Macroeconomic stabilization was not accompanied by deep and thorough supply-side reforms. Also, growth in real wages far outstripped real GDP growth in 1993-1997. The government led by the Civic Democratic Party had to adopt austerity packages in mid-1997 in order to reduce domestic demand, and to contain the high current account and budget deficits. Fiscal

152 austerity measures, ending with the soft credits to the enterprise sector led to a prolonged recession, which lasted during the period 1997-1999. Pressures on the currency forced the Central bank to end with the pegged exchange rate and turn to floating. Previously, the government committed itself to nominal exchange-rate stability that resulted in a strong real appreciation of the Koruna. Thus, the currency devaluation as a result of the 1997 crisis helped to reduce the trade deficit in the forthcoming years. The recovery began in 2000, supported by record levels of foreign direct investment and high export performance in relation to the strong EU growth. While the current account has moved into deficit since 1994, the financial account has produced strong surpluses as a result of large FDI inflows.

In the early 1990s, the most important privatization sales have been those of the Škoda Automotive and the state-owned tobacco enterprise to Philip Morris. In the mid 1990s, the government sold a 49 percent share in the petrochemical industry and a 27 percent share in the SPT Telecom Company. Thereafter, shares in two large banks, Investiční a Poštovní Banka (IPB) and Československá Obchodní Banka (ČSOB) were sold to foreign investors. The government's 1998 FDI incentives had a positive effect on the economic development, as had the start of the EU accession negotiations.

In 2001, with an average GDP growth of 3.6 percent, the Czech economy performed much better than the Euro zone as a whole and was among the leading performers of the Visegrad countries.

The major factor in this growth was the robust domestic economy. The current account deficit in 2001 amounted to about 4.7 percent of the GDP. The trade deficit narrowed from negative 6.5 percent of GDP in 2000, to negative 5.5 percent in 2001. Czech exports to the EU grew at a higher nominal rate (11%) than imports (9%). The positive trends in the trade balance continued in the first months of 2002. Furthermore, the expected recovery in the Euro zone can be expected to have a beneficial effect on the Czech export industry. During 2001, the country registered a record in the inflow of FDI; by the end of 2002 this record could be broken, when 11.5 percent of the GDP is expected to flow in. This inflow is increasingly made up of green field investments besides some major privatization deals: for instance, more than EUR 1 billion is being invested by Toyota and PSA Peugeot Citroen. The influx provides debt-free cover for the current account deficit. The negative aspect of this trend is that the constant inflow of foreign currency exerts strong pressure on the Koruna, and leads to its appreciation. In 2001 the value of

the Czech currency in relation to the Euro increased by about 8 percent in nominal terms and further accelerated in the first months of 2002. The National Bank intervened by buying foreign currency to curb the upward trend and reduced several times the key interest rates to counteract the negative impact of the strong currency. The strengthening currency is expected to have an adverse effect on economic growth and foreign trade (*CEE Report 2002-2*).

Table 8
Czech macroeconomic indicators (in %)

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002a
GDP (real)	-1.2	-0.4	2.9	3.6	3.2
Consumer prices (yearly average)	10.7	2.1	3.9	4.7	3.1
Unemployment (yearly average)	6.0	8.6	9.0	8.4	8.8
Budget balance (in % of GDP)	-2.9	-3.4	-4.6	-6.9	-9.2
Current account (in % of GDP)	-2.4	-3.0	-4.7	-4.7	-4.6
FDI (net inflow) EUR mn	3,434	3,941	3,887	5,390	8,427
Gross foreign debt (in % of GDP)	43.2	42.6	40.7	40.4	37.7

Notes: * forecast

Sources: Bank Austria Creditanstalt Economics Department, CEE Report Number 2-2002

Hungarian economy has gone through a very similar economic development as the Czech Republic. It also underwent a deep and long-lasting transformation recession between 1990-1993, became a very open economy, and embarked upon a fast integration with the European Union. The economic recovery began at about the same time as that of the Czech Republic, at the turn of 1993-94, but was followed by a major discrepancy – the Hungarian economy fell into the so-called second transition crisis by 1994-95 due to high external and internal deficits that further increased the already accumulated foreign debt. In order to avoid further deterioration, the socialist-liberal government implemented a severe austerity program, which constrained domestic consumption, increased export competitiveness and reduced import demand.

As a result of these measures contained in the so-called Bokros-package, Hungarian economic growth has temporarily registered a decline and a rise in inflation, but a turn for the better in terms of the governments' current account balance has been achieved. In the following years, the Hungarian economy was put on an accelerating growth path; meanwhile, the economic

equilibrium was not seriously affected. Due to the Hungarian privatization policy, sales to foreign investors enjoyed priority, which had the effect of opening up of the economy, primarily to multinational companies. Large foreign direct investment inflow has had a positive impact on the export performance, and it greatly contributed to the modernization of the export structure. Favorable economic trends starting in 1997 have been continuing ever since manufacturing exports were the engine of the economic growth, rather than domestic demand.

Economic growth was influenced in 2001 by the sluggish international environment. For the whole year, economic output expanded by 3.8 percent – the highest growth rate among the Visegrad countries. The Orbán government's anti-cyclical economic policy partly managed to offset the negative pressures from the West. The budgetary policy became more lenient – later, prior to the spring 2002 parliamentary election, perhaps too lenient. The economic growth declined further in the first quarter of 2002, when GDP rose only by 2.9 percent in comparison to the same period the year before. However, the confidence of the business community is on the rise again, which is strongly tied to the improving German confidence index, due to the close link between IFO's confidence index and the development of the Hungarian manufacturing export sector.

With the recovery of the global economy, we can also expect an upturn for the Hungarian industry. The strong household consumption and the rise in government-financed investments will ensure a strong demand for imports, which will still overshadow the export performance. As a result, the current account deficit is expected to widen from 2.2 percent of the GDP in 2001, to more than 3 percent. This could be a consequence of the former Prime Minister Orbán government's loose budgetary policy, which caused large wage increases and fueled inflationary price rises. The new socialist-liberal Medgyessy government took over the budget with very heavy engagements; by the end of May 2002, 85 percent of the planned central government budget deficit was already spent (*Konjunkturajelentes...*, 2002)

In Poland, despite frequent shifts of policy in the economic area, neoliberal economic policy established under the former finance minister Leszek Balcerowicz was later pursued, and determined the framework of the following governments. By the mid-1990s, Poland managed to achieve debt cancellation with the Paris Club, later with the London Club, EU Association Agreement was in place and OECD membership was approved. The economic

Table 9
Hungarian macroeconomic indicators (%)

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002a
GDP (real)	4.9	4.2	5.2	3.8	3.2
Consumer prices (yearly average)	14.3	10.0	9.8	9.2	5.5
Unemployment (yearly average)	7.8	7.1	6.4	5.7	5.7
Budget balance (in % of GDP)	-4.7	-3.4	-3.4	-3.3	-4.5
Current account (in % of GDP)	-4.9	-4.3	-2.9	-2.2	-3.5
FDI (net inflow) EUR mn	1,302	2,497	1,463	2,443	1,950
Gross foreign debt (in % of GDP)	58.0	60.1	67.3	65.5	60.7

Notes: ^a forecast

Sources: Bank Austria Creditanstalt Economics Department, CEE Report Number 2-2002, Author's calculations.

growth rate, after a severe recession, began to recover in 1992, peaked at 7 percent in 1995 and remained impressive in 1996-97 before slowing down in 1998-99, when it was pulled down by the effect of the Russian Rouble crisis. By 1999, the current-account deficit had risen to 7.4 percent of the GDP, causing concerns among investors about the macroeconomic stability. However, growing inflow of FDI proved to be enough for financing a large part of the deficit and avoiding a loss of confidence in the Zloty.

The economic situation in Poland did not improve at the turn of the century; rather, there has been a marked deterioration. Throughout 2001, GDP growth decelerated steadily, unemployment reached record levels and strongly appreciating currency, coupled with the weakening domestic demand depressed inflation. The overall economic situation inherited by the new centre-left government in power since November 2001 was rather disillusioning. The inflow of foreign direct investment in 2001 was much lower than in 1999 and 2000. The present government of Prime Minister Leszek Miller is increasing pressure on the Central bank to lower interest rates (*Regular Report* 2001).

The Slovak economy produced fast economic growth and decreasing inflation between 1994-1998 that was based mostly on foreign borrowing and led to an increased foreign indebtedness. Deterioration in the internal and external balances raised the question of sustainability of this economic policy. High growth was due mostly to infrastructure projects and did not include manufacturing industry. Industrial performance remained weak; the share of low-value added products was high. Deficit in the current account amounted to

Table 10
Polish macroeconomic indicators (%)

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002a
GDP (real)	4.8	4.1	4.0	1.1	0.8
Consumer prices (yearly average)	11.8	7.3	10.1	5.5	3.8
Unemployment (yearly average)	10.0	12.0	13.9	16.2	18.0
Budget balance (in % of GDP)	-3.2	-3.2	-2.7	-5.6	-5.9
Current account (in % of GDP)	-4.4	-8.1	-6.3	-4.0	-3.9
FDI (net inflow) EUR mn	5,354	5,434	9,036	5,600	3,400
Gross foreign debt (in % of GDP)	37.6	42.4	44.1	38.9	38.7

Notes: ^a forecast

Sources: Bank Austria Creditanstalt Economics Department, CEE Report Number 2-2002.

10 percent of the GDP in 1997. Foreign debt more than doubled between 1995-1998, international credit rating of Slovakia greatly deteriorated.

The government led by Prime Minister Dzurinda that came to power in the fall of 1998 was faced with the urgent need for strict economic measures and the need to liberalize the exchange rate. A drastic austerity program was accepted in May 1999 that raised the regulated prices, increased the turnover tax rates, introduced import surcharge, and led to the decline of social expenditures. Besides cutting the domestic demand, the new government returned to the privatization policy – accelerated its sales to foreigners, introduced foreign-investor friendly policies, and embarked on the privatization of the banking sector. As a result of the restrictions, economic growth slowed, but it did not turn into a recession, although it did cause a rise in inflation. Furthermore, unemployment jumped to record levels. On the positive note, the government of Prime Minister Dzurinda managed to bring the country out of international isolation – Slovakia began EU accession negotiations in the beginning of 2000 and joined the OECD in 2001.

Over the past years, the economic outlook for Slovakia has improved considerably, however, in 2001 the foreign trade deficit rose to historic levels, which resulted in a large current account deficit, equivalent to some 7.8 percent of GDP. The strong FDI inflow was mainly related to the privatization of the banking sector. Domestic demand is gradually emerging as the main driving force behind the economic growth and private consumption was also supported by the government's fiscal policy in the period leading up to the par-

Table 11
Slovak macroeconomic indicators (%)

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002a
GDP (real)	4.4	1.9	2.2	3.3	2.5
Consumer prices (yearly average)	6.7	10.6	12.2	7.3	4.2
Unemployment (yearly average)	13.8	17.5	18.2	18.3	18.9
Budget balance (in % of GDP)	-5.5	-3.9	-3.1	-4.6	-4.0
Current account (in % of GDP)	-10.1	-5.8	-3.3	-7.8	-8.0
FDI (net inflow) EUR mn	225	666	2087	2100	4000
Gross foreign debt (in % of GDP)	58.5	53.4	54.8	55.0	50.6

Notes: ^a forecast

Sources: Bank Austria Creditanstalt Economics Department, CEE Report Number 2-2002.

liamentary election in the fall 2002. By the end of its term (September 2002) the first Dzurinda government managed to achieve its major privatization goals: selling gas and electricity utilities and pipeline operators. Large FDI inflow from these privatizations has exerted pressure on the currency, which causes real appreciation and may deteriorate international competitiveness of the Slovak products. Furthermore, the Slovak government made significant progress in its second bid for NATO membership that means a real chance to receive an invitation to join the Alliance at the Prague Summit in November 2002 (*CEE Report 2002-2*).

Despite the negative effects of the global economic downturn, 2001 turned out to be a fairly successful year for the Visegrad countries. In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the rate of GDP growth not only accelerated in 2000, but also exceeded the expectations in the beginning of the year. In contrast, growth decelerated in Hungary where negative impacts of the weakening Western European import demand were the most important causes behind this downturn. Still, the three Visegrad economies produced considerably higher growth than the Western European average. The Polish economy encountered serious difficulties, when its economy came to a near standstill.

Considering the relative high openness of the Visegrad economies and the relatively weak global trade in 2001, the Czech, Hungarian and Slovak economic performance was surprisingly good. A possible explanation is the real improvement in the domestic demand, which was based on an increasing consumer and investor confidence. The relatively strong domestic demand

158 helped to partially insulate the three countries from the deteriorating external environment. Secondly, due to gains in productivity, they could improve their cost competitiveness. However, there were some dangers of this policy – namely the heavy reliance on the budget of central governments. The increasing deficit became a growing problem by the mid-2002. On the other hand, the fast appreciation of the Visegrad currencies – caused by the productivity gains and the relatively large foreign capital inflows – had adverse effects on trade balances. As a result of lags of Visegrad economies behind economies of Western countries, the negative repercussions of the weak Western demand has also impacted the economies of the region. In Poland, for instance, a revised budget for 2002 – reflecting the government's austerity program to reduce fiscal deficit and dampen domestic demand was approved. These adjustments may further slow down economic activity (Pöschl 2002).

CRITERIA FOR EUROPEAN UNION ENLARGEMENT

The European Union's latest country assessment (November 2001) gave encouraging signs for the enlargement. In the case of the Czech Republic, it praised its economic performance, namely economic growth, and rightly criticized the country's weak fiscal discipline. The Report further acknowledged the achievements of the banking privatization, but on the other hand, criticized the non-transparent public tenders, continuing corruption and weak public administration. In the list of shortcomings, the report emphasized the government's failure to enforce state assistance rules on restructuring of the steel industry, the lack of commitment to fighting economic crime, slow progress in the implementation of judicial reform and harmonization of tax policies, as well as limited progress in the area of public procurement.

Hungary was praised for its strong economic performance and the liberalization of the exchange-rate regime. However, its undisciplined fiscal policy was evaluated negatively since the two-year budget practice avoided parliamentary control and direct spending through off-budget funds has been implemented without public oversight. The expansionary fiscal policy has led to high deficit of the central government. Furthermore, the Report underlined a need for better co-ordination of the fiscal and monetary policies. Other shortcomings mentioned were the slow progress in the pension reform and the standstill in the healthcare reform. The EU negatively evaluated tight price

159 regulation, primarily in the energy-sector – it called for a greater independence of regulators, and would like to see price deregulation get underway. The Report also highlighted some problems encountered by foreign investors – namely the shortage of skilled labor.

The Report found that Poland is lagging behind in the adoption of the *acquis communautaire* compared to the above-mentioned countries. The European Union's major concern related to the weakness of the state administration, especially the understaffed, underfunded and poorly trained judicial system. The EU would like to see Poland carry out a coherent rural development policy in order to facilitate an efficient absorption of farm subsidies. However, due to the economic situation, the government needs to concentrate on solving problems of high unemployment and decelerating economic growth (*Regular Report* 2001).

Despite the fact that Slovakia has had a late start in the accession negotiations to the EU, it has caught up with its neighbours in the number of closed

Table 12
Fulfillment of economic criteria for enlargement

Functioning market economy				
	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia
1999	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
2000	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2001	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Competitiveness in the internal market "in the near term"				
1999	No	No	No	No
2000	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
2001	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Competitiveness can be reached in the near term, provided the country...				
Czech Republic	Makes progress in fiscal consolidation and completes the implementation of the structural reform program			
Hungary	Maintains and implements its reform program in a consistent manner			
Poland	Continues and intensifies its present reform efforts in a consistent policy environment			
Slovakia	Makes further substantial efforts in medium term fiscal consolidation and in ... the structural reform program.			

Source: Heading for the "Big Bang", EU Enlargement Monitor, Deutsche Bank Research, December 2001.

60 chapters. The European Union in its Report has praised the results of privatization and economic liberalization but has raised concern over the widening current-account deficit and high unemployment. The Report also states that Slovakia has made progress in the consolidation and deepening of democratic institutions and the rule of law. In the future, more work is required to be done to improve the state's capacity to implement EU rules, enforce the competition policy and reduce corruption (*CEE Report 2002-2*)

ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE VISEGRAD ECONOMIES AND THE UNITED STATES¹

The Visegrad economies are entering the final stage of the post-communist transformation to a Western-type market system. The privatization in the manufacturing industry and the banking sector is coming to an end, meanwhile ownership changes in the major public utilities, such as telecommunications and energy sector are going ahead. Continuation of market reforms is permanently improving the transparency and foreign-investor friendliness of these countries. The Central European economies' primary aim is to join the European Union – in order to achieve this goal, however, the adoption of EU-compatible reform legislation is required.

A parallel process is taking place in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland to meet NATO goals and commitments, while Slovakia prepares for accession. These enormous changes represent challenges, but also great opportunities for US companies that have to take into consideration several important points when doing business in this region. The first is that the countries of Visegrad 4 represent increasingly a wealthier market, are experiencing a pre-EU-accession spurt and are engaged in the catch-up to the European Union. Secondly, these economies must make important investments in infrastructure and environmental protection measures to meet EU standards. US firms with local partners could participate in these projects.

As future EU members, investment in the Visegrad countries will mean tariff-free access to the European Union's market for US firms. In this way, US

firms could sell their goods from within the Union, thus circumventing unfavorable tariff regimes and bureaucratic barriers. The relations between the US and Visegrad 4 countries on a political level are excellent and reflect strong historical ties. The four Visegrad governments individually cooperate with the US in the United Nations and many other international organizations, and although they have a clear interest in EU accession, they support a strong American presence in the region. Furthermore, the Visegrad countries are members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) – as such they offer more favorable customs duty rates on products originating in these member countries. In addition, due to the Association Agreements, tariffs between the countries of V4 and the European Union are lowered or eliminated. Both of these measures mean that US products not manufactured in the region can face higher tariff rates as compared to those paid by European competitors.

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Table 13
US trade with the Visegrad countries (millions of US Dollars)

	U.S. exports				U.S. imports				U.S. trade balance			
	1996	1999	2000	2001	1996	1999	2000	2001	1996	1999	2000	2001
CZE	410	610	733	649	482	754	1 071	1 118	-72	-144	-338	-469
HUN	331	503	569	576	677	1 892	2 716	2 351	-346	-1 388	-2 147	-1 785
POL	968	825	757	762	627	813	1 040	951	341	-12	-283	-189
SVK	n.a.	55	224	66	n.a.	n.a.	102	237	n.a.	n.a.	-67	-171

Sources: www.ita.doc.gov

Amongst the US trade partners in 2001, Hungary placed in 50th, Czech Republic 62nd, Poland in 64th and Slovakia in 103rd position. In the total American exports, the share of Visegrad four amounted to 0.28 percent, their share in the total American imports reached 0.4 percent. The combined trade of the four Visegrad countries was roughly equivalent to the Austrian-US or the Argentinean-US trade volume. For comparison – in terms of trade volume with the United States in 2001, Austria ranked in 36th place, Argentina in 35th. The share of the US trade with the Visegrad countries is much higher.

Czech exports amounted to 2.8 percent in total US trade in 2000 while the US trade accounted for 4.3 percent of Czech imports. The Czech Republic is a meaningful importer of US telecommunication technologies, automotive

¹ This part of the chapter is based on the following Internet sources: www.ita.doc.gov and www.stat-usa.gov

162 parts, spirits and liquors. The most important Czech export products include electrical machinery, glassware, toys, and sporting goods.

The Hungarian trade figures indicate that in 2001, the US took 5th position in the share of its exports, and 7th position in imports. However, there are important differences between the Hungarian and the American trade statistics. According to Hungarian data, in 2001 Hungarian exports to the US amounted to USD 1.525 bn, while in US figures this was USD 2.351 bn. The large deviation could be explained by the activities of multinational firms. The most important players in Hungarian exports are the following companies: Flextronics, IBM, General Electric, Philips, Raba, Biogal, Alcoa. It is also to be noted that the majority of the Hungarian exporters are operating in custom-free zones.

Polish trade figures indicate that the share of Polish trade in US exports was 3.2 percent in 2000 – ranking it in 7th place, while the US share in imports to Poland ranked 6th, amounting to 4.4 percent of total Polish exports. As a result of President Bush's visit to Warsaw on June 15th 2001, the United States and Poland signed a Comprehensive Trade Package. This agreement is designed to lower tariffs on key US exports to Poland by January 2002 and establish a framework for addressing further the problem of tariff differentials whereby US companies face higher tariffs than their EU counterparts. The United States intends to continue its support for Poland's participation in the US trade preference program, known as the US Generalized System of Preferences (GSP).

In 2000, US exports as a share in the total Slovak imports amounted to 2.1 percent, while Slovak exports as a share of US imports amounted to 1.4 percent.

US DIRECT INVESTMENT IN THE VISEGRAD COUNTRIES

The leading foreign investors in the Czech Republic include the Netherlands and Germany. The United States occupied fourth place with \$1.2 billion (6.2%). The most significant American investors include: Phillip Morris (\$420 mil), National Energy Corporation (\$400 mil), Pepsi-Cola International (\$200 mil), Ford Motor Company (\$115 mil), Procter & Gamble (\$109 mil), Atlan-

tic West (\$86 mil). Financial programs of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), including investment insurance is available in the Czech Republic since 1991.

According to the Hungarian Ministry of Economic Affairs, foreign direct investment in Hungary has totaled approximately \$23 bn. US firms are among Hungary's largest investors, responsible for nearly \$7 bn in total investments and about 30 percent of the investments above \$10 mn. The total of Hungarian investment in the United States currently stands at about \$153 million. Hungary also has a bilateral investment agreement with the United States. OPIC has been operating in Hungary since October 1989. In the fall of 1998, the then U.S. Ambassador to Hungary launched the *US – Eastern Hungary Partnership Initiative* to target the part of the country suffering from high unemployment and under-investment. Under this pilot program, the US Embassy opened commercial offices in the eastern and northeastern part of the country and the program has attracted investments totaling nearly \$400 million during the first 18 months of operation.

According to Polish figures, at the end of 2001, United States was the second most important foreign investor with \$7.806 billion in total investments. Several investments by US firms have been attributed to other countries because they were made by European subsidiaries of US parent companies (e.g. Opel/General Motors, Coca Cola). The largest US investors in Poland include: Citibank, Enterprise Investors, IPC, Philip Morris, General Electric, PepsiCo, Epstein, Procter & Gamble and Coca Cola. OPIC offers medium and long-term financing in Poland through its direct loans and guarantees program. Direct loans are reserved for US small businesses or cooperatives and generally range in amounts between two to ten million dollars.

The US is currently the fourth largest investor in Slovakia (behind Germany, the Netherlands, and Austria). US Steel is one of the largest investors in Slovakia, acquiring VSZ Steelworks in Košice at the end of 2000. The total US investment is estimated to be worth more than \$400 million and the Slovak government hopes that US Steel's investment will help attract other investors. OPIC, has been operating in Slovakia as well and can provide specialized insurance coverage for certain contracting, exporting, licensing, and leasing transactions undertaken by US investors in Slovakia. Slovakia is also a member of the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA). The two countries concluded a bilateral investment agreement. Important US investors include USX (US Steel), Emerson Electric, Philip Morris, Whirlpool,

164 Johnson Controls, Delphi Automotive, Citibank, and IBM. (Some American companies – e.g., Pepsi-Cola and Coca-Cola – are registered under foreign subsidiaries and thus do not appear as US investments in the Slovak statistics.) The American Chamber of Commerce in Slovakia was founded in October 1997 and has 185 members.

CONCLUSIONS

The Visegrad countries went through tremendous changes in the last almost fifteen years. These changes included, besides political and social transformation, a very deep and painful process of economic transition to the market economy. The prototype of the change came from the West, from the Euro-Atlantic Community. The Central European states's major intention has been to catch up to the model countries, make their own their economic structure, regulations, business practices, technology, skills – that is, to initiate a process of full integration with the European Union, NATO, OECD, IMF, WTO. Through this integration, the Visegrad countries want to be an integral part of the global economy.

The process of economic integration that has been underway in the four Visegrad countries included many similarities and some nation-specific differences.

In the early 1990s, all countries suffered from an inevitable transformation recession. New industries and new firms came into being, old products and loss-making enterprises died out. From the mid 1990s, it seemed that the Visegrad 4 already hit the bottom and started a process of recovery and growth. However, serious economic policy mistakes and bad corporate and public governance led in most of the countries to a second transition crisis. Another round of austerity programs proved to be inevitable and a more coherent liberalization policies had to be implemented. This proved socially even more painful due to the weakness and relative underdevelopment of the economies. Late 1990s brought about some positive changes on part of the V4 governments – economic policies turned to be more consistent, sustainable economic growth has returned.

Euro-Atlantic integration has proceeded ahead – membership in the OECD and NATO (in the case of Slovakia accession) and negotiations with the EU about accession became an everyday reality. The United States has served as a kind

of an engine of this integration. Although the trade relations between the Visegrad four and the United States remained of secondary importance in comparison to the trade with the European Union, America became a major capital investor in the region, brought in new technology, skills, market for products and thus helped to accelerate structural changes. Central European countries constitute strong and committed allies to America. The Visegrad Four within the region of Central Europe are breaking out of their semi-periphery status and historically and geopolitically determined underdevelopment.

The enlargement of the European Union will create a considerably larger economic potential – it will increase the size of the market, bring in significant new consumer capacity, and provide relatively inexpensive, qualified and flexible labor-force. As a result of the enlargement, economic competitiveness of the European Union is due to increase and positive technological changes will be accelerated leading to the affirmation of EU's status as a global player in the economic arena. Aside from the positive trends, it has to be acknowledged that compared to EU, the Visegrad countries reach about a half of the average in GDP per capita, their group is largely heterogeneous, and their convergence with the Western countries will not be a quick journey. Enlargement already has a sort of civilizational effect on the accession countries, as their regulatory framework, institutional structures, business and work ethics need to be changed and adjusted to the Western-European level. As the trans-Atlantic relations could be described also in terms of the global competition between the world's two strongest economic blocs – the EU and the US, after accession the countries of Visegrad will provide positive stimulus to the European Union in this power play and will bring "fresh blood" to the trans-Atlantic co-operation.

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Tomáš Valášek

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Chapter VII EUROPEAN UNION'S SECURITY POLICY – ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

The European Union is more than the sum of its parts. The Union as a negotiating party holds greater clout and power than any individual European state or even all EU member states together. EU membership instills a sense of discipline, which makes the Union a formidable negotiating partner – or an opponent. The very breadth of the intra-Union cooperation, and the close links binding the different issues on its agenda increase the cost – and reduce the probability of – a defection by any EU member from a Union-wide consensus. If Washington tried to use its good relationship with the new government of Silvio Berlusconi in Rome to block an EU initiative on, for example immigration, Italy, in considering whether to break with its EU partners would have to take into account the very real possibility of incurring their wrath on a host of other completely unrelated issues. As a consequence, the EU presents to the outside world a far more unified face than the diversity of opinions within it would normally suggest.

The benefits of the tight cooperation are apparent – the EU has been able to successfully influence and even modify policies of outside parties, including the United States, on issues such as trade and antitrust policy. In 2001, the Union managed to block a planned merger between two US companies, Honeywell and General Electric, which, in the Union's view, would have had an adverse effect on competition in the electronics market in Europe. The strength of the EU also allows it to fend off or water down attempts by non-EU countries to change the Union's own rules and policies, as was the case in the 1999-2001 dispute over banana imports to Europe. EU's actions benefit some countries more than others, depending on the issue, but in general, any member country that can gain the support of EU's institutions for its cause stands a far better chance of prevailing than it would on its own. Consequently, even countries with little to no stake in the issue on hand tend to

68 cooperate so that they can secure the Union's support for future disputes of importance to them.

But EU's strength varies from issue to issue. In the realm of foreign policy and defense, EU members have displayed a remarkable lack of unity and even unwillingness to rely on the Union to advance their goals – and thus found themselves unable to replicate the Union's successes in trade and antitrust disputes. The foreign policy and defense dimension is new to the EU, an organization that came to life as an economic alignment. (The Union's direct predecessor, the European Coal and Steel Community, was established in 1950 as tool of pooling Europe's commodity production, both to help speed the post-war economic recovery and to control the production of raw materials for war.)

The EU's 1999 Amsterdam Treaty embraced a united foreign and defense policy conceptually, while the Cologne Council, held later the same year, spelled out the Union's goals. "The Council should have the ability to take decisions on the full range of conflict prevention and crisis management tasks defined in the Treaty on European Union", the Cologne summit concluded. "To this end, the Union must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them, and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises without prejudice to actions by NATO" (*Delegation...*, 2002).

Ultimately, the Union would like to be able to conduct – under its command but with possible aid of assets by non-EU members of NATO – an ambitious range of missions from peacekeeping to interventions in cases of humanitarian and environmental disasters to "peacemaking", presumably along the lines of NATO's 1999 air war against Yugoslavia.

But progress on the security front has been slow in coming.

EU's success in defending its members' economic and trade interests depends on two key components – power, and the will among the member states to use this power. In the economic realm, the United States and the EU are peers. The gross domestic product of the EU zone is nearly equal to that of the United States (\$7,836 billion to \$9,896 billion), and both have roughly the same share of the world imports and exports (*ibid.*). But when it comes to military might, the EU simply lags far behind its peer, the United States. As for the second requirement, Union members, for a variety of reasons, have been either unwilling or unable to make the EU an active instrument of foreign and defense policy.

EU members have fallen far behind the United States in both the size and the quality of their military forces.

The numbers are telling: the United States spends more on defense than all its NATO allies combined (see graph for overlap between EU, NATO membership). In fact, the most recent US military budget *increase*, a 13 percent hike amounting to \$45.5 billion, is in itself larger than the *entire* military budget of any other NATO ally. Moreover, the United States spends a larger percentage of its funds on purchases of equipment than all but three of its allies. Most of the European allies are still saddled with large, static and manpower-heavy forces left over from the Cold War. Finally, the United

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170 States spends a far larger percentage of its defense budget on research and development of new weapons than any of its European allies, thus assuring itself of supremacy in the field of new military technology.

To make matters worse, EU countries are also getting far less bang for their buck. While the US defense industry has effectively been consolidated into a handful of large companies, defense dollars expended by EU member states continue to be divided among dozens of producers, generating little by the way of economies of scale.¹ And because there is no such thing as a EU army – the Union's 15 members all maintain separate military and civilian staffs – a disproportionate amount of defense dollars is spent on overhead. These factors have allowed the United States to leap ahead of its allies in both the quantity and, perhaps even more importantly, the quality of its weapons and support systems. European countries have played second fiddle to the United States in all recent NATO combat operations. Increasingly, they find it difficult to interoperate with US forces at all, given the array of new technologies in exclusive possession by the US forces. This picture is completely reversed in the relatively low-tech peacekeeping operations, where European allies contribute far more forces than the United States. But in combat, the European allies and Canada can take part in only a portion of the full spectrum of military operations routinely conducted by US forces.

Its weakness limits Europe's military options. EU states would be hard pressed to deploy, in a timely manner, a Balkan-type peacekeeping mission without access to crucial assets owned by the United States, such as airlift, precision guided munitions and reconnaissance means. Ironically, even after the EU began to move in earnest toward developing autonomous defense capabilities, after the 1998 St. Malo meeting² and the 1999 Amsterdam and Cologne European Council, the Union's reliance on the United States has only increased.³

¹ A defense industry consolidation is afoot in Europe – the past few years saw the creation of EADS and MBDA; An aerospace and a missile manufacturer giant, respectively. But because defense procurement process tends to move at a glacial pace, it will take years for benefits of these mergers, if any, to materialize. The consolidation in the United States started as early as 1993.

² The Franco-British summit in St. Malo, France signaled the beginning of efforts to build an EU foreign and defense policy. For the summit's final communiqué, see <http://www.ambafrance-us.org>.

³ For a good overview of the problem, see: Kori Schake, Constructive Duplication: Reducing EU Reliance On US Military Assets, Working Paper, Centre For European Reform, January 2002. <<http://www.cer.org.uk>>.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS: MORE MONEY, BETTER STRUCTURE

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The European Union has begun addressing the problem, first by identifying the most urgent requirements in its armed forces, and, second, by investing more in the military. At the Helsinki meeting of the Council of the European Union, held in December 1999, EU members established a "Headline Goal" – essentially a catalogue of military capabilities for crisis management operations, with specific assignments for individual members of the Union. The Union also created a network of civilian and military bodies tasked with planning and implementing future military operation under EU auspices. The second, more substantive, costly and controversial part of the process began only recently with defense spending increases announced in July 2002 in France and the United Kingdom.

Britain announced on July 15 a \$5.5 billion hike in defense spending between 2002 and 2006, the largest such increase in 20 years (*U.K. Ministry...*, 2002). The same week, French President Jacques Chirac announced a \$1 billion a year increase in military spending (*La Libération*, 13 July 2002). (Germany, under pressure to keep its rising budget deficit from violating the European Monetary Union-imposed limit, has mostly tried to finance new military investment with proceeds from reforms and reductions of the armed forces, without much success.) However, the new money – if any – is only a starting point. Some of the gaps in Europe's capabilities may be relatively easy to fulfill – the precision guided munitions, for example, can be bought from the United States (although fitting them to existing European aircraft may well require substantial modifications). Other components will take time. Most EU states committed to buying the Airbus A400M as a way to fulfill their need for long-range transportation. But Airbus does not expect to deliver the new aircraft, which is still on the drawing board, until 2007 at the earliest.

Without some key ingredients needed to stage a successful military operation, whether a peacekeeping one or even a lower-intensity mission such as intervention in cases of environmental disasters, EU members will have to rely on NATO – effectively the United States – for assistance. A sizable, fully autonomous EU military operation – particularly one on the scale of those conducted by the United States – is simply out of question for the near future.

172 **DOES THE EU REALLY WANT ITS OWN ARMY?**

But lest one dismisses the current state of affairs as a failure of EU policies, it is important to note that a degree of dependency on NATO is in fact highly *desirable* to at least some EU members. The relationship persists by design rather than by default. For a variety of reasons, many if not most EU members are unwilling to delegate to the Union the responsibility for their own defense or even for implementation of non-defensive military operations outside the EU area. Just as importantly, a number of EU members clearly prefer to maintain close military ties with the United States.

Security is different from trade – an open confrontation or disagreement on military issues would have grave consequences not only for the United States and EU members, but also for the larger world. A trade war is an acceptable risk and an established, if unpleasant, tool of US-EU relations, whereas a real war is not.

Similarly, an open disagreement between the EU and the United States on defense policy toward a third party invites instability, which threatens to weaken both Washington and Brussels. The Europeans often decry America's twitchy trigger finger but there is a tacit understanding, at least among some European elites, that a display of firepower is often necessary. When dealing with the world outside Europe, wrote Robert Cooper, a senior British diplomat and an advisor to Blair, "we need to revert to the rougher methods of an earlier era – force, preemptive attack, deception, whatever is necessary" (Kagan 2002). As long as Europe is incapable or unwilling to muster the same amount of military power that Washington does, the United States will remain an indispensable – if not always well-liked – partner to Europe. EU's military dependency on the United States thus becomes a way of preserving the close cooperation on defense between Washington and Europe. It keeps the Union from carrying out its own operations and forces it to turn to the United States.

Joint operations in turn require that the two sides seek to resolve, at least partly, their policy differences. As a result, EU and Washington work closer together than the divergence in their worldviews and threat perception would otherwise dictate. Defense is one component of national portfolios that the capitals are reluctant to fully entrust to the EU offices in Brussels. There are no guidelines as to what constitutes an EU issue and what remains a prerogative of the national capitals. Union members never clearly specified the

ultimate degree of their integration, preferring instead the moniker of "building an ever closer Union". Over the years, as EU members harmonized their policies across the board, one issue after another has been transferred from the purview of the capitals to the EU offices in Brussels. But defense may well become one of the last bastions of the nation-state's responsibilities in Europe because it touches on such fundamental problems such as the state's monopoly on the use of power, the right and obligation of a state to defend itself, and the right to intervene militarily in the affairs of other states.

Granted, some aspects of military policies are already highly integrated. Self-defense in particular lends itself to multinational arrangements. Under the right circumstances, it is cheaper and more effective for a country to secure the help of allies than to provide for its own defense autonomously. Eleven of the Union's 15 countries are members of NATO, which obligates them to come to each other's defense. But there are no plans to entrust the EU with a similar responsibility – the plans and missions envisioned under the European Security and Defense Policy stop far short of guaranteeing the defense of EU members. There is no discernible military threat on the horizon that would precipitate such move – terrorism, certainly, is an issue, but the Europeans generally view terrorism as a law-enforcement problem, rather than a military one. The EU already has mechanisms for the coordination of law-enforcement actions by member states, and more are being added in the wake of September 11th. Moreover, to the extent that outside threats to Europe do exist, NATO is generally seen as a more reliable guarantor of the safety of the EU-region. Because NATO's mutual defense clause is backed up by the US armed forces, it has a much stronger deterrent effect than an EU alliance would, at least as long as the latter lacks the capability and, more importantly, the will to provide for common defense.

The Union has only been able to obtain consensus on building a EU rapid reaction force by limiting the scope of its missions to peacekeeping, interventions in cases of humanitarian and environmental disasters, and possibly – on the ambitious end of the scale – "peacemaking", presumably along the lines of NATO's 1999 air war against Yugoslavia. There is little prospect of the EU expanding the envelope of its missions. In one of the most thoughtful and provocative studies of the Union's views on defense, US analyst Robert Kagan recently argued that European countries are increasingly adverse to the idea of use of force in general. Europe's post-WW II economic success came about only after the continent effectively abolished the idea of using force against one's neighbors. For most of Europe's countries, foreign policy and defense

174 strategy during the Cold War was based on two simple principles – a tight alliance with the United States to protect against threats from outside Western Europe, and integration of all democratic states of Europe into the EU in order to forever prevent the possibility of conflict *among* Europe's democracies. The latter policy succeeded beyond what anyone would have believed possible in 1945 – Germany and France, two old enemies, are now EU partners who cannot even conceive of again using force against one another. The lesson Europeans learned from this experience, Kagan argues, is that the very idea of military force is obsolete. "Europe does not see a mission for itself that requires power", he wrote. "Its mission is to oppose power.... The transmission of the European miracle to the rest of the world has become Europe's new *mission civilatrice*" (Kagan 2002). As all theories do, Kagan's also fails to fully explain EU's stance on defense.

Most EU members – eleven out of 15 – did use force, albeit under the guise of a humanitarian intervention, in 1999, when NATO fought an air war against Yugoslavia. In fact, the British government argued at the time that the use of force to enforce European values is not just a right, but also an obligation. "We cannot allow the values of Europe to be desecrated within one part of Europe while we live comfortably in our western corner of the continent", he said in a 1999 speech. "It is only if we stand up to be counted in the cause of justice that we will live up to the ideals of predecessors who helped to rebuild Aachen and the Europe it represents" (Blair 1999). Moreover, if Kagan's *mission civilatrice* theory were correct, one would expect a stronger and more assertive foreign policy by the EU in defense of this idea, but there are only faint signs of it. (In one of the rare instances of the EU challenging a US foreign policy course, the Union intervened in 2001 after the United States broke off talks with North Korea in order to pursue a tough line against the dictatorship of Kim Jong-il.)

In reality, the EU is deeply divided in its views on defense and the use of force in international relations. With little or no unity, Washington finds it too easy to play divide and conquer. Britain has traditionally played the role of the spoiler. With its traditional emphasis on strong trans-Atlantic defense ties, it is more likely on any given defense issue to stake a position closer to the United States' than to that of its European counterparts. Whereas the rest of the EU is either plainly opposed or vacillating on the issue of a possible military action against Iraq, Britain has taken a lead in compiling a case against Saddam Hussein and, by some indications, has already set aside money for future military action against Iraq (*Electronic Telegraph*, 7 July 2002). London's position,

greatly at odds with most other European countries, has effectively made it impossible for the EU to agree on a common position on Iraq.

Not only is Britain a part of the informal "troika" setting most of the EU agenda, London has also been at the forefront of the Union's defense efforts since launching the drive for an autonomous EU military capacity at a joint summit with France in St. Malo, France, in 1998. Britain is far from being the only country at odds with its European neighbors. Differences on the question of use of force follow ideological lines, not national boundaries. The conservative government of Silvio Berlusconi in Italy, Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar, and the opposition Christian Democrats in Germany have all advocated a far tougher response to terrorism than Europe's majority left-of-center governments.

MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS

Europe is its own worst enemy when it comes to replicating in the military arena the successes of integrated EU trade and economic policies. Internal divisions are not the only culprits; the member states' ambivalence about the role and the use of force has had a paralyzing effect on joint defense efforts. The process of EU integration to date has been almost completely inward-looking – a luxury afforded by the protective US shield and, more recently, the absence of military threats against the continent. The Union's defense plans (which specifically reject a mutual defense role for the organization) are by definition an outward-bound exercise. The process of integration cannot be completed without answering questions about what role the Union should play in the world, and what tools it needs to fulfill those roles.

One option is for Europe to adopt a narrow focus on affecting change on the continent's periphery, using a blend of diplomacy and development, the Union's traditional forte, and military force, in the rare cases when it is necessary. This seems to be the direction in which the Union is headed, as confirmed by the limited range of missions entrusted to the EU: operations such as interventions in environmental disasters and peacekeeping. This is consistent with the Union's general ambivalence about the applications of military power – it enjoys a consensus support among EU states, and it allows the more assertive members to mount operations individually or in coalitions outside the European Union.

176 But the approach limits the European Union to acting as a regional power, unable to match the political influence of the United States. And, perhaps more importantly, it leaves the European Union unable to act to address threats beyond its immediate horizon: challenges such as terrorism emanating from failed states, or weapons of mass destruction in the hands of powers aggressive to the West. The European Union makes no provision for joint action in cases where diplomacy and economic aid fail to deter a potential and very concrete threat to the European continent. It leaves the Union in a position where no action, action pursued individually by some member states, or reliance on the United States, are effectively its only options. The first position may not be an option at all, the second may fall short of averting the threat, and the third effectively subjugates the defense of Europe to Washington, which is wholly inconsistent with the principle of autonomy agreed at the Amsterdam and Cologne summits. However unappealing they seem, these are the Union's choices today.

The second alternative would be to expand the scope of missions to include what Robert Cooper called “the rougher methods of an earlier era: force, pre-emptive attack, deception” (*The Observer*, 7 April 2002). There seems to be little support for entrusting the EU with such responsibility, partly because states are reluctant to hand over the control over these destructive tools to the EU authority, and partly because the Union's foreign policy is, to a great degree, based precisely on *rejecting* raw power as a tool of international relations. Nevertheless, unless one accepts the unlikely notion that military force will never be needed to deter and defend against outside threats, this position leaves the European Union in a state of permanent dependency on the United States.

Lastly, there is the question of using military force as a tool of relations with the United States itself. Should the European Union balance America's power, complement it, or neither? One way of balancing America's policy would be for the European Union to build up a military force capable of global intervention, thus breaking the United States' monopoly. However, an open challenge is unlikely to ever gain a full support of EU members who disagree deeply on how close relations with Washington should be and what form they should take. It also runs contrary to Europe's preference for non-military solutions because it would require a military build-up unseen in Europe since the end of WW II.

Another variant of the above theme is a “good cop bad cop” scenario, with Europe offering sweeteners to troublesome regimes in order to spare them

the wrath of United States' precision-guided munitions. It is a policy based not so much on what you stand *for* but what you stand *against*. It might work under limited circumstances – if and when Europe and the United States agree that the use of force may indeed sometimes be required, in which case they would stand shoulder-to-shoulder. But it may be just as likely to alienate Europe from the United States and paralyze the West's ability to act in a unified manner.

Should Europe aim to complement America's military power? That is in effect the principle codified by NATO's founding document, the 1949 Washington Treaty. This principle has come under pressure from those in Europe who no longer view the United States as a benevolent power. However, the biggest challenge to this Cold War arrangement came not from Euro-skeptics but from the course of history itself. The demise of the Soviet threat made European armies largely irrelevant to new kinds of threats to which the United States has refocused its energy. Europe's large standing armies have found useful application in peacekeeping operations but these translate into little power and influence. Moreover, peacekeeping has no deterrent value and usually leaves the decision on launching military operations (the step which usually precedes peacekeeping) in the hands of countries with better combat skills – essentially the United States and Britain.

So the current state of affairs leaves Europe somewhere between complementing US forces and doing nothing – it is no longer important to the United States militarily, since it is incapable of making much difference in military operations outside the continent and it no longer sees eye-to-eye with Washington on defense and foreign policy issues. Despite these shortcomings Europe still shies away from challenging America at its own game.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

Two distinct phases can be seen in US foreign policy after the Cold War. First was an activist approach, practiced by the Clinton administrations, which expanded the array of missions for US military forces to include causes such as defense of human rights. The second phase was ushered in by the Bush administration and represented a more realist approach. The current president campaigned on the premise of reducing America's military commitments, reinvigorating its alliances, and strengthening its military. The Bush

178 administration succeeded in reducing America's presence in the Balkan peacekeeping missions, launched on President Clinton's watch. But despite the apparent difference, the commonalities between the two administration's security policies actually outweigh the differences.

Both of these approaches embraced the concept of *limited sovereignty*,⁴ which essentially reserves the right of the (vaguely defined) international community to intervene in domestic affairs of states whose governments have abused their monopoly of power, or where central governments have effectively collapsed. The two presidents would probably disagree on the threshold for launching such missions but both adopted the concept not only philosophically but also in deed.

Limited sovereignty is not uniquely an American concept, nor even a new one. The entire European order is in effect based on suspension of national sovereignty, so much so that Robert Cooper famously dubbed EU the *postmodern* society. "The European Union has become a highly developed system for mutual interference in each other's domestic affairs", he wrote, "right down to beer and sausages."⁵

Admittedly, military interventions are guided by a different set of rules. Some of Europe's leaders would probably oppose *any* armed intervention on philosophical grounds, rejecting the use of force in principle as a means of settling international conflicts. But in 1999, eleven of EU's 15 members took part in NATO's 1999 Yugoslavia air war, proving that use of force is admissible when humanitarian, not national interests are at stake. The principle of limited sovereignty had thus been established, allowing the states to go a step beyond what had previously been admissible under international law in defending human rights and protecting populations from the power of their own governments.

⁴ Nikolai Zlobin came up with the concept. It, in the view of US strategists, essentially implies that all countries are sovereign and all governments are lawful with the exception of three factors: they must not kill their own people within the country, they must not help proliferate nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, and they must not help terrorists in any manner. If these three conditions are not honored, in the view of US strategists, the governments of such countries may lose sovereignty on their own territory.

⁵ "The New Liberal Imperialism."

GOING BY THE BOOK

The United States parts company with the vast majority of its European allies on the question of the need for a proper legal framework for military interventions. In general, the European countries consider themselves far more strictly bound by the provisions of the United Nations Charter and other international law than the world's lone superpower, the United States. While this may appear to be a mere technical issue, in fact it speaks to the heart of the difference in the way the United States and Europe see the benefits and risks of using military power.

Europe prospered because it abolished warfare as a means of settling international conflicts. It has not abolished militaries, however; it needs them for purposes of national defense and for interventions in cases of humanitarian or environmental disasters. The problem is that the troops used for peacekeeping are the same that could be used to attack a neighbor – there is no reliable way to distinguish between offensive and peacekeeping troops. And while the present reduced size of the armed forces in Europe offers perhaps the best guarantee against such turn of events, there is always also the possibility of a military buildup. The scenario is admittedly far-fetched but never too far removed from minds of the European leaders, particularly when it comes to dealing with the continent's historical *enfant terrible*, Germany.

"French are still not confident they can trust the Germans", wrote Robert Kagan. "Every time Europe contemplates the use of military force, or is forced to do so by the United States, there is no avoiding at least momentary consideration for what such a military action might have on the 'German question' (Kagan 2002). And nor do the Germans entirely trust themselves. In 1994, the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) published a paper that caused a stir with its blunt prediction of reemergence of German disastrous prewar policies should the EU project fail. "If European integration were not to progress, Germany might be called upon, or tempted by its own security constraints, to try to effect the stabilization of Eastern Europe on its own and in the traditional way" (*Reflections...*, 97).

One way of preventing the re-nationalization of defense policies in Europe is institutionalization – the process of tying the states' hands through strict rules and regulations, and through delegating responsibility for decisions regarding the use of military force to supranational bodies. On the European scale, EU integration has succeeded in binding the member states together so closely

30 that mutual conflict would exact too big a price on all parties concerned, and would thus become increasingly improbable. On the global scale, the United Nations – ironically, a brainchild of Washington, not Europe – has been tasked with both authorizing military missions and with laying out rules for such operations. (Not surprisingly, Germany has gone the furthest in integrating UN regulations in its national legislation; the country's constitution requires a UN approval for all peacekeeping operations involving German military.)

But the solution that has worked so well for Europe is being rejected by the United States. The US is the only country in the world capable of launching a military mission anywhere in the world, and is thus most constrained by the legislation regulating the use of such force. Moreover, as a country convinced, for good historical reasons, of its own benevolence and its civilizing mission, it sees little reason for legislation that outlaws the kind of destructive behavior that the US itself professes to abhor. And in any case, with the demise of the Soviet threat, the United States sees increasingly less need for international support, be it legal, diplomatic or military.

In practical terms, the US attitude has demonstrated itself in Washington's decreasing reliance on and reference to the United Nations system. Both President Bush and Clinton have reserved the right for the United States to intervene unilaterally, without a United Nations Security Council resolution. The NATO air war against Kosovo was one such mission,⁶ and George W. Bush stated on a number of occasions that the United States is ready to invade Iraq with or without international support. Moreover, the future US National Security Doctrine, currently under discussion in Washington, promises to introduce a new concept of preemptive strikes against countries hostile to the United States and developing weapons of mass destruction. There is no provision for preemptive strikes in the UN Charter.

US actions thus represent a direct threat to the relevance of many of the institutions that the Europeans, along with the previous generation of Americans, painstakingly erected and which the Europeans view as a bastion preventing the return of power politics. This general trend has been clear for many years.

⁶ President Clinton, launching the 1999 air war against Yugoslavia, argued that the mission was permissible under Article 51 (the self-defense clause) of the United Nations Charter – a stretch of the definition of the article given that neither the United States nor any of its allies have been attacked.

For decades, the Europeans gave the United States the benefit of a doubt. Washington's allies historically assumed that the United States' behavior, albeit potentially disruptive, is still largely beneficial to the world as a whole. America has been and still is seen as unique in that it is a "good" power, that has rejected the idea of power politics a priori and uses force only to advance universally accepted, if not always admired goals. This philosophy, and Europe's dependence on the United States for its defense needs has kept the allies across the Atlantic unconcerned about America's disproportional power and its flexible interpretation of international law.

Both those underlying principles may be changing. Europe no longer sees a threat that would require America's military aid. "The end of the Cold War meant the loss of the automatic deference accorded to the United States as the leader in the fight against a common, mortal enemy" (Matthews 2002). And there also seems to be increasing doubt in Europe whether America still acts as the force of good. In case of the Middle East, for example, virtually all of Europe agrees that America has lost sight of its original peacemaking mission and has become beholden to domestic interests. Over Iraq, most European members would probably support a mission aimed at eradicating the country's arsenal of weapons of mass destruction – but even some of the closest allies balked when Washington decoupled the weapons issue from its war plans and called for an unconditional overthrow of Saddam Hussein. The absence of a clear, convincing rationale for overthrow of the Iraqi regime has allowed doubts to blossom about the motives behind US policies. Whether or not they are justified, the suspicions are quickly draining the reservoir of goodwill that the United States built up among its allies during the Cold War.

The two factors combined – Washington's increasing tendency to act outside the international legal framework and mounting doubts in Europe over America's true war aims – pose perhaps the greatest threat to trans-Atlantic security relations. It calls into question the wisdom of maintaining a trans-Atlantic military alliance. If the partners increasingly see each other as the problem, their alliance becomes impotent. The question is whether the rift represents a systemic problem, one that cannot be fixed because it is rooted in the differences between the major protagonists, or if it merely marks a state of crisis in an otherwise healthy bond.

The United States and Europe, after all, have always disagreed on a number of issues, yet they formed one of the tightest and longest-running alliances in history. But analysts generally take a dim view of the present day rela-

12 tionship. Jessica Matthews of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace sees two worlds that have always been divided along cultural lines and sharply disagreed on issues such as environment and international guarantees for human rights. The rise of the EU, Matthews wrote, changed the dynamic of the trans-Atlantic ties. “The United States faces a relationship with the EU that is utterly different from either its relations with individual European countries or with US-dominated NATO. Economically, the EU is no longer a junior partner” (ibid.). Kagan writes of a fundamental difference between a “Kantian” world where military power does not play a role (Europe) and a “Hobbesian” world that is only kept in check thanks to America’s military might. The view from Europe is only marginally more optimistic. Chris Everts of the Centre for European Reform blames a confrontational US Congress, America’s unilateral instincts and Washington’s preference for military solutions at the expense of diplomatic efforts for the deepening rift. In contrast, Everts writes, Europe is convinced that “most of the world’s problems – ranging from economic instability to environmental degradation to security threats – can almost always be solved only through robust multi-lateral efforts” (Everts 2001).

NEEDED: A NEW LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENT

So where does this leave the future of the trans-Atlantic relationship? Systemic changes in themselves need not be the undoing of the US-European friendship. The United States and Europe have always been different – the way in which they differ has changed, however, as has the overall security situation in the world. The Cold War no longer unifies the allies; the conduct of the war on terrorism may well divide them. And Europe no longer plays the second fiddle it used to, which means the United States cannot expect the European capitals to always fall in line when the bugle sounds alarm.

The international institutions and legal provisions created during the Cold War may well be unsuited for the current era. The choice, however, need not be one between *old* rules and *no* rules, which are essentially the platforms adopted by Europe and the United States, respectively. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the recent changes to the security landscape is the absence of creative solutions. Europe has widely and rightly, from the legal

point of view, criticized the United States for violating the Geneva Convention by denying the suspected terrorists in US custody the rights afforded by law to enemy soldiers. The United States has also rightly and justifiably pointed out that terrorists bent on destruction even at the cost of suicide defy the traditional definition of an enemy combatant as a uniformed fighter drafted into a service of a government, and thus require special treatment. Yet no debate followed about what changes should be made to the Geneva Convention itself, and the Guantanamo Bay fiasco left both parties disillusioned and bracing for more similar conflicts in the future.

The Kosovo war has made a mockery of the United Nations system when 19 allies completely bypassed the Security Council – the only body vested with the power to authorize the use of force, and launched an attack, in the eyes of current international law, on a sovereign country – unprovoked. There may well be a moral imperative to act to end future crisis such as the one in Kosovo and, unfortunately, more occasions to do so. And again, as in Kosovo, the United Nations may not be in a position to act for reasons completely unrelated to the crisis on hand. Yet no change to the United Nations system or the work of the Security Council is contemplated.

It would be a massive and ambitious undertaking, no doubt, but still one preferable to simply eliminating the UN Security Council from the war business, which is the *de facto* state of the affairs today. Similarly, the preventive attack doctrine discussed within the Bush administration raised sneers abroad about a Minority Report-approach (named so after a science fiction film in which mind-reading Tom Cruise plays a detective who arrests criminals for crimes they *plan* to commit), but no one has proposed a better alternative to keeping suicidal terrorists living outside the reach of the authority of any government from flying planes into high-rise buildings. If, as likely, Washington adopts the doctrine in one way or another, it will put the United States completely outside existing international law. Again, there are no plans of provisions for discussing changes to the law itself.

A further erosion of US-European defense ties is inevitable if the allies play by the same rules they have for the past six decades. What is needed is an earnest discussion leading to an agreement on a new set of rules governing the use of force; one that takes into account new phenomena such as failed states and international terrorism. It must allow for effective action against new threats while preserving the overall legal architecture and averting a collapse of international norms on war. Both parties would have to compromise.

84 Europe would need to let go of its stiff embrace of present rules and institutions. The United States would need to agree to give up some of the flexibility it has recently began to carve out for itself. But the potential payoff is immense. If such a formula is found, it will remove the biggest problem driving Europe away from its big brother across the Atlantic. It could solidify Europe's support for America's campaign against terrorism, with the corresponding benefits in terms of tighter law enforcement cooperation and military assistance. It could rejuvenate Europe's interest in military – once its roles and limitations have been clearly delineated – and thus make it a more even partner to the United States in the security field.

THE ROLE OF NATO IN US-EUROPEAN RELATIONS

NATO is quite simply the foundation of the defense and security relations between the United States and Europe. Its role may have changed radically since the end of the Cold War but its centrality to trans-Atlantic defense relations is undisputed – for now. As Europe and the United States move further apart in their views on outside threats and the use of force in meeting those threats, the consensus that formed the basis of NATO cooperation is being stretched to its limits. In future crises, the allies may find it impossible to muster even the appearance of a unified view, thus paralyzing the alliance. NATO also faces the prospect of irrelevancy – in a symbolic vote of non-confidence, the United States chose to leave NATO out of the conduct and command of operations in Afghanistan. But in the crisis lies an opportunity. NATO may be the one institution best positioned to help bridge the trans-Atlantic gap, or at least help mitigate the consequences – should the allies make a conscious effort to repair the damage.

Managing differences among the allies has always been an important, albeit secondary, role for the alliance. The allies pride themselves on being bound by a host of shared values, a source of considerable cohesion within NATO. But even among friends, disagreements arise, which if unchecked, could cause the alliance to unravel. And although the allies were bound by a common threat, the Soviet danger did not erase some of their historic enmities. So from the very beginning, NATO members consciously built an institutional arrangement, which would enmesh the allies in extensive consultation and necessitate joint, rather than national decisions. Upon its creation, “many

of NATO's distinctive features had nothing to do with coping with the Soviet threat at all”, wrote one analyst. “[The features] were a result of NATO's more subtle purpose of preventing a cycle of mistrust, competition, and instability in security relations among its members” (Wallander 2000: 716).

However, regardless of its assets and merits, NATO will not survive if the two main protagonists – the United States and the EU members, increasingly acting as one bloc part company on such fundamental issues as the right to preemptive strikes, the need for UN authorization for military action, or the legal protection for alliance soldiers in combat.

The allies have so far been able to work out their differences (often through the sheer weight of US influence in the alliance) and launch a number of joint missions since the end of the Cold War, but the trend line is worrying. To paraphrase an old cliché oft-used to describe US-European relations, “that which divides the allies is becoming stronger than what unites them”. In the interest of both NATO as an institution but, more importantly, good US-European relations, the alliance's consultative mechanisms could be put to use to start working on resolving the differences outlined earlier in this chapter.

THE ENTANGLING ALLIANCE

In NATO's early years, the challenges before the allies were to find creative ways to incorporate West Germany without spawning a new way of militarism in the country, to convince two erstwhile rivals – Greece and Turkey – to focus on the Soviet danger rather than threaten each other, and to find the right mix of nuclear policies that would deter Russia without provoking it – a point on which the United States and its European allies often passionately disagreed. While much of the discussion surrounding these disputes occurred on bilateral or multilateral levels, NATO played an important role all along. A high degree of unity and coordination was crucial for the alliance to credibly deter a Soviet threat. However, dispute resolution within the Western community was a goal in itself. Note that Lord Ismay's famous maxim that NATO was created to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down, deals only partly with the communist threat – two of the three functions are specifically aimed at keeping order among the allied countries.

186 NATO created a web of institutions and policies to overcome these and other early problems. By formulating defense policies on a supranational level, within the alliance, NATO helped dispel fears of Germany's rearmament. When Germany's neighbors needed a reassurance that the Bonn government would not turn its weapons against them, NATO helped provide a measure of comfort and security by moving much of the military planning to allied committees, with access and input by all members. The transparency also helped mitigate the potentially destabilizing impact of the Cold War arms buildup on intra-alliance relations.⁷ Furthermore, NATO's emphasis on democratic, civilian control over its members' militaries reduced the potential for domestic instability spilling into an external conflict (Wallander: 711).

Recent history clearly showed that democratically elected governments accountable to their voters are less likely to wage a pointless war. Not coincidentally, the 1974 Greek-Turkish tensions, arguably the gravest internal conflict NATO faced during the Cold War, peaked at the same time as both countries were effectively under control of the military establishments.⁸ Drawing on this and other lessons, NATO has already made democracy and rule of law one of the highest criteria for admission of new members. Hence NATO's warnings to Slovakia, which scored very high on assessments of the candidates' military and economic capabilities before the 2002 Prague enlargement summit, that it may miss the next round if its voters return the authoritarian Vladimir Mečiar to power (Szayna 2002).

These and other measures – integrated civilian and military staffs, standardized arms procurement and economic procedures – served the express purpose of preventing and diffusing conflicts among allies. In the post-Cold War years, NATO's institutions helped the allies bridge their differences over Kosovo and paved way for a joint military action against Yugoslavia in 1999.

There is no doubt that without alliance pressure, countries represented in NATO would have disagreed far more openly and substantively than they eventually did – even countries such as Greece and Hungary or the Czech Republic, which harbored grave reservations about some aspects of the campaign or the war as such, did eventually allow NATO to go ahead with military operations. The allied unity in the face of Serbian resistance and Moscow's reservation was crucial in forcing Slobodan Milosevic to sue for peace in June 1999.

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LESS DEFENSE, MORE ARBITRATION IN NATO'S FUTURE

NATO would offer a natural platform for the member states to seek to resolve their differences on security issues. A combination of the following factors makes it particularly suited to play this role: it has elaborate institutions that foster practically daily consultations on defense issues and a culture of consensus. "What catalyzed NATO [at the beginning of the Cold War] was a strong desire to link Europe and North America in response to the Soviet threat" (McCalla 1996: 448). That mission is just as relevant today as it was in 1949. The security environment and the sources of differences between Europe and the United States have changed but the challenge remains the same: to build on and strengthen the commonalities between the two sides of the Atlantic in order to overcome their differences and thus make joint diplomatic and military action possible.

If the national governments resolve to seriously address their differences, NATO's committees could provide the structure for early debates on the outline of changes to the legal system regulating the rule of force. Clearly, NATO discussions could only generate the seed of a future agreement. Reforming the documents and institutions most affected by the post-Cold War military missions – the UN Security Council, the UN Charter, the Geneva Convention – would require a far wider support than NATO members alone can muster. Enrolling China, Russia and the rest of the world in the process will be another challenge altogether. However, if at this future stage the United States and Europe have already arrived at a common reform proposal, one very important purpose would have been served – trans-Atlantic tensions would presumably have been significantly reduced, if not removed altogether.

⁷ For an alternative point of view, arguing that NATO membership aggravated the conflict between Greece and Turkey, see: Ronald R. Krebs, *Perverse Institutionalism: NATO and the Greco-Turkish Conflict*, *International Organization*, No. 53, 2 Spring 1999, pp. 343-377.

⁸ The 1974 invasion of Cyprus by Turkey, which actually prompted Greece to declare an (aborted) attack on Turkey, came at the time when Greece was under control of a military junta of Brigadier Dimitrios Ioannides. The civilian Turkish governments was at the time, and still is, operating under the influence of the country's armed forces, although it is unclear whether a fully democratic government would have responded differently to what Turkey perceived as an effort by Greece to fully annex Cyprus, with its large ethnic Turkish minority.

THE IMPACT OF THE VISEGRAD 4

The worsening US-European relations leave Central and Eastern Europe with two choices – becoming a part of a trans-Atlantic alliance that is in the process of weakening and possibly turning irrelevant, or taking a lead on transforming and repairing the relationship between the United States and Europe, whose deteriorating state represents the main threat to NATO's future health and influence. The first option is bad and getting worse – the tensions between the allies also threaten to make Central and Eastern Europe into pawns in the trans-Atlantic power games.

Both, the European Union and the United States view Central Europe's aspiration to join the EU or, in Slovakia's case, both NATO and the EU, as a source of leverage over the Visegrad 4 countries. The countries are in a potentially vulnerable situation. For reasons of history and geography, the Visegrad 4 value the mutual defense aspect of NATO membership more than other European NATO allies. This posture dictates a close relationship with Washington, the main (and some would argue sole) guarantor of Europe's security.

But Central Europe also seeks, for economic, cultural and other reasons, a rapprochement with the European Union. All Visegrad 4 countries hope to be admitted in the next wave of EU enlargement, likely in 2004. The two membership drives have always been viewed by candidate states as not only compatible, but also mutually reinforcing; keystones in the larger process of integration or reintegration, as the case may be, into the Western community. Few in Central Europe ever pondered the possibility that requirements of membership in the two institutions, NATO and EU, may become incompatible – that the trans-Atlantic community as such may, in fact, start coming apart. However, as Europe's and America's agendas diverge, Brussels and Washington impose increasingly contradictory demands and expectations on Central Europe's new democracies. One case in question is the dispute over the International Criminal Court (ICC). The Treaty of Rome, which came into force in 2002, established a permanent tribunal for prosecuting human rights violations such as genocide. Europe, generally speaking, has been extremely supportive of the ICC. All EU members have signed the Rome Treaty, and have formally committed to not only supporting the functioning of the court, but also to pushing for worldwide ratification of the ICC statutes (Council 2002). The United States took a dim view of the ICC, calling it a threat to

US sovereignty and an invitation to “politically motivated prosecutions” (Grossman 2002).

President Clinton reluctantly signed the treaty statutes in 2000, citing the need to strengthen international accountability but calling the document “deeply flawed” (Clinton 2000). The Bush administration first said it would not submit the ICC statutes for ratification to the US Senate, and later repudiated the US signature altogether. Washington also began a diplomatic campaign seeking protection for US military personnel from ICC's reach. In August 2002, Bucharest became the first to sign a treaty with Washington, which exempted US soldiers serving on the territory of Romania from the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. The issue is both serious and symbolic – the ICC does aim to try suspects from any country, including those that, like the United States, have not signed the Rome statutes. However, ICC prosecution begins only if courts in that country refuse to deal with the allegations. It is unlikely that US courts would ever refuse to examine allegations of human rights violations committed by its citizens. But the theoretical possibility exists that an outside jurisdiction would intervene where US courts refused to do so, and this very scenario has outraged conservatives in the US government.

There is every indication that the US government is very serious in its pursuit of bilateral ICC exemptions. The State Department announced that it would seek exemption agreements with all European countries. A respected US columnist William Pfaff called the tribunal “an obsession” for the Bush administration and added, “Washington wants to compel the NATO candidates to accept its demands, and it thinks it can force the EU to back down” (*International Herald Tribune*, 17 August 2002). In case of Central Europe, Washington is indeed putting the new democracies on a collision course with the European Union. Not only have all EU countries signed the Rome Treaty, members also agreed that no EU state should begin negotiating an exemption for US nationals until a common European approach is discussed. For EU candidate states to sign such an agreement with Washington is tantamount to placing their European Union candidacy at serious risk.

Already Bucharest incurred the wrath of European Commission President Romano Prodi, who admonished the Romanian government for acting before the European Union arrived at a joint position (*The United States...*, 2002). And Romania may have been in an easier situation than Slovakia – Romania's EU membership is a long way off, whereas Slovakia could enter the EU

as soon as 2004. For Romania, choosing the US position over EU made imminent sense – the government in Bucharest clearly calculated that the move would help it enter NATO in the short term, and may be forgotten in the long term, when its EU membership comes up for discussion. Slovakia, on the other hand, stands to be invited to NATO in the fall of 2002 and will also likely be among the first countries considered for EU membership. The Bratislava government may not have the luxury of buying time vis-à-vis the European Union the way Romania did. Moreover, nor are the NATO members among the Visegrad 4 safe from Washington's pressure – future provisions of US military assistance could be tied to the recipient countries' agreement on exemption of US personnel. It is a far-fetched scenario but one can envision a situation where candidate countries are faced with an either-or scenario – joining either NATO or the EU but not both, because the accession criteria, whether official ones or the ones formulated through diplomatic back-channels, are mutually exclusive.

As one Bulgarian analyst lamented over the position of his country, "this is a very difficult position. Actually, Bulgaria is for the first time in such a difficult position, being forced to choose between Europe and America, between being pro-European and being pro-American" (Knox 2002). Central Europe can simply no longer avoid dealing with the trans-Atlantic disagreements. In the long run, once the Visegrad 4 are fully integrated into the EU and NATO, they will also inherit both organizations' problems, including the growing gap between the United States and Europe. And in the short run, differences between Washington and Brussels already threaten the Visegrad countries' EU candidacy, or both EU and NATO candidacy, in the case of Slovakia. Closing eyes to the problems or pleading powerlessness will not do as an option.

The constructive approach would consist, in short, of making the EU more trans-Atlantic-minded than it would be on its own accord and initiative. This does not necessarily mean turning every European foreign ministry into a Whitehall (the U.K. Foreign Office), or reforming the US State Department. The differences between Europe and the United States are real, and they are here to stay. But there is plenty of room for improvement in two main areas: revising the legal framework regulating the use of force on the international scale, and strengthening the adherence among NATO allies to this framework. Both tasks are vast and difficult, especially the second which would require a change in the mindset of the security apparatus, particularly in the United States. Nevertheless, the hope is that a change in one area will lead

to an improvement in the other – that a clearer and more coherent understanding of the rules regulating the use of military force will remove the tensions between the United States and Europe and encourage more cooperation among allies. Reinvigorating the Atlantic alliance will require far more effort – in particular, the development of stronger defense capacity in Europe – but a new agreement on the rules of the game is a good start.

Central Europe's capacity to change the trans-Atlantic dynamic is, admittedly limited. The Visegrad 4 can help by simply being model trans-Atlantic citizens – discouraging provocative moves on either side of the Atlantic and urging their EU counterparts to consider the US point of view. More importantly, the candidate countries can help by moving one step ahead of EU members in proposing concrete reforms to the security framework, and by pushing for a dialogue to begin between the United States and Europe on the role of the Security Council, the UN Charter, the Geneva Convention, and other relevant bodies of law affected by the recent humanitarian interventions and the campaign against terrorism. In doing so, they would not only help their case vis-à-vis NATO and the European Union, they could help reinvigorate the very institutions they have recently joined or seek to join, and in turn strengthen their own security.

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Chapter VIII

THE CHANGING ROLE AND POSITION OF VISEGRAD FOUR IN THE AREA OF SECURITY AND DEFENCE

CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS

The Visegrad group is defined in the security and defence area primarily by the institutional position of its members, their main security interests and preferences for future evolution of key institutions and mechanisms available for crisis management in a broad Euro-Atlantic area.

Throughout the 1990s, Security and defence cooperation has been one of the most vibrant dimensions of the Visegrad project, quite often in spite of the discord apparent at the highest political levels. At the same time, security rationale was very strong in the creation of Visegrad group and its initial success during the period between 1990 and 1992 (Hyde-Price 1996: 122–131).¹

Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland all shared a basic security interest in the quick transfer of Soviet troops from their territories, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, and finally, deciding on their own about the security arrangements that would best suit their needs (Gazdag 1997: 18–26). First, two immediate tasks contributed to the creation of the Visegrad group so that the

¹ For more accounts of origins of Visegrad group and its security rationale, please see: Pál Dunay: Security Cooperation in the Visegrad Quadrangle: Present and Future. In: Andrea J. Williams (ed.): *Reorganizing Eastern Europe: European Institutions and the Refashioning of Europe's Security Architecture*. Dartmouth, Aldershot 1994, pp. 121–144; Andrew Michta: *East Central Europe after the Warsaw Pact: Security Dilemma in the 1990s*, Westport, Greenwood Press 1992; Jeffrey Simon: *Czechoslovakia's "Velvet Divorce", Visegrad Cohesion, and European Fault Lines*, McNair Paper 23, October 1993. Washington DC, NDU Press 1993.

194 member countries could join forces in applying pressure on Moscow and co-ordinate their negotiations and policies within Warsaw Pact organs, which nominally still existed in 1990. These efforts were remarkably successful and led to the dissolution of the military organs of Warsaw Pact as of 1 April 1991, and the political structures of Warsaw Pact as of 1 July 1991. Withdrawal of Soviet troops from their territories was completed surprisingly quickly: from Hungary by 15 June 1991; from Czechoslovakia by 25 June 1991; from Poland by 28 October 1992.²

The desire to choose the best available security arrangement contributed toward gaining of momentum in Visegrad cooperation which, as was agreed, should promote a further visibility of the group in the international system and set it apart from the rest of former Eastern Bloc. The ultimate goal soon declared by all three states was to gain membership in the North Atlantic Alliance that was seen, as both a strong security organization, and a political symbol in its own merit, sealing officially the membership of these countries in the democratic West (*Windsor Group...*, 1994). This security desire was complemented by the ambition to join the European Community, seen as a natural magnet for political and economic policies and bringing also the psychological vindication of status for these countries (Lukáč 2001: 6–11). Security preferences for early NATO enlargement were shared and fostered by all Visegrad countries by 1992–3 when all other alternatives proved to be far less attractive, secure or efficient (Wallat 2001: 24–27). This was primarily connected with the failure of hopes in the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and its future role as a strong pan-European security structure, as was tragically demonstrated during the spreading war in the former Yugoslavia.

Four Visegrad states are at the moment clearly divided into two sub-groups. One is composed of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, who are all NATO members and advanced candidates for EU membership as they started their accession negotiations in the first round in 1998. Slovakia is a hopeful candidate for both the EU (accession negotiations began in 2000 and Slovakia caught up very quickly to the first group) and also for NATO, where its three-year cycle of Membership Action Plan brought rather positive results. This institutional position distinguishes Slovakia from the other three Visegrad states as far as tools available at its disposal are concerned and also has an

effect on its low profile on many security and defence issues where it has to balance both EU and NATO interests (Missiroli 2002). The three Visegrad states from the first sub-group are also regarded as important states defined in NATO-EU framework as Non-EU European Allies (NEEA). This group also includes Norway, Iceland and Turkey bringing together all six NEEA states into special position regarding their place, influence and powers in the evolution of the European Security and Defence Policy – a recent project of the EU with a goal of asserting a more powerful role in security affairs on the European continent and in the world.

The three Visegrad states that are also non-EU European allies perceive their security status as a quite sensitive issue after it was strengthened by their membership in NATO and view any undermining of this status or limiting their influence once again as an unwelcome prospect (*ibid.*: 61)³ The current policy preferences of these three Visegrad states in the security and defence policy area is clearly determined by the formative experience of aspiration for NATO membership, the actual evolution of Alliance's stance on this issue and extraordinary role attached to the United States – including its top politicians, such as President Bill Clinton and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, in eventually bringing enlargement about. The resulting strong pro-US orientation cuts across all three Visegrad states that were eager to secure easy ratification of their accession to NATO in the US Congress (see Grayson 1999; Goldgeyer 1999). Conduct of NATO enlargement process itself therefore contributed to the self-declared membership of three new Central European NATO members in the informal pro-Atlanticist group in the Alliance. They could have been counted on to support US views in many issues of intra-Alliance debate, partially as a result of their interest in the vibrant Atlantic Alliance based on continuing US presence in Europe, and their gratitude for its role in NATO enlargement (Kupiecki 2001: 229–285).⁴

³ See also Jiří Šedivý: The Ins and Outs of ESDP: The Question of Participation, in *World Defence Systems*, Vol.3, Issue 2, London, RUSI 2001, pp.42–44; also helpful are chapters on the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland by Vladimír Handl and Radek Khol, Ryszard Zieba and László J. Kiss in Hans-Georg Erhart (Hrsg.): *Die Europäische Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik. Positionen, Perzeptionen, Probleme, Perspektiven*, Baden-Baden, Nomos 2002.

⁴ Please see also Bogusław Winid: Security Issues in Polish-American Relations, *Ibid.*, pp.171–193; Lajos Pietsch: *Hungary and NATO*, Budapest, Hungarian Atlantic Council 1998; Jiří Šedivý, Petr Luňák: The Czech Republic in an Atlantic Europe: a Small State's Ambitions, Roles and Responsibilities, in *Romanian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. IV, Special Issue Three, Bucharest 1998, s. 272 – 286.

² Although, due to the use of Polish territory for transit of Russian units of ex-Soviet Western Group from former GDR, some support units completed their pullout only by 15 September 1993.

96 At the same time, the security and defence dimension of Visegrad cooperation is crucial for its vitality. Not only were the frequent military contacts and security cooperation constant feature throughout the 1990s, the four Visegrad countries are currently bound together by shared strategic interest of bringing Slovakia into NATO (Marušiak 2001: 44–51). The political changes in Slovakia after 1998 elections made this possible, and together with political change in the Czech Republic, led to a revitalization of Visegrad cooperation (Handl 2001: 7–23; *Bilance...*, 2000: 17–42). The desire of three Visegrad NATO members to help Slovakia's bid for NATO membership was formally confirmed at the summit of Visegrad prime ministers in Bratislava on May 14, 1999. Major shared interest of strategically securing their immediate neighbourhood is thus influencing most of the activity that takes place in security and defence area of Visegrad cooperation, although it is primarily one-way effort directed at Slovakia.

In the future, this cooperation can be further expanded to include regular consultations and cooperation at various levels from ministers of defence to chiefs of general staffs and working groups of experts, which were taking place throughout the 1990s on bilateral basis inside the Visegrad group (Novotný 1999: 9–10; Svěrák 1998: 49–64). All three Visegrad NATO members decided to facilitate assistance in the area of practical preparation of Slovakia and share with their Slovak counterparts experience of integration into NATO. The learning process of Slovak politicians, civil servants and military personnel is also complemented by concrete projects directed towards future that should also strengthen the Slovak position before the Prague NATO summit by demonstrating their readiness and ability to integrate with current NATO members (*Slovak Army Review*, 2001: 17–18). The Czech Republic therefore invited Slovakia to form a joint peacekeeping battalion for KFOR comprising of 400 Czech soldiers and 100 Slovak soldiers, which was finally deployed in the operational area in March 2002.⁵ The second practical example of Visegrad military cooperation is the joint Czech-Polish-Slovak brigade with headquarters formed by May 30, 2002 in Topolčany designated for peacekeeping operations under the NATO or EU command. It should be a framework unit with Poland and Slovakia contributing one mechanised battalion each, the Czech Republic adding an artillery unit, making the brigade operational by 2005 (*CTK*, 31 May 2002). It was created following a joint declaration of three defence ministers in Bratislava on May 30, 2001 and an

international agreement was signed on September 20, 2001, followed by a technical agreement signed by chiefs of general staffs on March 21, 2002.

The process of aiding Slovakia in gaining membership in NATO by passing the experience of three Visegrad NATO members can in many respects also mirror the intensive coordination, cooperation and consultation that existed among the three Visegrad states that were invited to join NATO at the NATO summit in Madrid in July 1997 (Lukášek 2001). The three countries almost immediately initiated practical cooperation based on a meeting of three defence ministers on July 12, 1997 in Budapest, which resulted in a regular consultation of deputy defence ministers and chiefs of general staffs, clearly aimed at enhancing their preparedness for NATO integration. Areas of highest concern were identified and six working groups were created, covering Defence Planning Questionnaire, training of personnel for NATO structures, C3I, logistics, cooperation in air defence and human resources management. Later, areas dealing with defence strategies and military doctrines were added, as well as R&D and procurement (*ibid.*: 213). In the political area, these efforts were complemented by joining forces in securing smooth ratification of NATO enlargement in member states, especially the crucial vote in the US Congress. This intensive period of cooperation can be fruitfully adapted to the 3+1 format of three Visegrad NATO members and Slovakia.

Clear division of labour between the key organizations in the Euro-Atlantic area that all Visegrad states wished to join was complicated by the emergence of the European Security and Defence Policy in 1999. Until then, functions and roles of the EU and NATO were clearly delineated and non-conflicting. NATO was the primary security institution and main vehicle for military cooperation. On the other hand, the EU was mainly perceived as a political and economic institution with very limited role in security cooperation, but no role in military cooperation. Their goals were seen as complimentary and allowed for easy declaration of loyalties to both of them. However, the Atlanticist and European allegiances became a potentially more controversial issue once the EU declared its ambition to become a serious security player in world affairs and declared its goal of being capable to conduct crisis management operations on its own, if necessary.⁶ At the same time, some EU

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⁵ See press releases from 2 April and 7 January 2002 at www.army.cz.

⁶ Most skeptical in this regard was Poland. For good overview of initial Polish discussion, see Olaf Osica: CESDP as Seen by Poland, CSM Reports and Analysis 5/01, Warsaw, Centre for International Relations 2001.

countries anticipated a possible clash between pro-European and pro-Atlanticist options and the possible negative impact this may have on new EU members.⁷

Future shape and direction of ESDP is still a big question mark that can significantly influence security and defence preferences of Visegrad states, especially if there is a significant drift in trans-Atlantic relations. Visegrad NATO members faced the first tough test of their Atlantic resolve and willingness to contribute to the Alliance two weeks after they joined NATO at the start of the Kosovo air campaign. Although two of them were not in an easy situation, they supported all NATO actions and did not block them, as some had feared. The political elites in the Czech Republic had to deal with a deep division in the public due to the fact that majority of the population felt strong emotional and historical link to the people of Yugoslavia. Hungary, on the other hand, had to take into consideration the presence of Hungarian minority in Vojvodina and its direct land border with Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In contrast, direct contribution to the NATO-led peacekeeping operation in Kosovo – KFOR, was seen as non-controversial in all of Visegrad countries and balanced a previous period of great political strain (Hutchinson 2000: 25–38).⁸

Visegrad states also proved to be reliable allies and partners of the United States in the moment of its greatest need. They all demonstrated clear solidarity with the American people after the tragic events of September 11, 2001. Especially, three Visegrad NATO members had the opportunity to act through NATO where they supported both activation of Article V on collec-

⁷ This is explicitly viewed as a dangerous misperception and argued against in Gregorz Gromadzki, Olaf Osica: *Pro-European Atlantists: Poland and Other Countries of Central and Eastern Europe After Accession to the European Union*, On the Future of Europe Policy Paper no.3, Warsaw, Stefan Batory Foundation 2002.

⁸ For further analysis of the Kosovo crisis and reaction of individual Visegrad countries see especially: Milada Anna Vachudova, *The Atlantic Alliance and Kosovo: Enlargement and the Behavior of New Allies* in Pierre Martin and Mark R. Brawley, eds., *Alliance Politics, Kosovo and NATO's War: Allied Force or Forced Allies?*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001, pp. 303–332; Andrew Parker, *US Move Gives Boost to Plans for Rapid Reaction Force*, Financial Times, 7 February 2001, p. 1; Dominique Moisi, *A Sea-change in the Trans-Atlantic Relationship*, Financial Times, 12 February 2001, p. 1; Andrew Parker, *US Move Gives Boost to Plans for Rapid Reaction Force*, Financial Times, 7 February 2001, p. 1; Charles Grant, *European Defence From 2010 – a British View*, Challenges Europe, 21 October 2000, pp. 1–2; Deighton, *Toward the Glass Ceiling?*, p. 99.

tive defence and specific measures taken by NATO in support of the US-led coalition operations against global terrorism. They also directly contributed to US operation *Enduring Freedom* and ISAF international operation in Afghanistan deployed under UN auspices after the collapse of Taliban regime. The Czech Republic sent a field hospital to Afghanistan, together with Special Forces for its protection. Poland deployed combat engineers and logistics platoon in Afghanistan using eight flights by An-124 airplanes. Also Slovakia deployed an engineering unit in Afghanistan. Except for already deployed forces and assets of Visegrad states in coalition operations, the Slovak side offered a more extensive list of available units and capabilities, as well as stepped up its military presence in peacekeeping operations in the Balkans which relieved US troops for deployment in Afghanistan and elsewhere.⁹

MAIN INTERESTS OF RELEVANT PLAYERS

Main security interests of Visegrad states are still rather similar as they continue in the direction set by their accession to NATO (in the case of Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic) or desire to do so in the near future (in the case of Slovakia). Only with minor variation in degree of vocality, they share the constant interest in keeping the US military and political presence in Europe (Larrabee 1997: 87–122). America's leading position and continuing interest in the Atlantic Alliance is seen as a sufficient safeguard that NATO will remain an effective political-military organization providing the best available tools for a broad spectrum of activities, from search and rescue missions, to different types of crisis management operations (as seen primarily in the Balkans) up to eventual collective defence tasks. Most of these military activities are either facilitated to a great extent, or even entirely dependent on US forces, assets and capabilities. One thing remains clear – European allies on their own would not be able to conduct major crisis management operations without recourse to US assets in the area of strategic lift, mobile command and control facilities, satellite communications and intelligence.

⁹ More details on units offered to the US-led military effort can be found at regularly updated factsheet of US Department of Defense, <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/May2002/d20020523cu.pdf>

The Visegrad states also value American leadership in the political arena where it can bridge a potential lack of European determination to employ force if necessary or prevent political deadlock among several European great powers. Visegrad states also accept rather easily the dominant position of the United States in the Alliance's affairs because of the lack of negative historical experiences, as they have had with German aspirations to dominate the region of Central Europe resulting in two world wars, or unreliable alliance ties with European great powers, like Great Britain or France prior to the Second World War. The distant superpower enjoys an image in this part of Europe as a benevolent hegemon without hidden schemes in mind. In the security and defence area, the Visegrad states, especially in comparison with the states in Western Europe, still attach quite high a value to collective defence and strong security guarantees, coupled with wide arsenal of deterrence capabilities. Some of them, especially Poland still see NATO in traditional terms of strengthening the defence of their territory against enemy attack (Luif 2001). This perception of threat may be only partially reduced by enlargement of NATO to include the Baltic States.

The three Visegrad states certainly belong to the group of countries inside NATO that wishes to keep a balance between its existing core functions of collective defence based on a combination of military and political means and new missions focusing on out of area crisis management operations, addressing new security challenges and contributing towards stabilization of the wider European continent (Kupiecki: 277–285; Pezl 1999: 9–16). In a general framework of EU-NATO relations, which may fundamentally influence the security situation on the European continent, the Visegrad states follow a very similar policy. It is primarily driven by their institutional position as Non-EU European Allies (NEEA), and based on a shared interest in preventing any undermining of the position of NATO as an effective security organization, seen from their perspective as one having primacy over other organizations in this geographic area.

Initially, the EU's efforts in creating a military dimension for the European integration process were seen as a supplement to the pivotal role of NATO and its capabilities in crisis management. Three Visegrad NATO countries stressed the need to focus on pragmatic problems that undermine Europe's position – especially the lack of military capabilities.

Their original policy was suspicious of building new institutions that would duplicate those of NATO. They viewed with skepticism the autonomy prin-

ciple declared as central to new EU ambitions whereby the EU should have the capacity to take decisions, and where NATO as a whole is not engaged, to launch and then to conduct EU-led military operations in response to international crises. Moreover, with the creation of the European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI), the expectation that the 3 Visegrad NATO members would transfer to the WEU model of participation has met with strong resistance of the EU. The EU was determined to prevent either creating special associate membership status or granting automatic access of non-EU member states to EU decision-making in the military area. Also, internal divergence between diplomatic and military representatives in the Visegrad states complicated the formulation of coherent external policy on these issues, because the military establishments were generally hostile towards the ESDP project.

General military perception in Visegrad countries focused on the ineffectiveness of the European efforts, risks connected with the EU's taking over tasks of collective defence, disadvantages vis-à-vis proven structures of NATO, practical consequences of creating new EU structures, and reducing available resources through inevitable duplication. For most military officials in the NATO member Visegrad states, NATO environment also represented much more familiar ground, based on a distinct military culture, while the European Union was seen as a 'soft', civilian and quite alien structure.

Comparison of levels achieved in practical integration of three Visegrad NATO members into the activities of the Alliance to those offered by the EU is quite clearly in favour of NATO. But also for Slovakia as a non-NATO Visegrad state, inclusion in concrete activities offered by NATO, such as NATO Planning and Review Process (PARP), later upgraded to Membership Action Plan (MAP), harmonization of defense planning, procedures, doctrine, and participation in NATO-led peacekeeping operations – represents a much more advanced vehicle for individual preparation for eventual membership than that offered by the EU. Furthermore, permanent liaison structures through Partnership Coordination Cell ensures regular access of non-NATO partners to information on Alliance activities, out-of area operations open to their contributions and so on. This long-term experience with NATO's inclusive mode of functioning strengthens pro-Atlantic orientation also among military elites in countries like Slovakia (Bilčík 2001). In comparison, EU modes of participation offered to all "third countries", including four Visegrad states were not perceived as adequate, but rather as seriously limiting in the

2 degree of participation and influence for the three Visegrad non-EU European Allies that were downgraded from their previous position of WEU Associate Members. The level of participation offered to the Visegrad 4 generally did not create an overtly positive atmosphere towards the EU in security and defence establishments of these countries.

Once ESDP ambitions and structures became clearer, the attention of policy makers in Visegrad countries moved in a new direction, which focused less on modalities of participation for NEEA countries in ESDP, and more on the general setting of NATO-EU relations. Visegrad states in this area clearly share a basic interest in the vitality of the NATO-EU link. In their view, this relationship should be based on principles of cooperation, complementarity and transparency. Once all regular forums of dialogue and consultation between the two organizations are established and cooperation mechanisms tested in a time of crisis, the ESDP should be the main arena for furthering the security interests of Visegrad countries in a wider European area. At least one positive example on which both organizations can build is their successful cooperation in crisis management and conflict prevention in Macedonia that has taken place since the summer of 2001. At the same time, the Visegrad states would still prefer the NATO-first policy which means that EU-led crisis management operations should be envisaged only as a second option once NATO decides for itself whether it wants to be involved collectively or not. In the area of defense planning of the two organizations, Visegrad states promote intertwining the two processes as much as possible, even if joint planning proved politically impossible for the EU side. They also see many of the tasks of European Headline Goal Catalogue pursued by the EU, and Defence Capabilities Initiative, pursued by NATO as very similar – therefore allowing for close coordination of European military capabilities development projects as was already achieved in one of the NATO-EU working groups.

Visegrad states also have a common interest in utilizing all available channels and formats to convey their priorities, preferences and policy options. These include bilateral talks with the United States and major European powers or like-minded medium and smaller-sized states, talks within NATO framework, newly establishing NATO-EU bodies, and finally, consultative formats offered by the EU in area of ESDP to “third states”, including NEEA, known as 15+6 and 15+15. Although no specific preferences have been crystallized, and given that the utility of all of these formats may change with time, current experience with EU formats 15+6 and 15+15 is

certainly far from satisfactory. It is therefore likely that the Visegrad states will accept the formal approach of the EU that holds the required number of meetings, even though their content is very shallow and substance is clearly missing. The EU is also downgrading the status of these meetings by sending second or third-tier representatives and not responding in any constructive way to requests for special consultations on matters of high concern for some countries – like in the case of Visegrad states was Macedonia or Belarus.

The last major security interest that binds Visegrad states together is their goal of successful reform of their armed forces. The process as such was started in all Visegrad countries at the beginning of the 1990s, but major changes in civil-military relations, general preparation of security and defence policies, modernization, resource management, and other challenges had to be addressed in the process of preparation for NATO membership (Simon 1996). Requirements for minimal military interoperability at the time of their inclusion into NATO and gradual integration into its structures provided greatly needed reference points and also secured the attention of political elites to provide the necessary resources for the process of transformation. Based on the collective requirements of the Alliance, a framework for defence planning was outlined, and was later translated into Target Force Goals, thus further enhancing a clear direction of the development of Visegrad militaries (Cziomer 2000: 101–146; Matějka 2000: 9–33).

The overall approach to the process of transformation in the three Visegrad countries was complemented soon after their accession by a new focus on defence capabilities of which Europe's armed forces were in dire need for their deployment in international operations outside of their own, or even allied territory. Specified in NATO's New Strategic Concept and Defence Capabilities Initiative adopted at the NATO Summit in Washington in April 1999, the member countries decided to increase the utility of at least part of their militaries for these operations. Reform of the armed forces with an aim to achieve greater capabilities in this area is currently underway in the Visegrad states where the focus is either on rapid movement towards fully professional military (as in the Czech Republic) or on retaining a mix of professional and conscript soldiers for the time being (in Hungary, Poland and Slovakia).

Visegrad militaries have to balance their deployment for individual or collective defence tasks – either crisis management operations under EU or

1 NATO command – with peace operations under the UN flag.¹⁰ Their capabilities, assets and training should allow their militaries to be used for any of those roles, because the size of the country, its defence budget and political ambitions determine the principle for assigning the same set of forces to different frameworks, rather than if separate forces had to be ready for either NATO, EU or UN (Missiroli 2002). At the moment the units earmarked for either NATO or EU operations have priority for NATO tasks connected either with article V collective defence or with non-article V NATO-led peace-keeping operations. Essentially, the same units earmarked for NATO Rapid Reaction and Immediate Reaction Forces (also known as high-readiness forces) were declared by Visegrad states for EU catalogue of European Headline Goal. This principle is likely to be retained even after the entry of Visegrad states into the EU.

Major security interests of Visegrad states do not diverge at the moment. What we can observe is different emphasis of individual countries on specific geographic areas of perceived risks, various degrees of importance attached to different tasks of armed forces and certain political and military deterrence measures. Poland may thus pay much closer attention to the security status of the Baltic states, prepare for contingencies involving threat to its territory, or see value in its inclusion in the US missile defence project. It might also aspire to play a central security role in the region of Central Europe, both in bilateral relations with the United States but also within the context of NATO, and in the near future, in the context of EU where it wants to measure up to countries like Spain.

Hungary is more sensitive to the situation in Western Balkans, including the future of former Yugoslavia (now Serbia and Montenegro) or the situation of its ethnic minorities in the region (a constant theme of its foreign policy throughout the 1990s) and is less inclined to power projection activities even inside the NATO framework. The Czech Republic does not have the comparable area of a clear geographic interest, except for Slovakia, which it prefers to be stabilized and drawn into the Euro-Atlantic structures. Slovakia

¹⁰ For more details on reforms carried out by individual Visegrad states see Reform rules. Hungary: Country briefing, *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 20 February 2002; Poland: Country briefing, *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 26 September 2001; for Slovakia see *Slovak Army Review*, Winter 2002, pp.6-18 and at www.mod.gov.sk/model2010/; for the recent Czech plan approved by the government and President in April 2002 to professionalise Czech armed forces see www.army.cz/reforma/index.html.

itself is now at a stage that other three Visegrad states encountered more than three years ago and its bid for NATO membership greatly influences its security policy and interests. The Slovak diplomacy is therefore muted in voicing objections towards certain negative consequences of steps taken by either NATO or the EU. Slovakia, among the Visegrad countries also places the greatest emphasis on the vitality of the grouping, as it sees not that many other alternatives that would enhance its position.

THE IMPACT OF EU ENLARGEMENT ON TRANS-ATLANTIC RELATIONS IN THE AREA OF SECURITY AND DEFENCE

The impact of EU enlargement on Visegrad states in the area of security and defence can be quite fundamental over the long-term, rather than in the first years of their membership in both the EU and NATO. The success in this area for Visegrad as a group obviously depends on a successful integration of Slovakia into both organizations and the entire Visegrad group joining the EU in about the same time. Membership of the Visegrad countries in both the EU and NATO will inevitably change their policy preferences. They will be faced with a need to balance security interests of the EU and NATO. Since the NATO framework and context of security policy will no longer play such a dominant role, this may prove to be quite a challenging task, especially for military elites of these countries, or those political parties that declare themselves as staunch supporters of Atlantic orientation in terms of security and defence policies while being suspicious or openly negative towards military projects of the EU.

The need to show a basic level of solidarity with EU's external policies after accession to the EU may become a true political test, in a way unprecedented before. At the same time, the shape, ambitions and concrete opportunities for real actions of ESDP will undoubtedly increase. Not only is the deadline for meeting the European Headline Goal set by the EU for the end of the year 2003 fast approaching, but we may also see first operations being carried out under the EU flag before Visegrad states join the Union (expected in 2004). First is the IPTF follow-up police operation in Bosnia that is already planned under the mandate of EU Police Mission to take over from the UN in Janu-

16 ary 2003. EU also declared its readiness to take over NATO-led operation "Task Force Fox" in Macedonia which is nevertheless dependent on several NATO-EU agreements ("Berlin plus" on the EU access to NATO planning, common assets and capabilities; NATO-EU security agreement) and above all, on the eventual invitation by Macedonian government.

Political will to meet declared ambitions of the EU to contribute to security and stability, together with "exporting" its values to the rest of Europe and beyond, is likely to grow and new EU member states from Central and South-Eastern Europe, including the four Visegrad countries will meet with expectations to make visible contributions to ESDP operations. This political aim may coincide with desire of new EU member states to prove that they are not a political burden to an enlarged EU. This argument may be especially strong within Visegrad countries that view themselves as the most advanced of the EU candidate states – especially Poland that has political ambitions to establish itself as a regional leader. Determination to show political wisdom of the EU enlargement should then be translated into more specific, and perhaps even expanded, commitment of assets and capabilities of Visegrad countries for both military and civilian crisis management operations within the EU Headline Goal Catalogue.

Preference of policy-makers in Visegrad countries to make their presence visible also in the EU-led crisis management operations may then conflict with preferences of their military elites, or a low level of preparedness to contribute policemen or other civilian personnel for non-military EU operations. Thus, political and military expectations will probably diverge for several years while Visegrad militaries are expected to view NATO as a proven mechanism for planning and conducting a broad range of missions. NATO also offers last resort capability to intervene if the situation in the field deteriorates from a peacekeeping to the collective defence type of environment. Also, on the non-military side of crisis management, Visegrad states may face discrepancies given their limited pool of civilian and police personnel trained and available for this type of missions. Police personnel, especially, is not viewed as an asset deployable in international missions outside of their own territory, while for the military such deployment is generally perceived as one of its core missions.

Visegrad states will also be exposed to the challenge of higher security profile after they join the EU. Inside the EU, policy-making relies much more on bargaining and negotiations. The process is complicated by the fact that there is

no clear leader comparable to the United States' role in NATO. Based on their current preferences and track record inside the Alliance, one would expect Visegrad states to join the Atlanticist group inside the EU, therefore aligning themselves with countries like United Kingdom, Netherlands, Denmark or Portugal.¹¹ Nevertheless, the complexity of EU's foreign, security and defence policies may prove that such initial expectations may prove to be wrong.

While the life of Visegrad NATO countries in NATO was much easier given the presence of the United States, it was also facilitated by narrower scope of issues on the agenda. The European Union is a much more complex actor, with broader spectrum of issues on its agenda and regular interconnectedness of several policy areas. Moreover, in some policy areas – especially those in first pillar, but increasingly also in the second pillar – issues pertaining to CFSP are decided by qualified majority voting (QMV). Before the next round of EU enlargement brings in the Visegrad states, the EU may decide to broaden the scope of QMV to cover more issues, perhaps even the entire CFSP just short of the use of military means. This would present radical departure of policy-making style from that practiced in NATO where every member can rely on consensus-based decision-making. Such procedure is quite reassuring vis-à-vis NATO members, prevents NATO from initiating controversial actions and can be an incentive to hide behind the strong voice coming mainly from the US side. If the EU manages to increase its coherence of external actions and decides to move towards a more effective policy-making in response to an evolving crisis, for instance, new member countries may find themselves under more intense pressure. Enlarged EU may also produce a flexible pattern of internal coalitions of member states that will vary from issue to issue.

Satisfying their basic security policy goal of becoming members of both the EU and NATO, may also affect the security preferences of individual Visegrad states. Different size of Poland, compared to the remaining three members of the group, coupled with Polish ambitions inside the EU and the Central and Eastern European region, may negatively impact upon the coherence of the Visegrad group. Once the newcomers feel institutionally stabilized, citizens of Visegrad states may also view differently various issues of foreign and security policy, where finding optimal consensus may, as a result, prove to

¹¹ Three Visegrad NATO states already tried to influence the internal EU debate on ESDP through a common initiative with the United Kingdom in February 2000.

8 be difficult. If security policy preferences drive individual Visegrad countries in different directions after they enter the EU, a strong unifying incentive will disappear. In the period of accession talks, while the prospect of EU membership is in sight, Visegrad countries have a clear incentive to be perceived as a distinctive group that can offer to the EU specific assets, knowledge, expertise and resources.

In policies toward their eastern neighbours, the Visegrad countries will be constrained by the relations of the enlarged Union with Russia and Ukraine as well as the EU's policy of gradual integration of South-Eastern Europe. Even before joining the EU, Visegrad states were not able to harmonize perfectly their visa policies, which became evident especially in the treatment of Ukraine. The Czech Republic and Slovakia finally decided to introduce visa requirements effective at the end of June 2000, while Hungary, and especially, Poland wanted to postpone such decision until the latest possible date prior to accession.¹² Greater freedom of action, as is the case prior to accession may therefore simply lead to narrowing of the area where security policies of Visegrad states would still converge. On the other hand, membership in an enlarged EU may provide incentives for regional security cooperation among Visegrad states.

After gradually gaining experience with foreign and security policy-making within the EU structures, the new entrants may find that mutual support gives small and medium-sized states much bigger influence than if they stand on their own. Example of Nordic cooperation in the area of CFSP is quite instrumental, especially when we consider the impact that Finland and Sweden had on CFSP agenda shortly after they joined the EU (Forsberg and Vaahtoranta 2001). Visegrad states may therefore find it beneficial to keep regular pattern of consultations and cooperation in the area of security policy. It is also possible that their security policy outlook will bring them much closer to one another than with any other EU member across most of the agenda. Their unique post-communist legacy, geostrategic location and structure of armed forces could determine their policy choices in security and defence area even within the EU framework few years after accession.

¹² The Czech Republic decided in February 2000 to introduce visa requirements for Ukrainians, partially due to the pressure from the EU and for domestic reasons to act against increasing unemployment. This step prompted Slovakia to follow with the same measure in March 2000. Both visa regimes entered into force in June 2000. Remaining two Visegrad countries did not follow this step.

Regional security cooperation between the countries of Visegrad may also be supported by an emerging trend whereby small and medium-sized states in Europe are pursuing projects aimed at increasing their bilateral or multilateral military cooperation. Thus, political symbolism of joint units, procurement projects or sharing of assets and capabilities was during the 1990s complemented by increasing practical value of those endeavours.¹³ The EU openly favours this approach to redressing deficiencies in military capabilities through the EU Capabilities Action Plan. Moreover, the Visegrad states could benefit from inclusion in developing European frameworks, but they can also build on their nascent multinational military projects, some of which are serving to bridge the region either to West or East. Poland is perhaps the most active in this area through its participation in a Polish-German-Danish armed corps North-East, and joint peacekeeping battalions with Lithuania and Ukraine. Also, Hungary is pursuing similar activities through joint peacekeeping battalion with Romania and Italian-Hungarian-Slovenian mountain brigade.

Visegrad states also decided to launch two military projects among themselves. One such endeavour that is already contributing to the Euro-Atlantic stability is the joint Czech-Slovak peacekeeping battalion deployed in KFOR, while the other is the Czech-Polish-Slovak brigade established at the level of HQ. These units could follow successful examples of the Nordic framework brigade prepared for peace operations under NORDCAPS or Benelux Deployable Air Task Force prepared for entire spectrum of joint air force operations outside their home territory. Regional military cooperation could be also enhanced through joint modernisation and upgrade programs of equipment dating back to the Warsaw Pact era following the example of recently agreed modernisation of Mi-24 helicopters.¹⁴

EU enlargement will also undoubtedly influence defence procurement policy of Visegrad countries. They may find themselves in a more intense battle of

¹³ For general discussion on multinational military cooperation see Thomas Durrell Young: *Multinational Land Formations and NATO: Reforming Practices and Structures*, Pennsylvania, Strategic Studies Institute, 1997; and for suggestions how this approach and certain existing units can contribute towards improving European military capabilities see Centre for Defence Studies King's College London: *Achieving the Helsinki Headline Goals*, Discussion paper November 2001, London, CDS 2001.

¹⁴ International agreement was signed by four ministers of defence on 30 May 2002 in Piešťany and first modernized Mi-24 should be available in 2004.

- 10 European vs. US arms producers. Especially European firms may use indirect pressure through their governments to persuade new EU members to favour their products.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the Visegrad countries do not represent a key market for defence equipment because their investment possibilities are still rather limited. For the moment, they mostly focus on partial modernization of older weapons systems produced either domestically or on license from the Soviet Union.¹⁶

Investment in new defence systems has been rather limited.¹⁷ However, there was one prospect of a big contract – modernization of Visegrad air forces. At the moment they all consider, or are in various stages of tenders for new multi-role supersonic fighter jets (with Hungary deciding to lease for 10 year 14 JAS-39 Gripen produced by Bae Systems SAAB, therefore postponing effectively the final decision). In this specific area strong pressure divided along the EU vs. US lines could have been observed. US suppliers offered F-16 from Lockheed Martin and F/A-18 from Boeing/McDonnell Douglas, while European suppliers came up with JAS-39 Gripen from Bae Systems/SAAB, Eurofighter from EADS and Mirage 2000 from Dassault.

Political considerations in Visegrad states in most tenders seem to be for the foreseeable future secondary. If the envisaged procurement of new supersonic fighter jets eventually takes place, main consideration will be given to financial and economic conditions. Therefore, combination of price, financing conditions and, above all, offset packages will probably determine the outcome (Missiroli 2002). Whether defence procurement becomes an issue in the trans-Atlantic context for the Visegrad states in the horizon of several years depends also very much upon the future of the defense industry in general, and

¹⁵ Intensive lobbying was done by British and Swedish governments on behalf of JAS-39 Gripen produced by Bae Systems and offered to all four Visegrad countries.

¹⁶ This covers mainly different modernization programs for MBT T-72 in Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic; plans to modernize Visegrad air-forces through upgrade of Mig-29, Mig-21, Su-22, etc. The few major new weapon systems introduced after 1989 in service in Visegrad militaries include Czech sub-sonic advanced light combat aircraft L-159 ALCA and Slovak 155mm self-propelled howitzer Zuzana (both of them are not however purely locally produced, but integrate various subsystems from foreign suppliers).

¹⁷ Although a better version of partial modernization through import of used equipment from other NATO countries is possible. Poland signed a deal to acquire 128 German main battle tanks Leopard 2A4, for more information see *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 6 February 2002, p.9.

on the institutional development on the European side.¹⁸ The direction preferred by Visegrad states would lead to further integration of the arms industry across the Atlantic, thus defusing narrow definitions of US-only and European-only firms and building on several examples of combining subsystems from both sides of the Atlantic in final products, or combining ownership along similar patterns. The future of European defense industry may also depend upon its further integration on the side of supply and demand.

The demand side could be connected with several existing institutions, such as WEAG, OCCAR, or newly created European Armaments Agency that would work in close cooperation with ESDP structures inside the EU. The potential place of the remaining arms industry in Visegrad countries within the wider European context could then be an open issue.¹⁹ For the foreseeable future, however, prospect of European integration along these lines and strengthening of the demand side of procurement through harmonisation of criteria is rather unlikely due to the continuation of strong industrial interests of major EU producers. Only if European arms industry consolidation proceeds along the lines of mergers to create producers able to compete with American ones, one can imagine serious pressure on Visegrad states in this area.

The last issue connected only partially with EU enlargement is the prospect of changing perceptions of the United States and its policies toward the Visegrad countries and vice-versa. The strong ties that exist among the Visegrad countries and the US in the area of security and defence may be complemented by Poland's aspirations to become an important US ally in the region. But despite these strong ties and the fact that the people of Visegrad countries still trust the US more than their Western European neighbours, this trend may be already changing in some countries (*The Economist*, 25 May 2002: 29–30). Furthermore, the continuation of US policy seen in some aspects as unilateral and undermining of the EU's aims, interests and values

¹⁸ Analysis of the current state of defense industry in Visegrad countries, together with some tendencies in their defence procurement can be found in Tamás Földi (ed.): *NATO Co-operation: Defence Industry, Research and Technology & The Visegrad Countries*, Budapest, Public Policy Institute 2001.

¹⁹ Direct investment of foreign firms in Visegrad defense industry is still rather rare while most companies prefer subcontracting only assembly or production of parts and subsystems. Two examples of direct investment include Boeing acquiring stake in Aero Vodochody and CASA/EADS in PZL Warszawa-Okecie.

212 may contribute to this trend and speed up the internal cleavage similar to that in the EU member states. Visegrad states could become gradually more influenced by the internal EU atmosphere where they would no longer be able to insulate themselves from continuing feuds and trade wars between Europe and America. Visegrad states are not only likely to be forced to side with the EU in these conflicts, but they may also feel some of the negative effects of tariff disputes directly. In the security and defence area, the general perception of US policy may be influenced heavily by the approach to the Middle East problem or Iraq. Another important military campaign pursued by the US without any significant consultation with its NATO allies could be seen as a confirmation of the new trend in US security policy, which may lead to deterioration of US position in the Visegrad countries.

SCENARIOS

Position of the Visegrad states in the security and defence dimension of trans-Atlantic relations – once they are all both the EU and NATO members – will be directly affected by the wider state of EU-US relations, coherence of the group once they secure membership in the EU as their main joint interest, and domestic political preferences of public and elites of these countries. Combination of these major factors may result in three scenarios that are based on certain current trends, but represent mainly thinking about different directions or ideal types. Real development of security and defence policies of Visegrad states may – in the horizon of next five years – combine elements of these scenarios.

Scenario 1 – Atlantic stalwart

This scenario is based on a premise of reinvigoration of trans-Atlantic relations where most of the current disputes between the US and the EU are resolved and muted, especially those stemming from security and defence issues. The United States continues to be undisputed military superpower with new technologies at its disposal to protect its homeland and its allies and friends from major security threats and intimidation. At the same time, the global struggle against terrorism proved to the US establishment that political support and practical help are needed for effective pursuit of US

policy and reaching its main objectives. Consulting and cooperating with its European allies, who share with America values and aims, therefore serves US interests. This cooperation is based on a scheme whereby the EU acts as a junior partner in such a global coalition and accepts its practical limits. Direction of EU foreign and security policy is in this sense positively influenced by the inclusion of the Visegrad states, which enhance their profile as a strongly pro-Atlantic group and strengthen position of Atlanticists inside the EU centred mainly around the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, sometimes joining forces with the Nordic countries and Portugal.

Common security and defence outlook of Visegrad states helps to foster their regional cooperation in other areas building mutual trust and patterns of joint endeavours based on Central European framework. One such practical example involves gradual enhancement of security and defence profile of Visegrad cooperation following successful deployment of several joint peacekeeping units under NATO and EU flags, leading up to the creation of integrated standing military unit of Central European corps with high-readiness national components at brigade level and deployable multinational headquarters. Other successful Visegrad multinational military projects include joint logistics for deployment in NATO, EU or UN operations and common pool of transportation assets ranging from medium-range, to the strategic lift capabilities.

Scenario 2 – Internal split in troubled waters

This scenario is based on a premise of worsening trans-Atlantic relations, which results from continuation of trade disputes and squabbles in the political arena, but increasingly also affects security and defence structures. Although NATO still remains in place, different perspectives on security threats and policy prescriptions of how to address them, move both sides of the Atlantic apart. The United States decides to use its military muscle for settling political and personal accounts in several parts of the world under the guise of global war on terrorism, while Europe is more reluctant to follow every individual crusade.

For political and strategic reasons, US military presence in Europe is kept to a bare minimum, just to facilitate the functioning of NATO organs, but consensus is increasingly harder to achieve. The situation is not helped by the EU, which decides to push its ESDP project, and in the midst of practical problems decides to move along a more autonomous path. Because agreement

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214 on EU access to NATO planning structures, collective assets and capabilities is not smooth enough and provides only a cumbersome mechanism for crisis management operations, the EU decides to duplicate some structures and rely more on British and French national structures which allow for integration of multinational elements for EU-led operations. Political disputes between the EU and NATO also result in a more intense pressure on new EU members to prove their European "credentials". As a result, in several political rows the Visegrad group is internally split, as individual states have to choose either the EU or US side.

In this unfortunate dilemma, Poland sides with the US while the other three countries support the EU or try to keep very low profile. Another consequence of this policy pattern results also in the downturn in Visegrad cooperative efforts. Once common security outlook is lost due to the external conditions, and main political purpose of joint projects fulfilled thanks to securing Slovakia's membership in both NATO and the EU, practical problems and constraints gain upper hand. Individual Visegrad states adopt, once again, policy of ad-hoc cooperation with best available partners while inside the EU and NATO framework they join flexible coalitions on an issue-by-issue basis.

Scenario 3 – US departure from Europe, Allies on their own

This scenario uses a basic premise of radical rethinking of the US security policy and the resultant disengagement from Europe, including withdrawal of its military forces and probably also the end of NATO as an effective trans-Atlantic military alliance. The deepening of US tendencies to rely on a flexible military strategy and ad-hoc coalitions, as opposed to a web of permanent alliances, including military bases abroad, could produce this result. New US security policy and defence posture prefers homeland protection, reduction of permanent US bases as convenient targets abroad for US adversaries, and reliance on ability to strike anywhere across the globe relying on strategic lift capabilities and new ISTAR technologies combined with advanced generation of inexpensive, precision-guided munitions. Such development in US-EU relations would also lead to quick security emancipation of Europe, although imposed from outside, rather than from within.

Individual European states preferring strong bond with the United States and its security guarantee would either have to rely on any hollowed struc-

ture remaining from NATO, focusing mainly on political-military consultations between the US and Europe, or look for other realistic alternatives. Although a unique feature of joint military planning, problem identification and resolution would be lost or greatly reduced, the Visegrad states could still foster bilateral links with the US in the security and defence area. Realistically speaking, however, they cannot expect to be among major and most useful allies from the United State's global perspective. Some of their specialized assets could be deployable in US-led coalition operations, but they would not make a crucial difference. Assessment of their changed security situation would most likely lead toward a greater interest in security and defence policy of the EU. Visegrad countries may therefore prefer regional projects within the greater European context based on current joint efforts.

Although their pro-Atlantic orientation will not be lost, opportunities for its practical manifestation will be rare. EU will become a dominant frame of reference as the only available structure for collective security and defence efforts on the European continent, combining also a broad range of non-military crisis management and trade instruments in pursuit of its foreign and security policy.

CONCLUSIONS

Visegrad states are, in the security and defence area, a visible group bound together by number of shared security interests and by support for Slovakia's membership in NATO. Once all four countries are in NATO and the EU, they have a good potential to form a distinctive group in an enlarged EU, similar to the Nordic or Benelux groupings. Their comparable formative experience of NATO accession and security outlook contribute to the high value they attach to the US security presence in Europe, its direct security guarantee and the leadership it can provide in the Alliance. They can potentially strengthen the pro-Atlanticist group in the EU and therefore facilitate better trans-Atlantic cooperation on security and defence matters. In this respect, they can be expected to favour pragmatic solutions of various issues in the EU-NATO relations, including access to NATO planning structures, collective assets and capabilities.

The Visegrad 4 also pursue reforms of their armed forces so that they are deployable in various formats (US-led, NATO-led, EU-led) in a broad spec-

trum of missions – from collective defence to crisis management or conflict prevention in distant areas – sustainable over longer periods of time. Their individual potential may be further enhanced through joint military collaborative projects like the ad-hoc Czech-Slovak peacekeeping battalion under KFOR, Czech-Polish-Slovak framework brigade, or joint modernisation of Mi-24 helicopters. However, external developments leading to worsening of trans-Atlantic relations, or even decoupling between the US and Europe, may prove detrimental to their position and internal cohesion. Domestic consensus may be difficult to keep in such circumstances and Visegrad countries would end up in a situation they would like to certainly avoid – choosing either the US or the EU side.

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The preceding chapters have attempted to go deeper and define the unique region of Central Europe that was not so long ago in the perception of the West just a part of a gray buffer zone somewhere between Germany and the Evil Empire. Symbolically, all countries emerging from the unnatural and too long a division of a continent, the Visegrad states among them, declared that they wanted to re-join the West. Now their wish is coming true and they are going to have to make some hard decisions once inside the Euro-Atlantic structures.

Hard political and economic interests, identity, and perhaps history, are going to determine how they will fare and behave within the EU's institutions, whether they will be likely to cooperate as a group, what position and "worldview" they are likely to adopt, as well as what tools and approaches they are likely to support in the area of economics, foreign policy, and security. The questions that the future will find answers to are as follows: Who will be their allies within EU? How can they contribute to the complex ongoing processes underway in a rapidly changing world? Are they ready not just to take a back seat, but rather to initiate discussion on issues of interest to them? Will the framework for decision-making allow them to have their voice heard and allow them to pursue their nation-specific interests? – These are some of the questions the authors have asked, what is more, attempted to answer. They have offered scenarios of a complex work underway that will forever change the European continent and have an impact on Trans-Atlantic relations. What kind of change this is going to be is left to the actors involved. Before they join, however, the countries of Visegrad, as well as other soon-to-be EU members should know what kind of an EU they want to enter, and if their ideals are not met immediately after accession, to be prepared to affect change from within.

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ABOUT THE EDITOR AND AUTHORS

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Marek Štastný

Research fellow, Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava

Ján Figel

Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, National Council of the Slovak Republic; Main Negotiator with the EU

Martin Brusis

Senior Researcher, Center for Advanced Policy Research, Munich, Germany

Petr Drulák

Director of Studies, Institute of International Relations, Prague, Czech Republic

Serena Giusti

Researcher, Robert Schumann Center, European University Institute, Florence, Italy

Gunther Hauser

Lecturer and Researcher, Institute for Strategic Research, National Defense Academy, Vienna, Austria

Olga Gyárfášová

Senior Research Fellow, Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, Slovak Republic

Radek Khol

Researcher, Institute for International Relations, Prague, Czech Republic

Pavol Lukáč

Researcher, Research Center Slovak Foreign Policy Association, Bratislava, Slovak Republic

Tamás Réti

Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Economics, Hungarian Academy of Sciences

Tomáš Valášek

Director, Center for Defense Information – Europe

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Marek Šťastný
editor

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