V4 Papers

Visegrad cooperation within NATO and CSDP

edited by
Csaba Törő

No.2

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INTRODUCTION

The Hungarian Institute of International Affairs (HIIA) in cooperation with the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM), the Institute of International Relations Prague (IIR) and the Slovak Foreign Policy Association (SFPA) organised the second round in the series of conferences titled, "Creating a sphere of security in wider Central Europe: Sharing the V4 know-how in cooperation on security with neighbouring regions." The event took place in Budapest on 8-9 April 2010 under the title: "Past lessons, current issues and future prospects of Visegrad cooperation within NATO and ESDP."

In accordance with the profile of the joint research and conference project, the range of invited participants represented relevant expertise not only from the Visegrad countries but also from neighbouring regions—Ukraine and several Baltic and Scandinavian countries.

The Hungarian Atlantic Council (HAC) joined the HIIA's conference preparation to help make the event a valuable and stimulating occasion for the discussion and exchange of ideas among the chairmen of the Atlantic councils and associations from the Visegrad countries. The president of the HAC and the director of the HIIA extended invitations to the presidents and secretary-generals of the Czech, Polish and Slovak organisations to engage in a discourse on the framework of the conference about timely issues of European and Transatlantic security from the perspective of these associations and councils as non-governmental organisations. The heads of Atlantic councils and associations from the Visegrad countries jointly adopted a declaration during their meeting in Budapest. (See also, the summaries of panel discussions for more)

This report of the conference constitutes the second in a series of V4 papers to be published as the written documentation of the joint project "Creating a sphere of security in wider Central Europe: Sharing the V4 know-how in cooperation on security with neighbouring regions" of four Visegrad foreign policy institutes. This V4 paper is composed of three main sections. The first contains two lengthy analytical studies prepared for the conference to serve as broad conceptual instruments for an overview of approaches to security in both the Visegrad countries and their regional levels. Ivo Samson carries out a thorough assessment of the Visegrad cooperation from a security perspective. The renowned Slovak expert looks at various elements and aspects of security within the context of cooperation among the V4 countries.

The other analysis examines the evolution of Atlanticism in the Visegrad area through case studies of the Czech Republic and Poland. Judit Hamberger, a Hungarian scholar of Central European politics, identifies and explains a particularly important motive of security policy in two Visegrad countries as the policy has evolved and manifested recently in relation to these countries' participation in missile defence.

The second section contains written versions of remarks by Hungarian, Slovak, Lithuanian and Ukrainian experts as structured points of arguments and the positions of the participants in the debate during the conference. First, Brigadier General Gábor Horváth analyzes the perceptions of ESDP/CSDP in the Visegrad countries and provides his perspective on EU-NATO relations. Next, Vladimír Tarasovič shares his assessment of the possibilities for cooperation between the Visegrad countries and their eastern neighbours in the development of security and defence policy in the EU and beyond. In the third piece, Arunas Molis offers a Baltic approach to security and defence issues in the context of NATO and the EU after Lisbon. Last, Mykhailo Samus evaluates some recognizable perceptions and trends after the last election in Ukraine in its security and defence policy with regard to NATO and Russia.

The last section holds the summary of one full keynote speech and summaries of others together with comments made in the course of presentations and the exchange of opinions during panel discussions.

Csaba Törő

Part I. Articles

Ivo Samson

Assessment of Visegrad cooperation from a security perspective: Is the Visegrad Group Still Vital in the "Zeros" of the 21st century?

I. Looking for a Concept of Central Europe

Generally, one can agree that the Visegrad Group "is" in Central Europe. "Central Europe,"[1] however, is an amorphous concept loaded with historical memories. In the 1960s and 1970s the term had little political currency and was invoked only by a small number of historians specializing in the Habsburg empire and returning back to Friedrich Nauman's plan for an economic bloc in Central Europe in the early 20th century. In the early 1980s, "Central Europe" came to express the political aspirations of some of the members of the democratic opposition in Poland and Hungary.[2] Unlike Czechoslovakian diplomats, those in Hungary and Poland were resisting the usual classification of the Soviet bloc countries as in "Eastern Europe," and pointed to the specific historical, cultural, geographical and political autonomy of a "central Europe" in the historical political landscape of Europe.

Political changes in 1988 and 1999 in the countries of eastern Europe, which earlier had formed part of the Soviet bloc, and the differences in the paths taken by the post-Communist countries and the new democracies may tell us how misleading terms like "Eastern Europe" were then. It was not one version but various national forms of communism that were imposed on countries in this region after 1945. For the countries of the region, history matters.

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[1]   "Central Europe" refers here to the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia, i. e., to the four Central European countries that formed the non-institutional, regional cooperation group called the Visegrad Group at the beginning of 1990—in other words, at the time all of these countries were looking for their new positions in an integrated Europe. One of the reasons why all these countries harked back to the political, almost forlorn term "Central Europe" was also to differentiate themselves from both "Eastern Europe" and "Central Eastern Europe," which were commonly in use in the West following the end of the Cold War.

[2]   I. Samson et al., "Returning to Europe: Central Europe between Internationalization and Institutionalization," in: P.J. Katzenstein, *Tamed Power Germany in Europe*, Cornell University Press–Ithaca and London, 1997, pp. 195–196.

Referring to the region with a capital letter, as in "Central" Europe, creates a reification that tends towards exclusion. Regions such as Central Europe are specific constructs having served particular analytical or political purposes (from the point of view of integration into NATO or the EU). Having once emphasized the "central" position of this region (in the first half of the 1990s), some intentionally tried to devalue the integration ambitions of other post-communist countries from "Central Eastern" or "South Eastern" regions in the EU and NATO integration processes not believing, at that time, in a "big bang" enlargement of the EU and, partly, NATO, which happened in 2004. The term suggested that "Central Europe" was a *de facto* semi-western region between Western and Central Eastern Europe and deserved preferential integration treatment.

This goal was served by the fact that when founding the Visegrad Group in 1991, the Hungarian, Polish and Czechoslovak (later Czech and Slovak) politicians were rejecting other countries from the region such as Slovenia, Croatia or Romania for inclusion into the group because the area was historically symbolic and firmly and geographically defined by former medieval kings (Polish, Czech, Hungarian) and the will of the present republics (Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, then Czech Republic and Slovakia since 1993) to honour that history.

Questions of Institutionalization and of an Identity of Central Europe— the Visegrad Group

Prior to the integration of all the Visegrad countries into the EU (2004) and NATO (1999 and 2004), the process of transferring institutions across state borders was of great importance because creating potential buffers that, in the absence of a common membership in multilateral institutions, it was believed that the import of some institutional models from the West would help these countries adapt to a new international environment. The Visegrad group, however, was not very eager to present itself as an alternative to successful European or Euro-Atlantic integration groupings, fearing that this could be misused by the EU and NATO as an excuse to close their doors to new member states from the former Soviet bloc. In spite of the establishment of the Central European Free Trade Zone (CEFTA) in 1993, there were strong doubts about the Visegrad Group, as a whole, and the effectiveness of a coordinated block approach toward the coveted western institutions (EU and NATO first). The position of then-Czech Prime Minister Václav Klaus (who, in 2011, is the

Czech president) towards the Visegrad Group was very sceptical.[3] He even did not hide his opinion that the Visegrad Group was established not to bring the participating countries into the EU (and/or) NATO but rather to prevent them from entering these integration groupings. Already in the very beginning of the 1990s, the Visegrad Group refused to be duly "institutionalized," i.e., having similar (or parallel) institutional structures like other European or Euro-Atlantic institutions. Central Europe thus had no objectives to demonstrate its political or even security policy characteristics in the 1990s, prior to the integration of some of them into NATO (Czech, Hungary, Poland in 1999).

The question of the possibility to build up a common "Visegrad identity" appeared to be more real only after 2004 when all four countries did not have to bother about being regarded as part of a relatively prosperous, regional, multi-state institution that developed its relations with the EU on the basis of something like a "privileged partnership."

Central Europeans as Visegrad Countries and their Zero Hour

If Central Europe provides a wide range of cases to test the argument about the link between historical and geographic affinities and identity, there are considerable practical difficulties inherent in this kind of research that make it difficult to do a large-scale study of the region.

First, there are more variables than cases, making it necessary to exclude confounding variables through focused comparisons.

Second, it is difficult to gather data conforming to the thesis about a possible (security) identity and then, once some data are gathered, to be sure they are comparable.

Third, the extant effectiveness of a common security identity in Central Europe suffers either from the superficiality and narrowness of scope that often plague cross-national surveys of complicated topics or from the implicit, even unconscious, biases of measures developed by state agencies to implement the chosen policies.

Fortunately, the Visegrad countries are ideally suited to this kind of close and focused comparison. They are similar enough in other important respects to focus on their considerably different paths to building new and independent post-communist security identities.

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[3] For more about the problems within the Visegrad Group and with the Czech position in the first half of the 1990s, see: *The European Union Expansion to the East: aspects of the accession, problems and prospects for the future* (22 March 2002), http://goliath.ecnext.com/coms2/gi_0199-10945126/The-European-Union-and-expansion.html.

From this perspective, 1989 was zero-hour. One has, at the beginning, to look into the nature of the starting points and trajectories of the country-cases. Thus, the Hungarian, Czech, Polish and Slovak trajectories can be schematized in terms of the logic of party development. Immediately after 1989, electoral politics were dominated by loose umbrella movements mobilized against the former regimes, which emphasized class-oriented and internationalist identity—something running completely contrary to the new type of region-based identities in Western Europe. Once the former regimes lost control over their societies in favour of new resistance movements, these movements fell apart, and differences began to emerge. Now, it was up to the new party-political structures in individual Central European countries to consider a common regional identity as a contribution to escape from the so-called security vacuum that followed the incapacitation of the Warsaw Treaty Organization.

Despite the previously mentioned thesis that the Visegrad countries are ideally suited to this kind of close and focused comparison, since the very beginning some hurdles seemed to endanger a smooth way to regional cooperation. As a rule, these obstacles were caused by different, recent historical development trajectories. Looking for a basis for a common Central European (Visegrad) security identity, one does not encounter any serious historically-based problems between Czechs and Hungarians (the post-World War I and post-World War II Czechoslovak-Hungarian tensions were transferred to Slovak-Hungarian relations) or Hungarians and Poles. Noticeable historically-based difficulties can be traced back, however, to Slovak-Czech and Slovak-Hungarian relations.

Anyway, regional identities are based not only on exclusive demarcations. Specifically, what is at stake for Central European identity politics are the underlining principles of political and social pluralism, political democracy and economic efficiency that contradict the political homogenization, as well as the prevailing authoritarianism and potential future of the Russian policies. Differentiated from the former Soviet Union and (today) Russia, Central Europe thus became a "way station in a Europeanization process."[4] Having a look at the departure points of the four Visegrad countries, however, one does not necessarily find a homogenous past that is able to rely on a common and similar Central European heritage.

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[4] I.B. Neumann, "Russia as Central Europe's Constituting Other." *East European Politics and Societies,* vol. VII, no. 2, pp. 349–369.

Upon closer examination, the political and security-policy traditions of the V4 countries can communicate a sense of the different paths to state-building in each Visegrad country. This is necessarily coupled with natural obstacles on the road to a common perception of regional identity in the sphere of security. Individual national identities of the Visegrad countries were the result of deeper historical forces and, in particular, whether the national and religious questions had been solved in the course of each country's path to modernity. If deep historical processes are the root cause, however, one might ask if forming a common security identity is possible. To answer this question, we do not necessarily have to define the concept of security. A common security identity—in contrast to national identity—departs from historical assumptions but focuses on contemporary perceptions of uniting factors: perceptions of common security threats, fears and interests first.

History only determines some developmental paths but not all of them. The broader point is that to understand post-Communist state-building, it is only helpful to look at deep history but it is more important to take notice of modern history.

Central European states used to be unwilling and only passive subjects in geopolitical interests of greater powers and did not play a significant role in European, let alone international, politics. Poland and Hungary historically perceived themselves as a barrier protecting the West, and Czechoslovakia (later) aspired to become a bridge connecting the West to the East. Nevertheless none of them had the necessary human or material resources available or sufficient strategic territorial depth to exercise such a role.

After WWI, Central European states did not cooperate, but rather competed. They strived to attract the interest of major powers to support them in bilateral territorial disputes. Retreating into nationalism when facing their respective domestic challenges and agendas poisoned international relations in the region. National propaganda boosted mutual antipathies and prejudices, thus effectively undermining any goodwill to cooperate. A failure to create sustainable patterns of cooperation among Central European nations in the inter-war period facilitated the success of the aggressive policies of National Socialist Germany. It is not detrimental to repeat these lessons learned. The fates of the future Visegrad nations during WWII differed: Czechs were occupied and annexed into the Third Reich, Poland was divided by Hitler and Stalin, Slovaks and Hungarians tried to navigate their statehood through Nazi-dominated Europe.

Today, 20 years after the establishment of the Visegrad cooperation, the most obvious common denominator among Hungarians, Poles, Czechs and Slovaks could be the common experience with the Soviet bloc. However, comparing the 1956 uprising in Hungary and the 1968 Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia illustrates the difference between history and perception. Before 1989, the political and economic situations in Central European countries varied considerably and there was a lack of mutual societal contacts and information about each other. "Each country has a distinct communist past that has left a distinct legacy."[5] Therefore it is not clear whether the experience of a shared history and geography, especially that of four decades of communism and isolation from the West translate into an enduring East Central European identity.

Looking into the nature of security perceptions in the Visegrad countries, nobody can overlook the absence of leadership within the Visegrad Group. Similarly, nobody doubts that Poland is disposed for regional leadership by its size and capabilities. This country, quite naturally, tries to be the regional leader in Central (and even Central Eastern) Europe and is aiming its efforts at EU policy towards Ukraine, Belarus and Russia. These aspirations of Poland are not new, appeared immediately after the turn of 1989/1990 and have continued throughout the next two decades. However, one crucial problem appears: the other Visegrad countries have problems accepting the "Polish leadership."

Global Security Challenges and Security Interests of the Visegrad Countries

In general, it may be more appropriate to speak about the challenges, not the threats. The forecast regarding the broadly conceived Euro-Atlantic area in the foreseeable future seems to be as follows:

– No essential geopolitical changes will occur as a result of recent conflicts (maybe except closer Ukraine-Russia relations and closer Central Asia state relations with China).

– The changes will be of a local nature but will emanate across the general international situation. The Visegrad countries will have to make do with three significant and rather negative phenomena of at least medium-term duration.

The *first* is a decrease in the mutual trust level between West and East, both in political and military areas. Undermining the CFE Treaty and the various signals of a straying from control regimes as well as threats, both rhetorical and

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[5]   A.M. Vachudová, "The Division of Central Europe," *New Presence,* Autumn 2001, pp. 12–14.

real, of stepped-up military activity and a decreased sense of economic and energy security are factors that already have significantly limited the level of mutual trust. We have to deal with the biggest crisis of trust in international relations since the beginning of the1990s.

The erosion of the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty decreases the stability of the security system established on our continent in the post-Cold War years. The fate of several U.S.–Russian as well as multilateral agreements on armament control is uncertain. It will take time, and it won't be easy to reconstruct the mutual trust in relations between the West and Russia, and partly also between the West and Ukraine. Various institutions established to foster cooperation will continue to exist, but their way of acting and their performance may be much worse than they used to be and their operations may eventually become frozen.

At the same time, it is important that the broadly conceived Central Europe, including the Visegrad region and, especially, Poland, may be affected by a crisis of trust in international relations more than would Western Europe. Yet, Central Europe has no intrinsic instruments to defend itself against this phenomenon, apart from the possibly coherent policy within NATO, the European Union and OSCE. And it's good that the situation looks like that because the stability and security of the Visegrad Four are directly co-dependent on the potential and operational efficiency of the Euro-Atlantic Community. And the raison d'état of each country is the further integration with this community and cooperation within international security and arms-control organizations during possible new negotiation processes, for example regarding the problem of flanks in the CFE Treaty. Provided, that the Visegrad countries act in harmony with each other.

The *second* phenomenon that we will watch is, first of all, a consequence of political conflicts in the eastern part of our continent that are slowing down the West-East integration processes, replacing ambitious projects that reach as far as Ukraine and Georgia's membership in Western security structures with smaller, "practical" ones. And this would mean that the "hard" Transatlantic and European area will end at the Bug River for quite some time. The present order will become cemented. Thus, the Schengen countries, especially Poland and Slovakia then will face a challenge of not allowing the Eastern border that was supposed to disappear to divide the neighbouring countries.

The *third* factor of the situation in the Euro-Atlantic area, which is not new but remains crucial, is the shape of Transatlantic relations, the future of which unfortunately is still unknown. The dissonance in U.S.–EU relations overlap

with the particularities of European states and also has been seen in Visegrad countries for some time now. A lack of cohesion in the actions of states belonging to the Euro-Atlantic Community may pose a political risk and even a direct military threat in many specific situations, for example, in Afghanistan. However, cohesion is especially important in the case of small and medium states because it is mainly in their interest that the so-called concert of powers does not re-emerge.

These three factors create the framework in which the Visegrad countries will have to act in the future if they want to develop a common regional identity based on the region in which they are situated.

The character of new security challenges (risks, threats, vulnerabilities) is why the Visegrad Group may be approaching a turning point right now. If the Visegrad Four makes use of this chance, it might arrive at the need for common regional security interests and at a sense of a common security identity within NATO and EU as the main security organizations of which the Visegrad countries are members.

The Visegrad countries passed their first test when jointly—which doesn't mean without any dissonance—they applied for NATO and European Union membership, that is to say when they expressed the will to define their national interests. The so-called "race of negotiators" at the EU Summit in Copenhagen (1999) showed that each state has its own national priorities and has been led by them since then. The year 2004 was the first important turning point for the Visegrad Group. Since then, the question has been asked whether there were any common interests and objectives of the Visegrad Group left, after the member countries had achieved their strategic goals. One has to raise the questions, how many common denominators exist today and how many will exist in the foreseeable future, and what features can make the Visegrad countries and generally Central Europe constitute a certain quality in security policy today and tomorrow?

It is not about things as obvious as peace, stability or development. One can speak about concrete situations. From Central Europe's point of view, the two most important aspects of security policy, that is the deployment of an element of the American missile defence system (with discussions up to the end of 2009) and the Georgia-Russia conflict (being prolonged due to an unacceptable status quo for the Georgians up to 2011), have demonstrated that there are significant differences among the Visegrad countries. But these differences don't ruin the all-European agreements.

Anyway, the Visegrad countries' reactions to the Georgia-Russia conflict, especially regarding its repercussions for Central Europe's security, including energy security have been different. In this case, Poland and Hungary took two opposite approaches, due to different positions regarding the Nord Stream and South Stream pipelines. But again, different approaches didn't prevent the European Union from working out a common position in its relations with Russia. It only convinced Russia that it can gain on the dissonance among European countries.

So far, external and internal security as well as defence issues were ranked too low on the list of the priorities of the Visegrad Group. Therefore, filling the notations of Paragraph 7 of the activity program of the Visegrad Group for the year 2008—the year of the Russia–Georgia conflict—with the contents it is worth being aware that they reflect a lower level than they could. First of all, one should ask if these notations fit the new challenges that Central Europe faces. However, one also has to realize that the Visegrad countries have different perceptions of threats, frequently stemming from historical experience,[6] different ideological and internal situations (including a lack of consensus in these countries, sometimes even on the most basic issues) as well as different external relations.

II. General Discussion on a Common Visegrad Identity

The idea of a common Visegrad security identity is part of long-term discussions. The usual question is: "What is the reason for forming an identity (explicitly a security identity) within NATO and EU"—in two security organizations trying to create a common security identity—be it a "Euro-Atlantic" or a "European" one?

It is natural that forming a common Visegrad identity cannot and must not be seen as an attempt at establishing a "small NATO within NATO" or a "parallel" CFSP/ESDP within the EU. Rather, it should follow the goal to contribute to NATO and EU security and defence tasks with an efficient pooling taking place in the Central European region (namely in the Visegrad area) and a contribution to the common NATO/EU goal by using common (Visegrad) capacities, capabilities, sources and experience. To envisage such a proposal and set the regional (Visegrad) approach within the context of shared NATO and EU global security threats represents the first big event within this regional ambition. The opening discussion should deal with national security

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[6] See the historically shaped differences, above.

identities in V-4 countries, particularities in perception of security threats, attitudes of political and other elites, etc.

The relatively best way to awaken a sense of common identity and common security interests in a heterogeneous region traditionally has been to have a common security threat or, at least, a common security risk (not to mention a common enemy). Anyway, no documentary platform either in the EU (e.g., in the European Security Strategy or its update) or in NATO (e.g., in NATO's Strategic Concept or in the New Strategic Concept published in Lisbon in 2010) speaks about "enemies" in the shape of concrete states. One should, however, expect that the documents will describe security risks stemming from Russia's energy policy, the non-transparent steps by Russia in Northern Caucasus or in Ukraine as moves increasing instability in the Euro-Atlantic or Euro-Asia regions. In this respect, a common position by the Visegrad countries towards Russia (with an emphasis on energy policy, for example) can form a common departure point for the Visegrad group to create a common security interest *vis-a-vis* Russia. The common approach of the Visegrad Group hardly can face any criticism within EU/NATO, as not only the Central Europeans but also generally even "broader Central Europe"[7] still is unilaterally and to various degrees dependent on Russian raw energy materials.

The perspectives of a common Visegrad identity towards the Russian Federation can be fully compatible with the agenda of EU relations towards the Russian Federation, as well as the goals of Russian security policy towards the EU. The contribution of the Visegrad countries to the ESDP *vis-à-vis* the Russian security policy factor can present the specific experience these countries have accumulated over the course of several decades.

Summarizing the common Visegrad perception of security threats and defining an awareness of common Visegrad security identity can be a new step for the ability of the Visegrad Group to formulate—fully within NATO and EU—its common security interests.

Up to now, the Visegrad Group has reached a relative consensus as to a foreign policy agenda (the "New Visegrad Declaration" of Kroměříž, 2004).[8]

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[7]   "Broader Central Europe" or the "CE-10" is a term that has been sometimes used in discussion about newcomers to the EU and their security policy relations toward the Russian Federation. See, e.g., M.M. Balmaceda, *EU Energy Policy and Future European Energy Markets: Consequences for the Central and East European States*, www.uni-mannheim.de/fkks/fkks27.pdf.

[8]   See the full text of the document: Declaration of the Prime Ministers of the Czech Republic, the Republic of Hungary, the Republic of Poland and the Slovak Republic on cooperation of the

Building up a common Visegrad security policy still remains on the agenda of the future supported by EU presidencies held, or to be held, by two Visegrad countries (Hungary and Poland) in 2011. However, facing common new global security threats has offered the Visegrad Group an opportunity to declare the political will to pursue—besides foreign policy goals—a common security policy agenda as well. Forming a common Visegrad "security identity" should become the long-term objective of the non-governmental organizations of the Visegrad Group countries, because of their flexible opportunities to meet each other without diplomatic hurdles and being able to neglect eventual "freezes" in mutual relations, as with the recent "freeze" (2010—2011) following the Slovak-Hungarian dispute in the summer of 2009. Under the condition of constructive cooperation with their respective ministries of foreign affairs, non-governmental organizations can enjoy a unique legitimacy to promote the idea of a common Visegrad identity within the NATO/EU area.

Besides the positions taken on energy policy or towards Russian foreign policy (such as BMD, Ballistic Missile Defence), the discussion should also focus on global security threats as specified in the security agendas of the crucial international organizations of which Slovakia is a member (especially NATO and the EU). Recently, some new or "rehashed" global security concerns were raised: WMDs, terrorism, Afghanistan-linked peace supporting operations, failed states (European Security Strategy) and the Iran-linked nuclear program (related to the UNSC agenda). These concerns (security threats) have been repeated many times in various NATO and EU documents, as well as in the security documents of individual Visegrad countries. The reflection of these security concerns in the Visegrad Group reveals many similar, even partly identical responses.

The agenda of the discussion, therefore, follows a methodological bridge combining global security threats as the most visible common denominator of NATO/EU countries—defining shared Visegrad security policy interests based on the identification of global security threats—with proposing a joint security approach by the Visegrad countries in order to contribute to the cohesiveness of NATO and EU (ESDP) security policies.

More Detailed Proposal for a Discussion about Common Visegrad Identity

Methodologically, the discussion about a common Visegrad identity should be best structured according to the following items and topics:

Visegrad Group Countries after their accession to the European Union, 12 May 2004, www.ena.lu/declaration_cooperation_visegrad_group_countries_accession_eu_12_2004-02-18782.

A) the nature of global security threats and their perception in NATO/EU countries;

B) the common Visegrad security perception measured against the existence of global security threats; and,

C) specific global security threats as seen by individual Visegrad Group countries (compared with the views and evaluations of these threats by other NATO/EU countries).

First, the specific agenda for discussions should depart from needing consensus about the relevancy of global security threats as defined by NATO documents and the EU attempts to reach a common basis for a consensual security and defence policy. Flexibility, changes and modifications in NATO/EU security and foreign policy modalities should be reflected. The 2008 Bucharest NATO Summit, the 2009 Strassbourg/Kehl and the 2010 Lisbon NATO Summit Declarations, for example, cannot be seen as reliable common denominators for building up a Visegrad security identity since the construction of ballistic missile defence (BMD) sites in two Visegrad countries was cancelled by the U.S. president in September 2009. At the same time, a continuation and qualitatively new level of BMD was put into perspective when the U.S. side announced a new "stronger, smarter and swifter" BDM plan,[9] noting that the ballistic missile threat probably will present an increase in the danger of general security threats to Allied forces, territories and population.

Second, in the V-4, there must be an evaluation of official and politically obliging NATO/EU documents (corresponding to UN Security Council resolutions). One should pay attention to concrete interpretations of these documents in the Visegrad Group countries.

Third, there must be a common discussion to find a joint approach within the Visegrad Group and to contribute (in the form of a one-voice approach) to NATO/EU consensus on global security threats.

Fourth, there must be a way of dealing with global security threats as defined above (terrorism, WMD, ballistic missiles, failed states) and responses to them (UN/NATO peace-supporting operations).

Fifth, the global dimension of security threats should be visualized through a combination of understanding the relevance of global security threats to

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[9] "President Obama Announces New Missile Defense Plan Will be 'Stronger, Smarter and Swifter,'" *ABC News,* 11 September 2009, http://blogs.abcnews.com/politicalpunch/2009/09/president-obama-announces-new-missile-defense-plan-will-be-stronger-smarter-and-swifter.html.

NATO/EU with the reception of these threats in Central Europe (Visegrad countries) with the aim to explore the possibility of building up a regional (Visegrad) security identity against the background of these threats.

Expected results

As a contribution to the ongoing security debates in NATO and the EU, the "Common Visegrad Identity" initiative and discussion about it also should reflect some future steps expected within NATO/EU:

– NATO published its new NATO strategic concept in 2010 and did not discourage any attempts at regional initiatives linked to "NATO within NATO";

– The EU has been working on updating its European Security Strategy for several years; and,

– "Autonomously," the Visegrad Group—as a regional security entity speaking with one language about security interests— obviously was not able to step into the discussion about the wordings of the New Strategic Concept and an updated European Security Strategy in the sense it would have brought in regional security aspects. Still, the Visegrad Group can utilize both crucial documents for the realization of its own "niches" within the scope of the European or Euro-Atlantic security architecture.

Due to the results of the discussions about a common Visegrad security identity (contributions, debate, outreach and consultations with the government), a set of recommendations for NATO (or the EU) can be proposed. The recommendations should reflect the positions of government and NGO experts from the four Visegrad countries covering the debated issues. The first set of recommendations could pay attention to the convergence or—on the other side—dichotomy within the individual countries (government and NGO elites), the second one could focus on the convergence of common security identity views among the V4 countries.

In the sphere of global security threats to NATO/EU, which means they automatically apply also to the Visegrad countries, the goal of creating a common Visegrad security identity must evaluate global security threats as a top priority for NATO/EU security concerns in accordance with the results of the New NATO Security Strategy, the latest NATO summits and the European (EU) security priorities (threats that will be posed by the updated European Security Strategy). Because NATO and EU memberships overlap in the absolute number of cases (member states), the NATO/EU point of intersection with regard to global threats has been assumed to be matter of fact.

One of the crucial problems to be discussed in this part of the common Visegrad security agenda is the nature of specific global security threats and the explanation of their prominent position within the security threats mentioned by NATO. The EU and NATO (both including Visegrad members) should elaborate on the coveted, common approach of all institutional actors.

One will, at the same time, explore the European/NATO ability to accept defence against global security threats as a guarantee for future security for NATO/EU countries.

Sub-Actors in Challenging Global Security Threats: Building up a Common Regional (Visegrad) Security Identity

As to the Central European (Visegrad) dimension of the goal, key questions to be answered and recommendations to be elaborated include questions, including, can the Visegrad Group find consensus in NATO's recognition of global security threats as a common security-policy platform resulting in a common Visegrad security identity within NATO; what can a small group of countries such as the Visegrad Group do to put additional value to the efforts against global security threats in concrete, effective international control regimes (e.g., the former role of Slovakia in the UNSC Resolution 1540 Committee); what is the compatibility of global threat perceptions between NATO/EU countries (with emphasis on the Visegrad Group) and the regional actors that are directly involved; and, can a common security identity in the V4 countries contribute to strengthened NATO (and possibly EU) effectiveness in implementing the new NATO Strategic Concept and NATO summit conclusions concerning the ballistic missile threats.

With respect to the security threat posed to NATO/EU in general, the position of Central European countries (Visegrad Group) towards global security threats should be discussed with a focus on these problems, which can interfere with the security and defence policies of both old and new NATO Member States. The parallel objective of this agenda is to define a common denominator in the Visegrad Group as to sharing either similar or even analogous policy *vis-a-vis* the reaction to global security threats.

The parallel objective of this agenda is to define a common denominator in the Visegrad Group as to sharing similar policies *vis-a-vis* the reaction to global security threats.

The issue of global security threats should be debated from the point of view of the NATO-focused (preferred in the security reference framework) defence against global (new) security challenges.

III. The "Atlanticism" of Visegrad Countries

The question of whether the long-expected admission of Central Eastern European (CEE) countries has meant a contribution to European unity has proven to be quite controversial. Theoretically, the admission of 10 "post-communist" newcomers to NATO and the EU was accompanied by hopes of increasing the political relevance of the EU and of enlarging the *modus operandi* of Europe on the international scene. However, even before the official entry of the first eight countries from the CEE into the EU in 2004, it had become clear that practically all these countries were going to assume an articulated position on the issue of security and foreign policy, and especially security and defence policy. In the strife between "Atlanticists" and supporters of European autonomy in security and defence issues, they definitely sided with U.S. policy concerning the invasion of Iraq in 2003. In between, some of these countries softened their original, uncritical support for American policy in the course of the "war on terror" after 2003. Still, the modifications of attitudes toward Transatlantic issues in the last years cannot conceal the fact that Central Eastern Europeans contributed more to the division of Europe than to its unity. Their pro-US policy on the eve of the Iraq war (2002-2003) helped radicals in Washington pit "New Europe" against some allies in NATO and to postpone the implementation of the ESDP project indefinitely.

In the enlargement of NATO, the U.S. found an appropriate instrument in intervening successfully with EU internal affairs since the NATO enlargement coincided with that of the EU. Even in the year preceding the Iraq war and the deep division in the ranks of Europeans on this issue, official U.S. reports revealed confidence in the support of the new allies in the CEE: "Finally, we were convinced, as have been many U.S. Government officials, that the seven countries seriously under consideration for NATO membership, in addition to the three new members of NATO, are more committed Atlanticists (with the possible exception of Slovenia) than many of the current NATO allies."[10]

The wave of CEE (including Visegrad) support for the "war on terror" by President George Bush came at the time the governments of eight countries already had dates for EU membership. Despite this, three of them—Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland—early on joined some "old" EU countries along with the UK in February 2003 to express in the controversial Letter of

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[10] *Report of the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations*, Washington, D.C., 30 August 2002, p. 3.

Eight their unlimited support for the planned invasion of Iraq.[11] And quite independently, the so-called Vilnius Group—an *ad hoc* regional grouping of 10 countries from the CEE that was created with the aim to support one another in their ambitions for entry into NATO (including several countries with EU-entry dates plus Bulgaria and Romania)—signed a similar letter some days later. This was, once more, widely used by U.S. public diplomacy to collect voices of support for the Iraq invasion.[12] Reciprocally, this led some other "old" European states to react harshly in addressing Central Eastern European countries, the most notable case being that of former French president Jacques Chirac, whose rebuke declared the CEE letter to be "infantile" and stated "they missed a great opportunity to shut up."[13] In other words, since at least 2003 and up to 2011, the new EU (and NATO) members from CEE countries have hardly contributed to increasing the cohesiveness of the EU in the sphere of foreign and security policy, not to mention in defence policy. Even if some countries—most visibly Slovakia—have strongly dampened their Trans-atlanticism in the meantime (between 2006 and 2010), there have appeared several other points of friction between the EU and the CEE newcomers, for example, in positions taken towards the International Criminal Court (ICC), votes in the UN Security Council by Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia, anti-missile defence based on bilateral agreements between the U.S. and Poland and the U.S. and the Czech Republic, which were unilaterally cancelled by the U.S. in 2009.

Reasons for "Disloyalty" in the Transatlantic Dispute

The times of Central Europeans' romance with Transatlanticism seem to be over (as seen in 2011). However, the position of Central (Eastern) European countries towards the awkward management of a common European security and foreign policy does represent a milestone in the history of European integration. The reasons for why Central Eastern European countries (including, of course, Visegrad states) produced accusations of being European unity "breakers" are various and have been mostly correctly analysed in the last five years. Let us mention the notoriously famous reasons why the CEE countries were so eager to express support for U.S. foreign policy throughout the 1990s, and why they have often preserved it through the "zeroes" of the 21st century.

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[11] For the text of the statement, see "Leaders' Statement on Iraq: Full text," *BBC News–World Edition*, 30 January 2003.

[12] *The Recent Trip of Secretary Rumsfeld to Italy and Germany and International Support for the Global War on Terrorism*, www.fpc.state.gov/fpc/17712.htm.

[13] "Chirac Lashes out at 'new Europe,'" *CNN.Com/World*, 18 February 2003.

One of the reasons can be *historical*. It was the U.S. that appeared to be the winner of the Cold War in the eyes of the CEE, and many politicians appreciated the "Americans" as the ones bringing freedom and democracy to their respective countries.

Another reason might be found in the continuing emphasis in the CEE on hard power. This fact can be easily established by studying the basic security documents—especially "Security Strategies" and "Military Strategies"—the perception of security has remained very traditional and is still focused on the strong role of the military.

The *fear of Russia* did not fully disappear in the CEE after NATO enlargement. In connection with Russia's recent attempts to strengthen its role (including the Russian suspension of the CFE Treaty or the threat to aim Russian missiles with nuclear warheads at CEE countries because of the anti-missile plans with the Czech and Polish governments), the U.S. might once more appear as a power worthy close alliance links.

Another factor is *gratitude* (regardless of the highly questionable value of this category in *realpolitik)* for the U.S. role in pushing through the NATO enlargement process in the 1990s, which was seen as an impetus for the EU to re-consider its original (up to the Luxembourg EU Summit in December 1997) and indecisive enlargement policy.

The *superpower position* of the U.S. was another factor that contributed to the decision to rely more on the "big American" than on the EU, which has proven it has had limited ability to now in implementing the ambitious goals formulated in the Lisbon process.[14]

A *lack of unity* among "old EU member states" has made it easier for CEE countries to ignore the call for a more coordinated EU foreign and security policy approach.

Also, there is the *failure* so far to develop the CFSP and ESDP processes (in spite of the Lisbon Treaty) and the postponement of the building up of the Rapid Reaction Forces or Battlegroups as well as the inability to bring the European Security Strategy to practical conclusion (the 2003 version was slightly updated in 2008), which would entail the ability of the EU to engage in crisis management operations anywhere in the world. Despite the 7th anniversary of the European Security Strategy in December 2010, declarations about the need to develop a strategic culture that fosters "early, rapid and when

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[14] T. Zgajewski, K. Hajjar, "The Lisbon Strategy: Which Failure? What Failure? And Why?", www.irri-kiib.be/papers/Lisbon-Strategy-TZKH.pdf.

necessary robust intervention"[15] or the claim that the "first line of defence will often be abroad"[16] haven't seemed to be confirmed in deed.

One cannot disregard the fact, however, that the heyday of unlimited support for U.S. foreign policy in some CEE countries seems to belong to history, even if most CEE countries can still be regarded as more "pro-Atlanticist" than the average "old" EU member state. In general, one has to admit that in several capitals of the CEE there has been a change of heart and a more sober assessment of bilateral relationships with the U.S. Perhaps the most significant change has become visible in public opinion in most CEE countries, which has shown a steady decline in the popularity of the once-celebrated, big North American ally.

The alleged Atlanticist approach of the Visegrad Group (and of other countries in broader Central Eastern Europe) has been largely determined by the traditional emphasis on "hard security guarantees" (Article V of the Washington Treaty), notwithstanding the very low credibility of NATO's commitment to defend new members.[17] According to a survey made before the first wave of NATO enlargement in autumn 1998,[18] only 31% of the U.S. public agreed that the United States had a vital interest in Poland (in contrast to 87% regarding Japan) and only 28% agreed with the use of U.S. troops in response to a Russian invasion of Poland.

Since their accession to the EU and up to 2011, Visegrad Group countries have tended to balance the European and Atlanticist dimensions of their security policies. Some even spoke about the "Europeanization" of the foreign policy of new member states. The trend has been strengthened by growing dissatisfaction with U.S. foreign policy[19]. However, Central Europeans tend to pursue a less competitive and more cooperative approach towards the U.S. within the EU. Therefore, there is no reason to view the EU's eastern enlargement as drifting away from Transatlantic relations or a geopolitical shift towards Russia.

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[15] "European Security Strategy—A Secure Europe in a Better World," EU Council report, Brussels, 12 December 2003, p. 11.

[16] *Ibidem*, p. 6.

[17] D. Reiter, "Why NATO Enlargement Does Not Spread Democracy," *International Security*, vol. 25, n o. 4, Spring 2001, pp. 41–67.

[18] J.E. Reilly, *American Public Opinion and Foreign Policy*, Chicago, Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 1999.

[19] Since 2002–2003, U.S. foreign policy has been seen predominantly negatively in the public opinion of the Visegrad countries. See, i.a., Transatlantic Links.

Visegrad Policies Towards Eastern and Southeastern Neighbours

The new member states are closer to conflict regions in the East and in the Balkans. The Visegrad countries have a specific interest in preventing conflicts and stabilizing their neighbourhood through developing cross-border cooperation. The European Neighbourhood Policy attempts to square the two contradictory roles of the EU's external border: On the one hand, "borders are barriers that protect the Union and its citizens against threats from the outside, but, on the other hand, it is a fundamental goal of European integration to soften borders and reduce barriers."[20]

Visegrad countries, with the exception of the Czech Republic, share a common border with one or several Eastern neighbours. The geopolitical position of the Czech Republic is unique: All its neighbours are currently part of the Schengen Area. Therefore, the Czech Republic—as a sort of "Luxembourg of Central Europe"—has to rely on the successful frontline policies of its neighbours. Reversing the token, in the Visegrad Group only Hungary has a common border with the Balkan countries. Hence, it was assumed to be the most committed to the stabilization efforts in the former Yugoslavia. However, the Czech, Hungarian and Polish governments' performance in the 1999 Kosovo campaign did not correspond to what was expected. Operation Allied Force was the first test of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland as new NATO members: "Poland passed the test with flying colours, Hungary received only a satisfactory grade and the Czech Republic had problems passing at all and needed 'extensive tutoring' from Brussels and Washington even to make it. As to the performance of the Slovak Republic, due to the enlargement asymmetry of NATO, Slovakia was not (a) member of the Alliance at that time. Admittedly, the then government supported the NATO campaign against the former Yugoslavia politically (despite) negative public opinion, which was criticizing the war against 'fellow Slavs.'"[21]

Unfortunately, events after the 1999 military campaign against the former Yugoslavia divided the Visegrad group. By 2011, the V4 had not been able to find a common position on the recognition of Kosovo and Slovakia—unlike

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[20]   G. Gromadzki, and K. Raik, "Between Activeness and Influence: The Contribution of New Member States to EU Policies Towards the Eastern Neighbors," *Policy Paper*, Open Estonia Foundation (September, 2006).

[21]   A.A. Michta (ed.), *America's New Allies: Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic in NATO*, Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 2001, p. 196.

the other three Visegrad countries—has remained one of five EU countries that have refused to recognize the independence of Kosovo.[22]

Because all Visegrad countries were expected to support the "Wider Europe" and its Eastern dimension, including enlargement, the Kosovo "episode" seems to be one of the obstacles on the road to the creation of a common, regionally based approach towards political and security problems in Europe. The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland obviously seem to see the recognition of Kosovo as a contribution to peace and stability in the western Balkans, whereas Slovakia still regards the declaration of the independence of Kosovo as an illegal act from the point of view of international law. Still in 2010, one could register several statements from Slovakia regarding Kosovo. It seems that Slovakia—the only Visegrad country not recognizing Kosovo at least until now, became victim to its own past absolutist declarations.

In a 3 December 2009 meeting with Serbian President Boris Tadić, Slovak President Ivan Gašparovič said that Slovakia would not recognize Kosovo even if the International Court of Justice ruled against Belgrade.[23] Since then, even under the new centre-of-the-right government (in office since summer 2010), the Slovakia's position has not changed. Top officials of the new Slovak government have re-confirmed their negative attitudes towards the independence of Kosovo despite the verdict ("advisory opinion") from the International Court of Justice in June 2010, which stated that Kosovo's declaration of independence did not contradict international law, including:

- Slovakia will recognize Kosovo only after Serbia has done so;[24]
- A one-sided secession from a home country is not in the interest of Europe;[25] and,
- Slovakia will not recognize the independence of Kosovo.[26]

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[22] "Slovakia Remains Firm: No recognition of Kosovo," *Trend*, http://en.trend.az/regions/world/europe/1725008.html.

[23] "Slovakia Supports Serbia on Kosovo, EU," *B92*, 3 December 2009, www.b92.net/eng/news/politics-article.php?yyyy=2009&mm=12&dd=03&nav_id=63477.

[24] I. Radičová, the Slovak PM., *Hnonline*, 12 December 2010, http://hnonline.sk/slovensko/c1-48506880-radicova-najskor-musi-kosovo-uznat-srbsko-potom-my.

[25] M. Dzurinda, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, *Webnoviny*, 2 September 2010, www.webnoviny.sk/politika/dzurinda-nepovedal-som-ze-sr-nikdy-ne/211158-clanok.html.

[26] Ľ. Galko, Minister of Defense of the Slovak Republic, *Pravda*, 22 June 2010, http://spravy.pravda.sk/slovensko-postoj-nemeni-nezavislost-kosova-neuzna-fh8-/sk_domace.asp?c=A100722_172832_sk_domace_p23.

The Kosovo case is one example (along with the Russia-Georgia war in 2008 or the issue of anti-ballistic missile defence through 2009) demonstrating the differences between the political representatives in individual Visegrad countries concerning the perception of regional or global security threats.

IV. Visegrad and Crucial Hard Security Players: NATO and Russia

Aspect of the Visegrad NATO Membership

Looking at Visegrad cooperation from the aspect of security, one has, of course, to take into account various factors relating to security, "safety", vulnerability and a lot of theoretical problems surrounding so-called security risks and security threats.

All four Visegrad countries entered NATO for obvious reasons: to be "secure," which means to be protected in the "politico-military" sense of security. New NATO partnerships, therefore, do represent a basic security agenda for the Visegrad region.

A considerable part of the security community in Visegrad Group countries[27] agrees that any country that subscribes to the basic values of NATO can become a partner—but this does not, however, relate to the category of strategic partnership. Here, more is needed. It means that if a strategic partnership is in play, the active support of NATO values and NATO policy is needed.

On the other side, those countries that do not accept the basic values of "NATO culture" should be excluded from partnership with NATO. However, they should be given the opportunity of regular contact with the Alliance to maintain a critical dialogue. It is in the interest of NATO not to squander its partnership potential and prestige. With regard to new partnerships, the Alliance has to proceed pragmatically but not at the cost of engagement if partner countries violate elementary values (pluralist democracy, human rights, religious freedom, etc.).

A prevailing part of the security community in V4 countries also insists on the observance of values the Alliance actually maintains. Still, cooperation and dialogue with "non-value" countries is a necessary instrument for the stability of the whole Euro-Atlantic region.

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[27] The author's conclusions have been based on a representative study of the Slovak Security Community, conducted for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic and published in 2010, www.sfpa.sk (Slovak).

The issue of "real" NATO values must have priority when countries are hedging their ambition to become full-fledged NATO members. For "non-value" countries, some sort of partnership with NATO is preferred, and it is quite legitimate to find consensus in the field of common security interests with these countries.

Another stream within the security community in V4 countries wonders if the New Strategic Concept can offer some new solutions for NATO and for global security. According to this group, all important principles already have been anchored in the NATO Treaty (Washington Declaration) of 1949 and it is counterproductive to invent some new methods, mechanisms or instruments since they only need to be modified. Today, NATO needs time for considering the next steps and it needs time for self-reflection and internal consolidation. Looking into the nature of the Euro-Atlantic partnership, it is absolutely necessary to demand the observance of constitutional principles from all NATO partner countries.

In the interest of improving the Euro-American relationship, it is high time that Europe also contributes to a new quality of Trans-Atlantic relations. Otherwise, the very core of the NATO partnership (Europe–U.S.) relations will be exposed as being in real danger of breaking.

It is interesting, that unlike in the "old" NATO countries only a small part of the security community in Visegrad Group countries thinks the U.S. is guilty of the deterioration of Euro–American relations. An unequivocal paradigm should be introduced saying that in the interest of the Transatlantic partnership, a "proliferation" of new centres within NATO is not desirable. Otherwise, the U.S. will gradually lose interest in Europe in favour of more advantageous global partnerships. Because of difficulties setting priorities and a lack of resources, it is more and more complicated to reach consensus in the Transatlantic partnership.

Relations Between NATO and Other International Organizations

The views of members of the security community within the Visegrad countries represent a varying degree of credibility attached to other (than NATO) international organizations involved in the governance or management of security.

In the "hierarchical competition," the EU has been considered the institutional candidate that—in the opinion of the majority of the Visegrad security community—should become the most relevant partner to NATO. Although the UN (followed by the OSCE) is the organization enjoying the

highest and most respected international mandate, the biggest part of the security community[28] believes it is the European Union on whom NATO should rely most as a partner organization. In this respect, certain pessimism with regard to the UN has been manifested.

The "rating" for OSCE is even lower. About one third of members of the security community did not mention OSCE at all, and the rest didn't put this organization as the number one partner for NATO.

According to the majority of the security community, the EU represents the most natural and important partner for NATO. The EU, therefore, deserves special treatment by NATO, and the UN Security Council should take this organization more into consideration and define the EU as a natural priority for the Alliance.

The second largest group of experts in Visegrad countries sees the UN (*i.e.*, the UNSC since the UNGA was not mentioned) as the most important partner for NATO. The supporters of a "UN priority" for NATO have mostly argued about the necessity to obtain a mandate for possible "out of Art. 5 operations" from the UNSC. A part of the security community believes that the UNSC should clearly define NATO obligations with regard to UNSC resolutions. According to this stream in the security community, NATO should declare openly that it does not want to be rigidly bound by UNSC resolutions or by the non-existence of a resolution that explicitly permits a military operation. This should be the rule in case national interests within NATO are exposed to danger or if there is an urgent need to act, for example, when genocide is underway anywhere in the world. In these cases, NATO should declare in the UNSC that it is ready to ignore the non-existence of a concrete resolution (such as the case of the Yugoslavia/Kosovo war in 1999).

Security Threats in the Visegrad Region: Central European Denominators

It seems that the territorial security of the four Visegrad states depends on global security threats rather indirectly, while none of the states has any global interests.

Therefore, it is better to focus instead on the Visegrad neighbourhood itself and on specific Visegrad aspects of the security relationship with respect to the European Union, NATO and Russia. It is less necessary to discuss threats to

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[28] Here, once more, the author generalizes, first of all, the empirical data collected in the research of the Slovak security community.

military missions deployed outside the territory of Visegrad countries since they are not more exposed to attacks or acts of terrorism than other allied forces.

NATO–Russia Relations

Almost nobody in the Visegrad Group wishes a return to a confrontational policy with Russia in the style of the Cold War. Most members of the security community prefer the idea of a sort of strategic partnership with Russia. NATO should encourage Russia to play a more critical role in maintaining world stability. One should not hesitate to criticize Russia for aggressive acts (such as the war against Georgia) but one also should take into account that NATO necessarily needs cooperation with Russia in at least four crucial and mutual NATO–Russia priority points:

- Common interest in Afghanistan;
- Anti-ballistic missiles protecting both NATO countries and Russia against future Iranian nuclear missile threats;
- Strengthening the non-proliferation regime; and,
- Re-engagement of Russia in the CFE (treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe).

Anyway, a strategic partnership between NATO and Russia must have its limits if the basic values of NATO (human rights, freedom of independent nations, right of other states to join NATO and non-respect of agreements) are harmed. The best type of partnership between NATO and Russia might be called a "conditioned partnership."

The issues of a common Visegrad security identity have aroused a vivid discussion in the security community of Visegrad countries. Generally, the experts have perceived NATO as an unequivocal guarantee for defending the national security interests of the four Visegrad countries. It is desirable that V4 countries cope with new, accumulated problems following developments in the security field in recent years. In other words, the building up of a common Visegrad identity, regardless of the desirable methodological moves and covetable steps to be undertaken by non-governmental organizations and the respective state agencies (first of all by the ministries of foreign affairs) necessarily must be based on a common language in which one addresses common security threats, positions towards Russia, towards Transatlantic relations and the common vision of one geographically and culturally shared political view of European and Euro-Atlantic affairs. Only under these conditions may the security identity of the Visegrad Group be both internationalized and institutionalized.

Is Russia a Threat to Central European Countries?

There is no doubt that Russia has become the "spectre going around Central Europe," to paraphrase the famous motto of the Communist Manifesto. Paradoxically, in cautioning against the Russian factor, we can easily resort to no one other than Karl Marx: " … Europe faces only one alternative: either Asian barbarism, under the leadership of the Muscovites, will come down on Europe like an avalanche, or Europe must restore Poland and thereby protect itself against Asia with a wall of 20 million heroes."[29] Even rigorous critics and convinced antagonists of Karl Marx's social philosophy and economic theories may agree with some of the judgments in his analysis of 19th century geopolitics. It seems that Marx's dictum used as the epigraph to this paper is valid enough these days despite the apparent fact that now the security landscapes of Europe and Eurasia differ radically from those that existed some 150 years ago. Apart from other things, it draws attention to the strategic role of Central Eastern Europe in the international system emerging on the European continent. This role is constantly debated, and is split as to whether this region, with the Visegrad Four at its centre, is evolving into a bulwark of European liberties and affluence, defending them against Russia's expansion or if it should be "Finlandizied" and converted into something like a "bridge" between Europe and Russia, or whether Central Eastern (or East-Central) European countries are doomed to become minor elements of a certain "Europe from the Atlantics to the Urals without dividing lines," a lofty goal of European pacifists and anti-Atlanticists and as well a cherished dream of Soviet, now Russian, strategists. These debates are especially important because of the so-called "reset," another attempt by some American and European circles to engage with Russia.[30] Observing the practical steps of Russian foreign policy towards the countries of Central Europe, one cannot avoid the suspicion that a "New Yalta" represents Russia's strategic goal today.

In order to assess the strategic role of the Visegrad group in the EU–Russia relationship in the context of the "reset," one should explore the principal goals and forces of Russia's foreign policy. The expansion of Russia's influence on Central Eastern Europe and its domination over it was one of the principal constants of Russian policy from the early days of the Romanov Empire.

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[29] K. Marx, "Poland and the Russian Menace," Speech to a general meeting commemorating the 4th anniversary of the Polish Uprising of 1863, Cambridge Hall, London, 22 January 1867.

[30] S. Charap, *Assessing the 'Reset' and the Next Steps for U.S. Foreign Policy*, Centre for American Progress, 14 April 2010, www.americanprogress.org/issues/2010/04/assessing_reset.html.

Current Russian political thinking reproduces the basic characteristics of the Russian intellectual mainstream and national self-identity that finally formed in the first half of the 19th century soon after the end of the Napoleonic wars. At that time, Russia ultimately constituted itself as an ideological alternative to Europe with a principally different value code as well as an actor that compensated for the inability to modernize its society and economy by geopolitical expansion and pretending to decide the destiny of Europe.

There is a growing body of evidence that in the 2000s the Kremlin uses "stick and carrot" policy and "salami-slice strategy" in order to establish Russia's dominance in post-Soviet spaces and strong political influence in areas of Europe near the former Soviet Union. Moscow's idea of the European international order presumes that although maintaining national sovereignty, the countries of Central Eastern Europe should first turn into a geopolitical space divided between the partially restored Russian Empire and the main European powers; and, second, into instruments of Russian influence in European and Euro-Atlantic institutions. With these goals in view, Moscow wants a "Yalta-type" agreement with the West. The latter should admit its use of military force within the former Soviet Union; accept the rebirth of the Russian Empire surrounded by a belt of satellite states and stop criticism of Russian authoritarianism.

One can add that Moscow's stubborn opposition to NATO's eastward enlargement starting from the early 1990s; hysterical political and propaganda campaign against American ballistic missile defence elements in Poland and the Czech Republic, including threats to deploy a few dozen new nuclear missiles in the western part of Russia, are attempts to enfeeble NATO by establishing a so-called "new European security architecture." All these elements of Russia's foreign policy have a common denominator. Their goal is to minimize and devalue security guarantees resulting from the Central Eastern European countries' membership in NATO and other Western international institutions. These guarantees are seen—and actually are—a strong obstacle to the realization of Russia's strategic plans in Europe. At the same time, Moscow performs a typical "divide and rule" policy capitalizing on the differences between different European states' threat perceptions and security interests and persuading its partners in Europe, such as Germany, Italy and France above all, that the Central Eastern European states are "trouble-makers," which because of their inability to overcome their heritage are factitious and malicious obstacles in constructive cooperation between Russia and Europe.

Partly, Russia's strategic goals regarding Central Eastern Europe result from a political mentality dominating in top Russian echelons. Their vision of

this region is tinged with paranoia. And, quite possible, they believe their own ideas. In particular and at every turn, Russian military commanders and political leaders repeat meaningless mantras about "NATO's military machine approaching Russia's borders" via Central Eastern Europe and the military bases located there, which "encircle Russia." President Medvedev personally accused NATO of endangering Russia's security, having said, "The real issue is that NATO is bringing its military infrastructure right up to our borders and is drawing new dividing lines in Europe, this time along our western and southern frontiers. No matter what we are told, it is only natural that we should see this as action directed against us. But the moment we try to point out that this is objectively contrary to Russia's national security interests everyone starts getting nervous."[31]

Paranoid hallucinations are combined with megalomania. Russian elites today believe that Russia has "risen from its knees" and has restored its muscle and wealth while the West's potency deteriorates because of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, threats from Iran, instability in Pakistan, differences between the U.S. and Europe and also between so-called "Old" and "New" Europe and, since the end of 2007, the escalating financial and economic crisis. Political correctness, the disposition to use soft power rather than military force and the consideration of human rights as a high value are typical of Europe today and are seen in Moscow as signals of decadence and impotence. Because of this, the masters of Russia hope to obtain a crucial voice in deciding international issues in the areas close to the country.

Russian expansionism results from the evolution of its economic and political systems, too. After 1991, Russian elites and society were not capable of transforming the mammoth, coarse and fossilized empire into an effective post-modern democratic state. The rise of authoritarianism has been combined in Russia with the establishment of strong control over key sectors of the economy by a few bureaucratic cliques and power networks, which were mostly formed by those who came from the security sector. This voided the path to modernization and led to high inflation, a decline in labour productivity and technological and institutional degradation of the economy, during which time (early 2000s) growth was only achieved by export revenues from the skyrocketing prices for oil and gas. A Russian expert from the Moscow-based Institute of Economy, Nataliya Smorodinskaya, concluded: "To outweigh the slowdown in economic growth and the resulting contraction of the domestic

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[31] D. Medvedev, *Speech at World Policy Conference*, Evian, France, 8 October 2008, www.president.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/10/08/2159_type82912type82914_207457.shtml.

base for rent extraction, the ruling elite has moved to a more aggressive and outright manner of advancing its vested interests over and above the national boundaries. … By mid-2008, the domestic economic situation in Russia has only further worsened. Therefore, a small victorious war against Georgia, a small disobedient neighbour, could be welcomed by Russian governing elites as well timed."[32]

In addition, many in Moscow believe that influence in and dominance over Central Eastern Europe may increase Russia's international weight, both in Europe and in the global context. In other words, nostalgic neo-imperialist feelings and imperialist policy are fuelled, at least partly, by practices typical of the 19th century when political domination over territory was an effective method to achieve economic and international advantages. If a country like Russia is not able to compete successfully in the international arena due to its inability to modernize its society, economy and technology, it must use geopolitical instruments to ensure its interests abroad. In this light, Russia's domination of the former Soviet Union and East-Central Europe is considered to be a precondition if Russian businesses, mainly energy supplying companies, are to achieve and secure preferential positions in Europe.

Central Eastern Europe Involved in International Bargain: "Reset" as Philosophy and Practice

It is natural enough that many in the U.S. and Europe would like to engage with Russia with a view to turn it into a constructive partner in fighting common threats, including WMD proliferation, Islamist-led terrorism and drug-trafficking as well as to assure stable and uninterrupted supplies of hydrocarbons to Europe. However, it takes two tango. Putting it differently, the question is whether Russia is willing to cooperate with the West and, if so, what is the price the West should pay for Russian cooperation to help resolved the problem with Iran's nuclear program or support for the U.S. and NATO activities in Afghanistan? In particular, is there a threat that the key states of the West will repeat the blunders made by Paris and London in 1938, and by the U.S. and Great Britain in 1945, when the two leading Western democracies allowed the USSR to convert Central Eastern European states into satellites?

Initially, "reset" presumed, in fact, a sort of strategic deal with Moscow. Its agenda included cessation of the criticism of Russian actions in the South

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[32] N. Smorodinskaya, (Head of the Department Institute of the Economy at the Russian Academy of Sciences, or RAS), "Motives behind Russian foreign policy," *Russian Foreign Policy,* Moscow Review, The EU–Russia Centre, Issue 8, October 2008, pp. 42–43.

Caucasus and the putting on ice of Ukraine and Georgia's attendance at NATO in exchange for Russia's cooperation in fighting the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, and, mainly, in closing Iran's nuclear program. The other element of this deal was the negotiation of a new Russia–U.S. strategic arms treaty to replace START I, which is highly desired by Moscow. Yet, the central point of the "reset" was the American proposal to rethink the plans of the American ballistic missile defence in Central Europe. If "through strong diplomacy with Russia and our other partners, we can reduce or eliminate that (Iranian) threat, it obviously shapes the way at which we look at missile defence," William Burns, the U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, said in Moscow just after Vice-president Biden announced the "reset" in his speech in Munich in February 2009.[33]

Some European circles enthusiastically supported the idea of a "reset." In particular, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the German Foreign minister at the time, solemnly announced the opening of a certain "window of history."[34] Russian leadership also warmly welcomed the advent of the "reset," basically because Moscow perceived it as extra evidence of Western weakness and vulnerability. A "window of history" to the Russian reading is nothing more than a possibility to take advantage of current Western susceptibilities in full measure. At the same time, democratically oriented Russian politicians and experts were deeply disappointed. Andrei Illarionov, the former adviser to the president of Russia concluded that "reset" means the achievement of many goals that Russian "chekists," who are in power, only dreamed would happen.[35]

The concept of the "reset" as a strategic bargain in which both sides make tantamount concessions was not implemented. Between 2009 and 2010, the Obama administration made a number of concessions highly important for Russia. Indeed, Washington mitigated its criticism of Russian aggression against Georgia, scuttled its plans and obligations to deploy ballistic missile defence facilities in Poland and the Czech Republic, terminated its support of Georgia and Ukraine joining NATO and concluded the new START. "Reset"

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[33] W. Burns, "U.S.–Russian relations need reloading," *Interfax Interview,* www.interfax.com/17/471696/Interview.aspx.

[34] F.-W. Steinmeier (Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, Germany), *Speech at the 45th Munich Security Conference*, 6 February 2009, www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/rede.php?menu_2009=&menu_konferenzen=&sprache=en&id=223&.

[35] "From Competition to Collaboration: Strengthening the U.S.–Russia Relationship," Hearing testimony of Andrei Illarionov (Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute, Washington, D.C., and President of the Institute of Economic Analysis, Moscow) before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, www.cato.org/testimony/ct-ai-20090225.html.

became a part of the European approach to Russia; the French government, , in particular, approved selling four Mistrals, modern assault ships that are a type of helicopter carrier, to the Russian Navy. As for Russian democracy, the American and European leaders have long since decided, perhaps with all good reasons, that if Russians enjoy living under a patrimonial authoritarian regime so much, it is a waste of time and effort to try to persuade them and their rulers of democracy's advantages. All these events were regarded as principal successes of Russia's foreign policy, especially because the U.S. was only rewarded by Moscow's granting a transit air corridor over Russia to Afghanistan. So far, Moscow refuses to support what it calls "traumatic sanctions" against Iran, mostly the ban on gasoline supplies to Iran which is probably the only method to force Tehran to stop its nuclear weapons program. Meanwhile, the nuclearization of Iran is the most dangerous threat to international security including global energy security, as it essentially intensifies the risk of nuclear conflict in the Persian Gulf region, a vital oil-producing area.

There could be a few basic explanations for the current American approach to its relationship with Russia. The first one presumes that the air transit corridor through Russian territory to Afghanistan outweighs the Russian sabotage of effective UN-approved sanctions against Iran and other manifestations of Moscow's uncooperative behaviour. Another explanation is based on the hope that Russian ruling circles have threat perceptions similar to those of American and European elites and that the only thing the West should do is make some concessions to Russia in order to mitigate Russian suspicion and thus move it towards cooperation with the West. And last, nobody can exclude that by concluding the new START and grossly exaggerating the importance of the air corridor the Obama administration is striving to create an impression of essential successes in the world arena to overcome growing domestic criticism and a lack of true international achievements.

V. Conclusion: Visions of Visegrad Cooperation

Defining the Security Interests of the Visegrad Countries

In looking for a common Visegrad security identity, one cannot avoid common security interests. One can find consensus on several main sets of factors that create the framework in which Visegrad countries will have to act that can be called national interests and Visegrad harmony. The set of factors may be formulated as follows:

– The Visegrad Group may be approaching a turning point, and if its members make use of this chance they will gain on their lack of subjectivity.

− The so-called "race of negotiators" during the EU integration process showed that each state has its own national priorities and is led by them since that time. The year 2004 was the first important turning point for the Visegrad Group. Since then, the question has been asked whether there remain any common interests and objectives of the group since the member countries already had achieved their strategic goals. As the organizers of this conference put it, how many common denominators exist today and how many will exist in the foreseeable future? What features can define the Visegrad countries and constitute Central Europe generally as a framework for security policy consideration today and tomorrow?

− From Central Europe's point of view, the two most important aspects of security policy—the deployment of an element of the American MD system and the Georgia–Russia conflict—have demonstrated that there are significant differences among the Visegrad countries. But these differences don't ruin the all-European agreements.

− Especially difficult, mainly for public opinion and the media, was the issue of the anti-ballistic missile shield. How is it possible the Visegrad group didn't work out a single approach to the anti-missile shield considering the fact that it was to be deployed in two Visegrad states by the U.S. with the support, although limited, of other European NATO members?

− How is it the two main actors, the Czech Republic and Poland, haven't worked out a common concept even though the MD agreements concluded with the U.S. are not in contrast?

− The V4 countries' reactions to the Georgia–Russia conflict, especially regarding its repercussions on Central Europe security, including energy security, were different. Poland and Hungary took opposite approaches due to different positions regarding the Nord Stream and South Stream pipelines. But again, different approaches didn't prevent the European Union from working out a common position in its relations with Russia. Instead, the differences only convinced Russia that it can gain on European dissonance.

Formulating a Preliminary Visegrad Consensus on NATO

The strongest part of the Visegrad security community represents the so-called "constructivist" stream that regards NATO as the basis for security and defence policy.[36] As for priorities, which were formulated in the NATO Strategic Concept of 2010, most members of the Visegrad security community

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[36] I. Samson, *Budúcnosť Severoatlantickej aliancie z pohľadu slovenskej bezpečnostnej komunity (The Future of the North Atlantic Alliance as Seen by the Slovak Security Community)*, Research Centre of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, Bratislava, 2010, p. 101.

regard the defence of member countries, including the V4 countries (according to Art. 5), as the highest priority. The hierarchy of priorities as seen by the "constructivist" stream is as follows:

a) collective defence;

b) political consultations, *i.e.*, a dialogue enabling NATO countries to take over responsibilities and combat widespread tendencies towards isolation and passivity;

c) crisis management carried out by using NATO Response Forces and participation in peace-supporting operations;

d) uncontested priority of Art. 5, which means mutual solidarity and armed help; and,

e) dialogue about military problems and the coordination of military exercises.

If we consider the hierarchy of importance, in the group of "constructivists" the most obvious priorities relate to:

1. Defence of a state's own territory;

2. Export of security beyond Art. 5 of the Washington Treaty; and,

3. Guaranteeing global security.

There exists another part of the Visegrad security community that seems to be more sceptical about the priorities of NATO. This stream of the security community represents the opinion that NATO should focus on its own cohesion and internal strengthening. In order to reach this goal, it is necessary to concentrate on a common perception of security threats and to enforce consensus in the decision-making process (namely in the North Atlantic Council). NATO should dampen its enlargement activities towards nations that do not meet the full criteria of democracy and civic society. According to this "sceptical" stream, the priorities for the next several years are as follows: the elaboration of a quick exit strategy for Afghanistan; elaboration of a new strategic vision for NATO on a mid-term horizon; finding a more appropriate platform for selected partners outside NATO (Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea); and, enforcing the effectiveness of decision-making processes within the Alliance.

As can be seen from the set of problems mentioned above, it is possible to find many common Visegrad security denominators as well as some serious differences. It seems that the best way to overcome the problems lies in the ability to define a common security interest, the threats and risks to the region as a whole.

Judit Hamberger

The evolution of Atlanticism in the Visegrad area: the case studies of the Czech Republic and Poland as observed from Hungary

Introduction

Atlanticism has been present in the security policies and foreign policy strategies of Poland and the Czech Republic since 1991–1992. It has similar and different features in the two countries. In the light of the possible deployment of the United States' missile defence system in Poland and the Czech Republic, it is timely to compare and contrast these features.

General Features

Atlanticism in both Poland and the Czech Republic emphasises the special importance of the United States to the European security system. The point of departure is that NATO—and within NATO, the United States—is best able to guarantee the security of both countries. For the Poles, Atlanticism is a matter of their country's security and defence against a large and strong eastern neighbour (Russia) and a large and strong western neighbour (Germany). The Czechs, for their part, tend to underline their distrust of Germany; in light of the geographical distance, they now fear Russia less.

Poland trusts neither its Russian neighbour nor its German neighbour. This is a consequence of historical experiences going back several centuries and the attacks that Poland suffered from both sides in the twentieth century. The Poles require a counterbalance, the assistance of a third major power—the United States. This is the experiential basis of Poland's present Atlanticism. Since the Poles fear Germany in both the European Union and NATO and do not fully trust France (because of its pro-Russian bias), the United States remains the superpower that they can trust. According to their own assessment, NATO membership—attained in 1999—was a decisive step for an independent and democratic Poland; it was a step with far-reaching consequences for the country's security, political stability and economic development. With the West's assistance (that is, by employing the Western option), Poland rewrote the legacy of Yalta; it embedded its security in a geopolitical constellation that represents an opportunity denied to Poland for 300 years.

The essence of Czech Atlanticist policy is the idea that the Czech Republic is a member of an organisation (NATO) that guarantees the United States' presence in Europe, thereby adding to the security and stability of Europe. In this context, the exceptional role of the United States as a global superpower is often highlighted, as is also the importance of ensuring the presence, in the Czech Republic, of the highest possible ratio of American capital (as a counterbalance to German capital). In Czech foreign and security policy strategies, emphasis is placed on developing cordial and friendly relations with the United States as an ally.

In both the Czech Republic and Poland, the development of Atlanticism took place over the course of a decade (1989—1999), during which a formerly hostile NATO became a friendly organisation. In both countries, membership in this organisation was formulated as a desire and a goal.

The trajectory of Polish Atlanticism

As the country's freedom and independence began to be restored in the initial months of the political transition (at the time of Tadeusz Mazowiecki's government), Polish foreign policy was characterised by quiet and cautious diplomacy. Poland faced three security policy options: Finlandisation, neutrality and the Western option. The country's principal political forces soon rejected the first two options, as both of them would have led to the country's marginalisation in security policy terms. The events of 1990 and 1991—Germany's reunification and the attempted coup in the Soviet Union—prompted Poland (with others) to decide in favour of the Western option. Previously, the Poles had been preoccupied with the winding up of the Warsaw Pact and COMECON, as well as with Polish—Russian and Polish—German relations. In 1990 and in 1991, they were interested primarily in the possibility of expanding the CSCE and the pan-European security system. By means of its unification, Germany as a whole became a NATO member; NATO thus became an immediate neighbour of Poland, but it was not yet a potential guarantor of Poland's security. The idea of binding the country to the West was initially formulated in the government programme of 1992.

Within the scope of the Western option, Poland's relationship to NATO and to the United States became one of the most persistent issues on the agenda. The issue first appeared in Polish security policy deliberations at the time of the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1991–1992. Within two years, the Poles reached the conclusion that the cheapest way of safeguarding their country's security interests was to participate in, and become a member of, Western institutions.

Formal relations with NATO were established as early as 1990, but it was in 1992 that Polish foreign policy began to stress the importance of an American presence as a force necessary for Europe's stability.

For Poland, the most tangible proof of its detachment from the Soviet Union was the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and COMECON in the summer of 1991. A further milestone was the withdrawal of Soviet troops, which finally took place in 1994. (Although Soviet combat troops left the country in late 1992, nevertheless trains carrying troops, armaments and equipment from the GDR and elsewhere continued to pass through the country until 1994.)

In 1991 and 1992, neither NATO nor the EC was in a position to welcome prospective applicants with open arms. They were not yet ready to receive the Central Europeans, who had just regained their independence. The two organisations were hesitant and often rather dismissive, as they did not want to upset the Russian leadership. For the West, Moscow and the conventional arms limitation process were important factors. Regional stability was fragile; under these circumstances, NATO chose a new strategy: the gradual extension of a commitment towards Central Europe.

Like other countries in the region, Poland had no wish to become a permanent buffer zone subject to East–West superpower rivalry. Polish governments were also cautious when making political statements: They stressed their desire for closer relations with NATO rather than for membership of the organisation. In late 1991, they accepted that they were not needed by NATO, and that several years might have to pass before they were needed. NATO also made sure that they were aware of this.

In the process of forging closer relations with NATO, an important development took place in February 1991 when the Visegrad Three (Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary) declared their intention to cooperate on matters of integration into the European organisations. They confirmed this intention in the Visegrád Declaration of May 1992, which noted their common intention to join NATO and cooperate with each other for this purpose.

In early 1992, the strategy of the new Olszewski government identified the West as the direction of security for Poland. It noted that neutrality was no longer an alternative to NATO membership. It was in the same year that Poland made known its long-term intention to become a NATO member. It wished to achieve this goal in a gradual, step-by-step manner, while striving for good bilateral relations with the member states and for good relations with the Alliance itself. In mid-1992, even the media was reporting that Poland had switched options; it had turned from the East to the West, and it was already

implementing this new orientation in its economy and wished also to do so in its foreign and security policy.

As governments changed in Poland, the demand for NATO membership was formulated with varying degrees of conviction. But from November 1992 onwards, membership was the strategic goal in every security policy review. Indeed, in subsequent periods, the principal objective was NATO membership, integration into the Western structures, and the establishment of good-neighbourly relations. This was Poland's threefold foreign policy priority, which was supported, in the long term, by all the country's major political forces, in spite of debates and criticisms. Political and social support was strengthened by events and developments underway at the time in the Soviet Union and then in Russia. Public support for NATO membership was as high, between 73% and 83 percent.

The first institutional framework for joint action with NATO was the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC). At the time of its founding Polish officials stated that they regarded NATO as the cornerstone of European security and the United States' military presence in Europe as a factor in the continent's stability.

In 1993, the Democrats took control of the U.S. Congress. A narrow group of U.S. foreign policy-makers began to consider the possibility of NATO expansion. At this time, the Polish government began its diplomatic lobbying with this aim in mind. There was no change in this situation even when left-winger Aleksander Kwaśniewski became president of Poland. Even so, concerns were raised: how, for instance, would Russia react if NATO drew closer to its borders? Naturally, Russia's protests were increasingly vehement.

Russia urged the establishment of an all-European security system under the auspices of the CSCE. It wished then to subordinate NATO and the WEU to this new system. This explains why Boris Yeltsin protested when, in September 1993, Polish President Lech Wałęsa wrote a letter to Manfred Wörner, the NATO secretary-general, requesting Poland's acceptance into NATO. By way of protest, Yeltsin also wrote a letter to NATO; he cited a promise made by the Western powers in return for Russia's consenting to Germany's reunification, namely that Poland would not be granted NATO membership. In response to his protest, Poland began to lobby in the United States for membership. The Polish embassy in Washington and the large Polish community in the United States contributed significantly to this effort.

By the end of the year and in early 1994, NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) plan had been elaborated. The plan offered membership to applicants

individually (rather than as a group). Its main point was that the defence structures had to gradually draw closer to NATO. This did not satisfy the Poles, but they consoled themselves with the fact that they now had an opportunity to consult with NATO in the event of a threat. The fact that it prescribed civilian control of the armed forces and also required a civilian as minister of defence enhanced the significance of the PfP. Furthermore, the scheme even allowed Russia to join it.

The Poles joined the PfP, and this proved to be a valuable step towards the gradual attainment of NATO membership. Poland's involvement in the Partnership was exemplary; the Poles wished to fulfil all the required conditions as rapidly as possible. In the autumn of 1994, a joint military exercise was even held in Poland. Each task was taken seriously and all efforts were made. The following year, Poland took part in NATO military exercises, and in 1995 it sent peacekeeping troops (a contingent of 670 soldiers) to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Polish policy also gave due attention to the WEU, sensing that a readiness to become fully involved would facilitate the granting of membership.

An important factor during preparations for membership was military cooperation with NATO. The leaders of NATO expressed recognition and admiration for Polish military leaders and the army's performance within the PfP. The Polish government made considerable financial and intellectual efforts to meet the criteria. One reason for this was the fact that the army is an important symbol of Polish sovereignty—both for the Polish elite and for Polish society. Indeed, the army holds an esteemed position in society and in Polish historical traditions; society has high regard for its soldiers and its army, attributing great significance to them. The principal actors in the wars of independence and liberation were Polish soldiers, the legions of Polish recruits and the armies of Poles.

In 1994–1995, Russian Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev announced a new foreign and security policy doctrine, giving rise to concern and anxiety among the Poles. This military doctrine reformulated the Russian demand for superpower status and sought to return the post-communist countries to Russia's sphere of influence. Mention was made of the "near abroad," which was understood to mean the former satellite states, including Poland. At the time, 70% of Poles thought that Russia was a military threat to the country. NATO membership ambitions served to strengthen public hostility towards Russia.

From the Russian side, there was constant pressure on NATO not to expand and on Poland not to seek membership. Polish–Russian relations have not been good ever since the change of political regime; indeed, depending on

the government in power, relations have been either poor or antagonistic. Over the years, the mutual relationship has given rise to many hostile gestures, almost all of which have drawn attention to the great number of unresolved problems that have accumulated over the centuries. Another notable feature is the propaganda war perpetrated by both sides. Several attempts have been made to improve relations—for instance, when the Polish post-communists were in power. But such attempts have been rather unsuccessful.

Russia clearly sought to hinder Poland's NATO membership. It claimed that Polish membership would lead to tensions between the West and Russia. (A Russian general even declared that Poland's NATO membership might lead to World War III.) A number of threats were made against Poland. From time to time, there were problems with the gas supply, and Russia's secret services stepped up their activities in the country. One of Gazprom's intimidating actions has been the construction of a gas pipeline from Russia to Germany under the Baltic Sea, enabling it to circumvent Poland. In this way it hopes to exclude Poland from Russian gas supplies, thereby diminishing Poland's strategic significance. The demand for a Russian corridor to Kaliningrad was also seen as an unfriendly act.

Following the initial German gestures in the early 1990s, German–Polish relations were damaged by the demands for financial compensation of Germans expelled from the country after 1945. Polish governments have tended to stress different aspects of the relationship, and this has influenced the social and political climate. Relations with Germany are, however, "kept in check" by the framework of EU integration.

In connection with its plan to offer military assistance to the Central Europeans, and acting under pressure from the United States and Germany, NATO produced a study—in late 1994—about the consequences of expansion and its effect on European security. In the autumn of 1995, a paper setting out criteria for NATO membership was published.

By the middle of 1995, the Polish government began making serious preparations for the time when the country would be accepted into NATO. It made its progress known, with one eye on the membership criteria. By the beginning of 1996, Poland had met the criteria. In 1996–1997, many individual consultations were held with NATO. Meanwhile, the foreign and security policy endeavours of successive Polish governments remained the same: each of them demonstrated the collective will and shared intention for NATO membership.

The United States exerted constant diplomatic pressure on NATO member states, with a view to persuading them to accept the new members. Madeleine Albright sought—alongside the candidate countries—to convince the member states that Western Europe's security depended on Central Europe, and that it was worth accepting new members and expanding NATO as a means of furthering Europe's democratic integration. It was also an appropriate way of arranging for the United States to commit itself to the defence of Europe.

In the summer of 1997, three countries—Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary—were finally invited to join NATO. This was followed by the negotiations for accession, member-state ratifications, and finally—on March 12, 1999—the final signature to the agreement. Subsequently, Poland had to prove on an ongoing basis that the concept of solidarity among allies was not alien to it. The first occasion arose almost immediately—on March 25, 1999, during the bombing of Serbia.

Polish Atlanticism performed well during this first test, but it became even more apparent at the time of the Iraq War, in the light of the Poles' determined involvement. In 2003, George Bush told President Kwaśniewski that his country was the United States' best friend in Europe. Poland assisted the Americans in the Iraq War by sending troops. It also signed the "letter of the eight," in which it supported a possible armed invasion of Iraq. The public continued to support this until the deaths of Polish soldiers.

Despite prior reassurances from the United States, Poland did not receive political or economic benefits in return for its participation and endurance in the Iraq War. The United States does not intend to abolish its visa requirements for Polish citizens (whereas the Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians and others have received a promise to this effect).

Polish foreign policy (especially, from 2006, under the government of Jarosław Kaczyński) underlined Poland's special relationship with the United States—a relationship complicated by European anti-Americanism. Kaczyński proved the nature of this special relationship when he agreed, without setting major conditions, to the deployment of parts of the U.S. missile defence system in southern Poland (Redzikowo).

Reflecting the frequent changes of government, the emphasis of Polish Atlanticism sometimes changes. This applies even to the new government, established in November 2007 under Donald Tusk's leadership.

Poland has no wish to draw a distinction between Atlantic and European factors in its security policy. Instead, it wishes to apply both sets of factors

together. For this reason, it seeks to reduce tensions in the Transatlantic relationship. Its participation in the expansion of the U.S. missile defence system reflects this as does its effort to link this with similar defence ideas raised by NATO.

The EU's "failures"—including, for instance, the unsuccessful attempt to establish an energy security pact—have encouraged Poland to adhere to its Atlanticist position.

As it assesses its security policy situation, Poland recognises that it has tasks as a NATO member in the eastern half of Europe. It is also aware that its position is important in such matters, and that it must promote democratic and free market values in this direction. Warsaw supports the cooperative initiatives that have formed in response to Russian neo-imperialism (GUAM: Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova). It backs Ukraine's Western aspirations and assists the opposition in Belarus as well as Georgian independence. In this way it has caused tensions in Polish–Russian relations, which have become "warlike" due to the possible deployment of the U.S. missile defence system.

Some Polish experts believe that, for the West, Poland's importance depends on the place that it can occupy in the East (in Europe), as well as the extent of its commitments there. Others believe the reverse: namely, that the extent of Poland's detachment from the eastern half of the continent depends on its embeddedness in the West. Still, in order to be able to offer assistance to its eastern neighbours, Poland needs the security umbrella of NATO, the United States and the EU.

The Development of Czech Atlanticism

At the start of the political transition (1990–1992), Czech(oslovak) foreign policy and diplomacy—in contrast to that of Poland—acted quickly and dynamically. The shapers of the country's foreign policy (President Václav Havel, the former dissident who had been raised to the country's highest post, and Foreign Minister Jiří Dienstbier, also a former opposition member) set about implementing an almost complete programme under the slogan "Back to Europe."

The initial period in the development of Czech Atlanticism dates to the end of 1989 and the early part of 1990. It was often emphasised at the time that the Czechs' policy of Atlanticism had traditions going back to the period of the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1939). In February 1990, President Havel was invited to the United States, where he delivered a speech to the two houses

of Congress. In the speech he underlined the United States' important role in the security of Europe. Havel's political personality was crucial to the development of Czech Atlanticism: From the outset, he forged particularly good relations with the U.S. government and presidents, and this had a significant effect on the quality of Czech policy towards the United States. (With some exaggeration, one may state that Havel was the embodiment of Czech Atlanticism. His Atlanticism characterised the foreign policy of the Czech presidential office until 2003, since he was president from late 1989 until March 2003—with the exception of a break of a few months.)

The Atlanticism of the Czech political elite was strengthened in 1993 when a new U.S. ambassador to the United Nations was appointed in the person of Madeleine Albright, who, because of her Czech roots, showed more than the usual level of interest in the post-communist democracies and made no secret of her attraction to the region. The positive aspects of this also had an effect on Poland and Hungary's chances of NATO membership. (Madam Albright served as an ambassador to the UN between 1993 and 1996, during the first Clinton administration and she was appointed the Secretary of State during the second term of the Clinton presidential years from 1996 to 2000.)

A pro-American stance became an element of Czech government policy after 1990; the Czechs recognised that the new European political structure could not be shaped without the active involvement of the United States. Moreover, they wished to preserve cordial and friendly relations, in the light of the United States' role as a world power. They hoped that the United States and the Western European structures would render the Central European region secure. With the collapse of the bipolar world and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, they initially believed that NATO should be disbanded. Within months, however, they had changed their minds.

The Czechs requested various types of assistance from the United States as they sought to dismantle or restructure Czechoslovakia's armaments industry (an intergovernmental joint committee was even established for this purpose), with a view to finding replacements for the old communist markets. Indeed, Foreign Minister Dienstbier even raised the possibility of a new Marshall Plan for the ex-communist countries of Eastern Europe. Following the attempted coup in Moscow in 1991, the Atlanticist orientation was given even greater emphasis; the Czechs often noted the stabilising role played by the United States in the Central European region. They also acted to strengthen intra-regional cooperation: They attempted to establish the joint representation of interests among the Visegrad countries, and they also formulated their demand that the country be permitted to join NATO.

After the division of Czechoslovakia, the 1993 government programme of the now independent Czech Republic (CSK) already referred to NATO membership as a security policy priority. All Czech governments have identified the integration process as a principal goal; they have developed the country's bilateral relations with those countries that could enhance this process. Included in this group was, of course, the United States. As far as the present international balance of power and the international system are concerned, the United States holds a key position; for this reason, it requires special attention.

For the governments of the Czech Republic—those of both the left and the right—NATO counted as the embodiment of the Transatlantic relationship with the United States. The right-wing Civic Democratic Party (ODS) led the governments that held power in the Czech Republic from mid-1992 until mid-1998. The party continually emphasised the importance of the U.S. presence in the Central European region, although some of its politicians (most notably Václav Klaus and Jan Zahradil) condemned NATO's intervention in Serbia at the time of the Kosovo crisis in 1999. The ODS's pro-Atlanticist foreign policy orientation has consistently determined the foreign policy strategies of both the party and governments led by the party. The same is also true of the smaller right-wing parties (the Christian Democrats, and various liberal and conservative parties hostile to Klaus), which have formulated—in even plainer terms than the ODS—the need for an American presence in Europe in order to preserve the balance of power.

The Social Democrats—who led the country from mid-1998 until the end of 2006— also have been supporters of the Atlanticist orientation of Czech security policy, although they have voiced their opposition to the stationing of foreign troops on Czech soil and have gradually switched to asserting the importance of European security.

Under the Klaus governments (1992–1996, 1996–1997) the most important factor was a strengthening of investment and trade relations with the United States. (In 1993, more than half of the foreign investment in the country was owned by American companies)

From 1993, the eight-year friendship between Havel and Clinton as heads of state left its mark on Czech Atlanticism. Bill Clinton (with Albright at this side) rewarded Prague: He often travelled there, and it was in the Czech capital that he announced the PfP. Because of the latter—which was regarded by Prague as a perpetual waiting room—Czech foreign policy-makers became

rather disappointed or even embittered, but they did not alter their pro-Atlanticist stance.

It was viewed as a success of Czech Atlanticist policy that, rather than collectively address the Visegrád Four, the invitation to NATO membership was made, in the end, on the basis of the individual performance of countries.

The manifest Atlanticist orientation of Czech foreign policy was strengthened by the fact that the Czech Republic was willing to participate, at NATO's side, in the Bosnian intervention and the Iraq War. Additional results of this were the United States' decision to transfer Radio Free Europe to Prague as well as its support for the Czech Republic's bid for OECD membership, which it received more quickly than anyone else (1995). In 1995–1996, leading politicians in the Klaus government considered their relations with the United States to be completely free of problems, since, unlike the other post-communist countries, the Czech Republic was stable.

Before the final stretch in the campaign for NATO membership, the Czech Republic exercised light pressure (by way of Albright) on the U.S. leadership with a view to preventing Russian protests against NATO expansion from discouraging the Americans and to stop them from creating a framework that would mean less than full NATO membership.

Between November 1997 and the summer of 1998, the Czech Republic experienced major political changes after a government crisis: first, a temporary right-wing government was formed; then—after parliamentary elections—the Social Democratic left took the reins of government. This meant a change of political course; in foreign policy, alongside the priority of NATO membership, greater emphasis was laid on EU membership as a foreign policy goal.

The first major dispute in Czech–U.S. relations was caused by Radio Free Europe's broadcasts to the East. The temporary government formed by Tošovský (which held office from November 1997 until June 1998) permitted broadcasts only to Iran, whereas Radio Free Europe also broadcast to Iraq— which increased the security risk to the Czech Republic and was also damaging to Czech–Iranian relations. The dispute ended with a "victory" for the United States.

In mid-1998, with the advent of Miloš Zeman's Social Democratic government, the Social Democrats renounced their earlier demand for a referendum on NATO membership. In its programme, the new government identified NATO membership (with full rights and privileges) as the main aim; for the Social Democrats, relations between the United States and the Czech Republic were also important, and so they pledged to work consistently for a

further improvement in the close and friendly relations between the two countries.

The 1999 accession of the Czech Republic to NATO was the most significant result of Czech foreign policy. Assessing this fact, President Havel indicated that NATO membership meant, among other things, that Czech–US relations had been raised to a new level. However, the Zeman government expressed on several occasions a rather unambiguous position on the United States, which was harmful to the U.S. view of Czech foreign policy.

The relationship between Czech foreign policy and the United States did not improve when, in the same year, flyovers and bombings against Afghanistan, Sudan and then Kosovo were on the agenda. The foreign policy manoeuvrings of its parliament and government damaged the Czech Republic's formerly good reputation in the United States. There was no clear support for NATO—a cause of disappointment to the organisation's politicians. At the beginning of the Bush presidency, the relationship deteriorated even further. The Czech Republic pressed for the adoption of a resolution in the UN stating that the United States was violating human rights in Cuba and condemning the economic sanctions imposed on Cuba. In response to this Czech foreign policy initiative, the United States threatened the audacious left-wing Czech foreign minister (Jan Kavan) that it would arrange for the Prague NATO summit—planned for November 2002—to be held elsewhere.

Thus, the foreign policy of the Social Democratic government caused tensions in the relationship between the Czech Republic and the United States. For this reason, the right wing of Czech politics often criticised the Zeman government, which just prior to its departure further provoked the United States by deciding to purchase Swedish Gripen aircraft instead of U.S. fighter planes. Wolfowitz condemned this deal for being superfluous; he referred to the negative effects on Czech–U.S. relations. The matter was not such a good foreign policy launch for the next Social Democratic government, the government of Vladimír Špidla (2002–2004). The new prime minister considered friendly and allied relations with the United States to be important; he also valued the opinion of President Havel.

Following the attacks on the United States of 11 September 2001, however, the Czech foreign policy leadership was ready to assist the United States "with all possible means." It regarded the attacks as having been committed against NATO as a whole and against each member state. Both the unfailingly pro-American Havel and the Social Democratic government were willing to allow the Americans to cross the country's airspace; furthermore, at

U.S. behest, 300 Czech soldiers were sent to Afghanistan to contribute to Operation Enduring Freedom.

The intervention in Iraq opened a further chapter in Czech Atlanticism. Once again the Czech Republic's foreign policy lost its bearings, becoming rather unsteady and unpredictable. The Czechs sought to realise two types of strategy: one directed at the United States and the other directed at the Germans and French. The Czech Republic, as a new member of NATO and with links with the United States, bore testimony to a contradictory approach: President Havel signed the "letter of the eight," thereby indicating a pro-American stance. However, Špidla and his government disagreed with this position; having disassociated themselves from Havel, they announced a divergent official position. The government understood the commencement of operations against Iraq, but it did not wish to become directly involved in them.

The intervention in Iraq divided the government coalition: The Social Democratic majority partner was opposed to it, while the Christian Democratic minority partner—to which Foreign Minister Cyril Svoboda belonged—asserted a pro-American position.

Shortly afterwards (from March 2003), Klaus, the new Czech president, formulated a position that ran contrary to that of his predecessor Havel. Consequently, it became even more difficult to understand and interpret Czech foreign policy. With his criticisms of the United States, Klaus set himself against his own party, the ODS, which usually took a pro-U.S. line.

Klaus publicly condemned the attack on Iraq, while citing Czech public opinion. From then onwards, the relationship between the United States and the new Czech president was poor. Thus, in foreign policy documents the Czech Republic was clearly a supporter of Transatlantic relations, but in practice it did not join the coalition against Iraq. (Acting in petty response to what it considered a petty Czech foreign policy, the United States informed the Czech Republic in late 2004 that it was reducing the amount of military assistance destined for the country by a hundred thousand dollars, because this was the amount owed by Czech diplomats in New York for illegal parking.)

The United States requested the Czech Republic to provide a chemical defence unit to contribute towards the military effort, but the Czech parliament refused to authorise this. (Instead, the Americans were sent a chemical defence and landmine unit by Slovakia, which sought NATO membership at the time.) That this contradictory and unpredictable policy had no graver consequences was because Havel's signature was present on the "letter of the eight," which,

as far as the United States was concerned, counted as the official Czech position.

The foreign policy of the next Social Democratic government, the Gross government (2004–2005), gave precedence to EU membership and EU factors. It emphasised the construction of a European and Euro-Atlanticist security system, explaining that the Czech government supported a consolidation of the partnership between the EU and the United States. Since the Czech Republic was now an EU member, the shaping and practical steps of Czech foreign policy received a new kind of framework. In the strategy, the hope was expressed that an enlarged EU would be an influential and effective partner for the United States, exerting a positive effect on efforts to resolve the world's problems. This government also judged the Transatlantic alliance to be of primary importance.

Thereafter, the visa affair became an important factor in Czech policy towards the United States. The Visegrád countries together attempted to persuade the U.S. government to change its policy on visas and include them in its Visa Waiver Program.

When Bush was elected as U.S. president for the second time, President Klaus greeted him, emphasising that a secure and reliable alliance was in the Czech Republic's interest, and so, even after its accession to the EU, he would support close and effective Transatlantic cooperation. (Klaus had a strong desire to be welcomed by Bush at the White House.)

The Social Democratic government that held office between 2005 and 2006 under Prime Minister Jiří Paroubek made no change to the direction and emphasis of foreign policy. On the other hand, it publicly revealed that it was negotiating with the United States about the possible deployment in the Czech Republic of a radar system that would form a part of the missile defence shield.

In the summer of 2006, following elections, the right-wing ODS returned to power. Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek took a firm Atlanticist position on the deployment of the radar system; he supported implementation, even if two thirds of Czechs were against the radar system.

Afterword

The comparative case study of the approaches to the content and the significance of Transatlantic relations in the Czech Republic and Poland in the larger part of the first decade of the second millennium highlights and explains general attitudes and specific manifestations of Atlanticism in these Central European countries. The perceptions, political attitudes and perspectives of

Transatlantic relations and the place of Central and Eastern European counties in this relationship have undergone some serious transformation in the political class, but also in public opinion in the CEE as well. It moved from firm belief and high hopes of mutual commitments to doubts and anxiety about the devaluation of Central and Eastern European allies in the American strategic calculations of the prices of Russian collaboration in global security matters.

Some observers familiar with the mood and opinion across the region already noticed the turn of the dominant Atlanticist stream into a minor current in various Central and Eastern European countries.[1] The causes and concerns underpinning this tendency only became stronger as significant events and initiatives in U.S.–Russian relations began to unfold in 2009.

In March 2009, there were signs of a clear shift in U.S. foreign policy on missile defence in Central Europe. The U.S. president sent a letter to the Russian prime minister indicating America's willingness to reconsider and possibly give up its plan to deploy components of a missile defence system in the Czech Republic and Poland in order to strike a deal on the new START treaty.[2] As the details of the letter emerged, the underlying attitude and the broader implications of the U.S. approach made it clear for even enthusiastic Central European Atlanticists that American priorities had been re-oriented with Central European concerns traded away for perceived benefits from Russia on a larger strategic scale. The sobering news of the letter seemed to confirm a strategic drift in the U.S.–CEE relationship: It was consigned to a lower level of importance and U.S. preferences would be given to bargains with Russia over allies on the eastern flank of NATO.[3]

An open letter in the Polish daily *Gazeta Wyborcza* on 16 July 2009 from known Central and Eastern European politicians, diplomats and intellectuals to the U.S. government was launched as public articulation of their anxieties and disappointments over the emerging trends in transatlantic relations in the context of the highly advertised U.S.–Russian "reset."[4] The letter

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[1] C. Gati, "Faded Romance: How Mitteleuropa Fell Out of Love with America," *The American Interest*, November/December 2008.

[2] A. Spillius, "U.S. offers Moscow a deal on missiles," *The Daily Telegraph*, 4 March 2009.

[3] H.C. Dale, A. Cohen, *The U.S. takes "new Europe" for granted at its own peril*, The Heritage Foundation, *Backgrounder* No. 2478, 21 October 2010, p. 9.

[4] V. Adamkus, *et al*., "An Open Letter to the Obama Administration from Central and Eastern Europe," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 16 July 2009, www.rferl.org/articleprintview/1778449.html.

unmistakably expressed the growing fears among the members of the political class in the CEE of potential neglect and marginalisation by their principal ally in favour of a renewed relationship with Russia.

It seems that the feelings of the political elite are increasingly shared by the broader public in these countries. The Russian decisions to suspend the participation in the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty in 2007,[5] the invasion of Georgia as well as the revival of military exercises along the borders of Poland and the Baltic states added to the sense of insecurity throughout the region. American foreign policy analysts called attention to recent opinion surveys in CEE countries that indicated a worrying tendency of decline in the popularity of NATO after the earlier widespread support for the organisation in the region. [6] As indicated by the results of the 2009 Transatlantic Trends poll conducted by the German Marshall Fund, NATO enjoys more support among the British (72%), Germans (63%) and the French (56%) than among Slovaks (52%) or Poles (50%).[7]
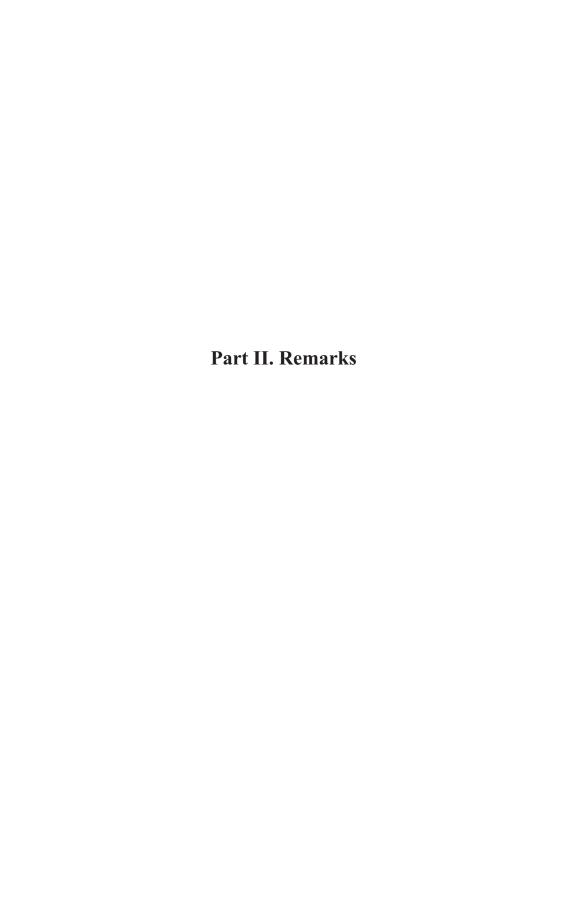
These indicative events, appeals and opinion polls stand in sharp contrast to previous attitudes and views prevalent in the region. The tendency may be reversed again but it requires more reassuring signals and coherent policy to restore the confidence of CEE countries in the equally important security of all members of the Transatlantic alliance.

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[5] *Russia: CFE 'Moratorium' Causes Consternation in Europe*, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 27 April 2007, www.rferl.org/content/article/1076139.html.

[6] H.C. Dale, A. Cohen, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

[7] *Transatlantic Trends 2009*, German Marshall Fund, http://209.200.80.89/trends/top linedata.html.

Part II. Remarks

Gábor Horváth

Perceptions of ESDP/CSDP in the Visegrad countries: Current and future EU-NATO relations

Editor's note: The following is an edited transcript of spoken remarks delivered by Brig. Gen. Horváth.

First of all, I would like to thank you for your kind invitation to deliver a speech on the perceptions of ESDP in the Visegrad Countries in the very dynamic context of the EU–NATO relationship.

Let me be precise from the outset: ESDP, the European Security and Defence Policy of the Union has become Common Security and Defence Policy with the changes introduced by the Lisbon Treaty. This new set of instruments might change the management of the security issues at the Union level, however, it will not change the security environment.

And this brings me to the idea of what I would like to speak about. My intent is to walk through, together with you, from a general security landscape to some concrete ideas on how the Visegrad countries—and those countries in the neighbourhood—can find areas of better and more meaningful cooperation in the field of security and defence. Context is important: All Visegrad countries, as well as most of their neighbours, are now Member States of the European Union and Allies within the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, or partners thereof. Hence, our thinking should be driven by the concept of equally satisfying the security needs of our respective countries and that of the Union and the Alliance.

So the question that I offer for deliberation is whether opportunities exist for the countries of the region in the current security environment to work together to deliver an added value.

As a temporary member of the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, I cannot be totally balanced when extending remarks about the issues of the EU–NATO relationship. Therefore, I apologize for two things in advance: for being rather EU-heavy in my short presentation and for speaking relatively more about military issues. I hope that the panel members would help me cover my weak spots.

First, I want to draw a short security landscape by speaking about the three major elements of the security debate today, which are the institutional changes within the European Union, the general thinking at NATO at the eve of the new Strategic Concept and the realities of today, namely the economic crisis and its effects on security and defence.

CSDP after Lisbon

With the Treaty of Lisbon, the European Union made a new step forward in consolidating the complex legal background of the institution. The road to the Lisbon Treaty was equally long and painful. Most key ESDP developments had taken place outside the structures of development of the EU Treaties: From the St. Malo summit in 1998 through Cologne, Helsinki, Nice, Laeken and the ill-fated Constitutional Treaty, many building blocks had been put together before the Lisbon Treaty's entry into force on 1 December last year.

All of the provisions in the Treaty of Lisbon are the result of long work and tortuous compromises between a perceived need for common action and a reluctance to transfer powers in this area. The defence area is one in which Member States have been most reluctant to pool sovereignty. The treaties are the barometers of what Member States are doing. They rarely, by themselves, generate new competences and powers but merely create and consolidate the legal framework for the competences and powers that already are being shared. This applies more to CSDP than many other areas.

With regard to the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR) and its supporting EEAS innovations, which are aimed at rationalizing the EU's institutional architecture, this is a compromise about how to generate coherence between the Community's powers in external actions and the intergovernmental CFSP/CSDP aspects. The HR is double-hatted as vice president of the European Commission and is supported by the European External Action Service (EEAS), which effectively overcomes the pillar structure and incorporates a role for Member State diplomats. One aim of the creation of the HR/VP is to increase consistency and coordination of the various EU-instruments with external implications.

In decision-making procedures, the essential intergovernmental nature of decision-making in relation to CFSP and CSDP was maintained. Member States were clearly unwilling to relinquish unanimity in this area. CSDP is still governed by specific decision-making procedures based on unanimity.

Speaking about the financing mechanism, the present system based on the "costs lie where they fall" rule was left essentially unchanged in the Treaty.

The exception is the start-up fund provided for in the Lisbon Treaty, based on Member State contributions, which might represent small progress. Although in principle its scope is limited to "preparatory activities" for CSDP missions, Member States could interpret this provision broadly and provide for that fund to cover a large share of common costs.

The European Defence Agency (EDA), created in July 2004, is now inserted within the legal framework of the CSDP, thereby seemingly reinforcing the leading role that the MS want to assign it in pushing forward the development of EU operational capabilities and the EU as a military actor on the international scene. Through the Capability Development Plan (CDP), adopted in 2008, EDA and MS have tried to find a structured way to match all desires, needs and requirements. This paved the ground for establishing a solid basis for structured and visible shortfall management within the EDA to contribute to improved capabilities.

The origins of Permanent Structured Cooperation in the field of Defence (PSCD) lie in the very different views of Member States on a common defence, on neutrality and on the relationship with NATO. The compromise between those who wanted to have the possibility of creating a hardened core of States that could go further in developing a common defence and those who wanted to ensure that any such structure would not jeopardize the existing commitments of NATO or their own neutrality led to the current treaty articles and protocol.

Much will depend on the way in which the specific criteria for participation will be eventually set and implemented, as their degree of inclusiveness will determine also the ultimate shape and scope of the whole scheme. In other words, a convincing balance will have to be struck between functional and political criteria, with a view to making PSCD an additional source of an impulse for matching effectiveness and efficiency, on the one hand, and inclusiveness and legitimacy on the other.

PSCD should not be confused with the existing treaty provisions on enhanced cooperation. Enhanced cooperation has been an available option since the Amsterdam Treaty but has never been used because of the risk of proliferation of initiatives that could trigger a fragmentation of existing and future common policies. Rather, enhanced cooperation has served more as a sort of institutional deterrent of last resort against political blockage, and it is therefore unlikely to be used in the field of CSDP.

Let me extend my remarks finally on the mutual defence clause and the solidarity clause, both promoting the principles on which the EU is based, that is to say the solidarity with and assistance to other Member States.

The mutual defence clause in the Lisbon Treaty—echoing the former Western European Union (WEU)—binds all Member States to provide aid and assistance "by all means in their power" in the event of another Member State becoming a victim of armed aggression, without prejudicing either neutrality or the relationship to NATO that some Member States may enjoy. Many questions are yet unanswered, and I can rather quote here (Hungarian) Foreign Minister Peter Balazs, who mentioned yesterday that we live in the interpretation period instead of an implementation one.

The solidarity clause represents a new legal mechanism of assistance between Member States when one of them is the victim of a terrorist attack or natural or man-made disaster. The EU will mobilize all the instruments at its disposal, including military resources made available by Member States, to assist. This is in addition to the new provision on civil protection.

NATO on the eve of the new Strategic Concept

NATO started to work on the new Strategic Concept at the Strasbourg-Kehl Summit in 2009. The development of the potentially new Strategic Concept is not a question of re-inventing but refining, to address (using the words of former U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright) the "toxic blend" of the threats we might face in the near future. She also said that the new strategic concept must be flexible enough to embrace those who want to be partners, but must also be hard enough to retain those wishing to counter the Alliance in the pursuit of its goals. With respect to the NATO–Russia relationship, it was spelled out that "the safe limits of enlargement have been reached," and the pressure for the enlargement perceived during the last decade will not remain a priority and will be replaced by other important issues.

The U.S. seeks partnership with Europe, because, and I quote again, "the relationship with Russia is an opportunity, the relationship with the EU is a given." In fact, the U.S. needs more cooperation from Europe. It should be understood that if Europeans want to be consulted, they have to contribute to security. During the work on a new NATO Strategic Concept, it is often spelled out that fighting ideological wars should be avoided, especially between NATO and the EU.

For NATO, the European territory is the principal concern, but new strategic areas also might be identified. Hence, the requirements for expeditionary forces remain and, therefore, deployable forces will be needed. I would like to underline also the idea that serious thinking must be given to the pooling of resources in the future. (I will come back to that later.)

We cannot forget about today's *disadvantageous economic situation* when trying to think about security issues. It is well known that 80% of the total defence expenditure of EU countries is composed of the top 10 EU Member States—and from the Visegrad countries only Poland can be found amongst these. There was at least a 2% decline in defence spending in Europe in 2008, compared to 2007. Collective Research and Development spending has been reduced by 9.4%, which has led to better EU-sponsored collaborative equipment purchases. Conversely, the rather less-than-significant defence investment in our region has been coupled with even more cuts—a deadly blend for the next decades.

The new threats and challenges

NATO thinkers believe that hybrid threats have emerged, and in order to understand them, a better definition is needed. Although the threats have not changed, their interaction has changed. For these thinkers, the most serious threat remains nuclear terrorism, and we have to be prepared for a better cohort of more sophisticated terrorists in the next generation.

Beyond the classical threats, the consequences of climate change and the threats to energy security also should be addressed. NATO also will need to address new threats such as the cyber threat and piracy.

In the energy sector, demand is going up and renewable sources are needed since oil and gas exploiters will be required to reach hard-to-get-to places (which might also require military planning). Pipelines are remarkably vulnerable, threatening energy security on the whole. Since Europe is a peninsula, important energy flow arrives by sea; however, recent piracy might distract our attention from the important threats related to overland energy flow.

Some words on the evolution of Petersberg-related tasks

The European Security Strategy Implementation Report dated 10 December 2008 identified a range of new threats and challenges the European Union will face in the future.

The ESS Implementation Report identifies some new threats and challenges. Cyber security, energy security and climate change were introduced as new threats. These new threats are closer to Homeland Security issues and are already addressed by other bodies outside the CSDP institutions and/or existing scenarios. In the crisis-management domain, climate change is, for example, covered by the Humanitarian Assistance scenario. Maritime-centric operations could be the only one to offer some added value to the existing illustrative scenarios by introducing a new approach, though securing lines of communication, which includes securing the common energy supply.

In December 2008, the European Council also agreed on a "Declaration on the reinforcement of capabilities." This declaration contains significant elements in terms of the level of ambition, including the civil-military dimension, of EU operations and capability development. The declaration on the reinforcement of capabilities also contains significant elements in terms of the level of ambition. The declaration sets numerical and precise targets to enable the EU in the coming years to conduct simultaneously and outside its territory a series of civilian missions and military operations of varying scope, corresponding to the most likely scenarios.

Some interim conclusions: it would be very beneficial if the V4 and the neighbourhood countries develop a common approach to how to mitigate some of the major global or horizontal risks listed above. This is, admittedly a very political issue and, therefore I would like to be rather prudent on formulating proposals—these are, rather, ideas.

One undeniably common risk is the energy security issue and although it is highly unlikely that this area will ever need an approach that requires a recourse to security or defence instruments it might not be a wasted effort to harmonise the related policies.

A less tangible but omnipresent threat is the cyber security of our nations. This area has gained remarkably focused attention in recent years (especially overseas), but the answers to the related challenges seem rather dispersed and incomprehensive. A better focus and a more cohesive approach is necessary since there are players in the world who employ hundreds of thousands of experts to develop exploitation and offensive tactics against our government and corporate networks even as we talk.

Not least, but temporarily ending this incomplete list, are threats related to terrorism and organised crime. Terrorism is in the focus of our Alliance activities, but organised crime poisons the very values of our Union. More active and preventive actions should characterize our future if we want to prevail in the long term—again, it is a wasteland that offers enormous potential to cooperate.

Opportunities

It has to be admitted that NATO has been (and is) conducting high-profile, high-intensity Peace Support Operations which are truly joint and muster all the capabilities that we own at the common and national levels. At a military level, the EU has conducted mainly surgical operations of short duration in rather permissive (well, at least non-hostile) environments. On the other hand, many EU civilian missions have been conducted for long durations, although

at a relatively low-cost and, consequently, low profile. Such a separate civilian mission has not been launched by NATO to date.

Some keep asking why the EU needs military crisis-management capabilities. The answer to me is rather more political than strategic. There are still spots on the globe where NATO is not welcome, due to heavy U.S. participation. These are places where the EU can and, in my opinion, must deliver a credible security solution.

It appears that the two organisations have failed so far to act together in a theatre in a way that would show the value of their complementary strengths. *De facto* EU missions and NATO operations co-exist and cooperate. However, sometimes the appropriate legal coverage is missing and that makes the cooperation rather ad hoc instead of well-framed in the political mainstream —and our opponents know that very well.

In the long run, and especially on the EU military side, we do everything to avoid duplication. However, and by definition, we have to complete all related works to ensure the autonomy of the implementation of the CSDP. This is to be done on a complementary basis and not on parallel, duplicate or even competing ways.

Turning back to our core question: What opportunities can V4 countries and their neighbours offer in the field of participation in Peace Support operations?

Truly, I believe that CSDP might offer more to us—at least at the moment—than NATO does. In the NATO structure, the Visegrad countries' armed forces have been split to an extent—the northern part belongs to a different Joint Force Command than does the southern part. Therefore, the links to multinational commands and formations also are split irreversibly. The only exception should be participation in the NATO Response Force, but many discussion are yet to be done to explore ways to better coordinate our efforts in this endeavour.

On the CSDP side, the EU Battlegroups may offer a unique opportunity to strengthen some regional military cooperation; and, as I understand the current state of play, we are well on the way to making use of this opportunity. As I believe that this will be a topic for further discussions today, I might stop here.

Military and civilian capability development

Turning to military and civilian capability development, and remaining with the EU–NATO relationship, while the work should continue on solving the high-level political issues that have impeded the effective and mutually beneficial development and implementation of the EU–NATO strategic partnership

in crisis management, there are measures that would allow a concrete and pragmatic reinforcement of EU–NATO relations in the field of capability development. From this perspective, there is plenty of room for improvement and the potential for increased efficiency and transparency between the distinctly different CSDP Capability Development and NATO Defence Planning processes. The key issue is that both organisations establish requirements and shortfalls in the same way so that MS can use the results for their own prioritisation and allocation of resources.

The importance of national internal coordination has been identified as being of utmost importance, and an elementary step to take if real coordination between the organisations is to be achieved. The international staffs are primarily a tool through which nations (MS) can achieve collectively agreed upon objectives.

On Specialization: Combat forces and force multipliers

Many speak about the limited budgets and constraints of the armed forces when trying to modernize themselves. It may be a little harsh, but personally I think that we have to definitely give up the idea that our countries in Central and Eastern Europe will ever be able to develop a nominally full-scale capable armed forces at a national level. Each of us has to make choices about what capabilities to develop, what capabilities to leave at a dormant stage (that is, to be frank, to condemn them to die slowly) and what capabilities to abandon. This, logically might lead us to the idea of specialization, which is in the core of the proposals coming either from NATO or from the European Union.

The specialization is widely considered functional, although there also are other ideas. Some believe that countries may not specialize in a particular military or civilian function, but instead may chose to specialize in a separate part of the crisis-management cycle. One example may be if a country takes up some peculiar nation-building tasks such as security sector reform, to include the training of local military and law enforcement forces while other partners or allies are conducting combat operations. These ideas, however, still need to mature.

Turning back to functional specialization, there is of course an important caveat: Specialization is only possible if the mutual trust reaches such a level that it is guaranteed the missing capability is always available through an appropriate mechanism.

Earlier, I mentioned that one of the EU's advantages is its ability to act in areas where NATO is politically unwelcome. This advantage could be fully exploited if EU Member States, regardless of whether they are NATO members,

are capable of mustering adequate and modern combat forces. Therefore, to specialise only for supporting roles might not be a good idea in the long run.

Specialization has been an idea rather extended to combat support and combat service support so far, but I think that even combat forces might be specialized. Beyond the combat forces there also might be a need for specialization in force multipliers. Since these areas are very sensitive, the specialization might be restricted to those assets and capabilities that are intended to be used in common expeditionary missions.

Sharing and pooling capabilities: strategic enablers

Even if the best and most logical specialization efforts are made, there will remain capabilities that are simply too expensive to develop by any of our nations alone. Therefore, there might be a need for a more purposeful pooling and sharing of our existing or planned assets in the future.

It appears that the most promising areas for pooling are those related to the strategic enablers. NATO's Strategic Airlift Capability has created good conditions to start with, but it also is offered for consideration that the SAC MOU makes a provision for the later inclusion of other aircraft types into the Heavy Airlift Wing, particularly for tasking that does not necessarily require the range or outsized capability of the C-17.

Intra-theatre airlift capacity also appears to be a critical shortfall in expeditionary operations. The helicopter initiative launched and supported equally by NATO and the EU perhaps might be extended in the future for short-range tactical air transporters. Pooling and sharing these assets might save resources and, thus, might contribute to easing the burden of maintaining such a capability in the defence budgets. We would not be alone with this kind of cooperation—the incoming A400M fleet for the Benelux states is believed to be maintained on a shared and pooled model.

And, logically, some additional enabling functions might also be considered as possible areas for pooling, like the specific assets for RSOI (Receiving, Staging and Onward Movement and Integration) or air-to-air refuelling capability.

Logistics and medical areas also are full of potential. What is important in these models is the added value in the long term without compromising the legitimate right of Member States to sovereign decision-making in the participation of a common operation, under NATO, EU, UN or coalition umbrella.

Speaking of other opportunities, I also can see some other opportunities for the V4 and surrounding countries, provided Permanent Structured Cooperation is launched and our countries fulfil the criteria and decide to join. The Permanent Structured Cooperation may also permit MS to frame ad hoc cooperation in new areas such as training and logistics with some interested MS whenever a qualified majority of MS would allow others to do it.

After having discussed the security landscape, the threats, challenges and ambitions and contemplating the current and emerging opportunities let me offer some ideas for conclusion.

First, although it is already obvious, the Visegrad countries and most of their neighbours should remain fully committed to creating better and more meaningful EU–NATO cooperation in the field of security, and, perhaps later, extend it also to defence.

The coherence in Member State NATO and EU commitments should not remain at the level of declarations. Since the defence budgets in our region are relatively small and likely to remain so, there will be little room for manoeuvre in the short and medium terms. This might direct our thinking about exploring new ways of securing the necessary military and civilian capabilities: specialisation and sharing and pooling capabilities appears to be the only ways to meaningfully comply with our Allied responsibilities and support the European efforts to extend a sphere of security beyond the European homeland.

Second, we might start to think about how to make more value of the comprehensive approach to crisis management at the governmental level, and share our lessons and experiences with each other. Many examples from the recent past show that there is a tremendous need for civil–military capabilities and dual-use technologies. The transformation may not remain only a matter for our armed services, as has been the case for years.

Third and last, we may give up our attitude of waiting for other partners to find solutions to resolve security concerns that are ours then only later join the mainstream. A more proactive approach might be needed in both Brussels' meeting rooms and elsewhere in the region. We have to acknowledge that in spite of our relatively light weight as international partners, on the Grand Chessboard, we definitely belong to the part of the world that is called upon and considered to be a security provider.

Vladimír Tarasovič

The possibilities for cooperation of the Visegrad countries and their Eastern Neighbours in the development of security and defence policy in the EU and beyond: the Slovakian perspective

More than 20 military and civilian operations under EU management since 2003 demonstrate the accelerating progress of ESDP in the last decade. The launch of the development of EU Battle Groups (EU BG) six years ago and the recent financial crisis with its serious consequences for national defence budgets across the Transatlantic area compel us to discuss not only the acquired experience, but also the possible ways of future development of security and defence in Central Europe.

These remarks are going to focus on a Slovakian assessment of the EU Battle Group experience from two cases of participation in these multinational formations: the Czech Republic in the second half of 2009 as one of the instances as well as the involvement of Slovakia in the combination of forces with Poland, Germany, Lithuania and Latvia. In light of those lessons, the perspectives for a possible Visegrad EU BG or a Visegrad+ EU BG will be considered.

EU BGs represent the EU response force meant to be deployed in crisis-management operations with the aim of "sharing responsibility for global security." The EU Battle Groups project, which was adopted in June 2004, is very ambitious. It should focus the EU instruments that can be mobilised with modern military capabilities to act as a global player.

In the introduction, I would like to point out that Slovakia has accepted the Battle Groups project but has not fully identified itself completely with that idea. At the government level, the Transatlantic-oriented government before 2006 promoted the concepts of "NATO first" and "one country with one package of armed forces." It is very difficult to say what the government after 2006 has promoted.

There also is no unified opinion on this project in the Slovakian security community. The Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs has organized the Slovak Strategic Forum, which is focused mostly on a discussion about the ESDP since 2006. It follows from those discussions that Slovak experts concur

that an increase in EU ambitions is legitimate. However, one important restriction is the political will in the fulfilment of ambitions and engagement of civilian and military capabilities. At the same time, a question arises as to whether the EU BGs are able to carry out all tasks because, from a military point of view, their size and structure do not correspond to the declared ambitions of the Union. The battalion-sized groups are appropriate, rather, for responses to crises and conflicts of lower intensity, there remain various national restrictions and there also are other difficulties, for example, in the area of strategic transport.

The experts suppose that one of the weakest points of this concept at a political level may be, for example, the possibility for paralysis of the engagement of BGs by some states in case EU Member States cannot find the common will to act. This was illustrated by the example of the different views of the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic on engagement in Kosovo—these two countries formed the common BG in the second half of 2009.

Critics of the EU BG concept refer to the project only as the result of a successful lobbying process by some EU members for a progressive attenuation of the "NATO first" concept, which the security of the whole Euro-Atlantic space is based on.

The Visegrad Battlegroup initiative

All Visegrad countries went, or are going through, a test of the EU BG project. Hungary was the first from the V4 group to participate in a BG, with Italy and Slovenia in 2007. Two countries, Czech Republic and Poland, will have experience from their roles as BG Lead Nations as will Slovakia, which was a member of two BGs, with the Czech Republic in the second half of 2009 and with Poland, Germany, Lithuania and Latvia in the first half of 2010.

Slovakia has had the first real positive experiences, but also negative ones as well. What we can see as positive:

− first, the experience is a political signal to the public about the tasks of the EU in the area of security and defence;

− second, Slovakia gained invaluable international experience;

− third, to be prepared for the BG tasks within the perimeter of 6,000 km, a country needs to have well-prepared and sufficiently-equipped troops, which means it must have a real tool for the modernization of technical equipment and an upgrade of professional and language skills; and,

– last, it is attractive for small countries to be connected to the BG but with flexibility in its contribution (a minimal contribution guarantees the national flag on the pylon).

However, some negative elements have appeared that could bring about many problems in case the BG is deployed. One of the most serious problems experts have defined is probably the prolonged and administratively difficult decision-making processes, from preparing the EU BG to its potential deployment, which demand the preparation of many documents at all levels. This, and we still think of it as being the deployment of a rapid reaction force within the span of a few days after the start of a crisis.

The next problems are vague certification and training regulations, which are supervised only by a participating country and not by an impartial certification body. That could lead to possible credibility gaps between contributing countries in the case of deployment, though that can be verified only by a real activity. Because we have not adopted a Lessons Learned process, it has not been confirmed whether the political ambitions of this project are achievable.

Furthermore, it is necessary to include problems classic to Europe: strategic airlift, logistical support and reduced military budgets, not to mention all those smaller members of EU and NATO that should or, at least, wish to participate in the National Response Framework concept. In addition, more problems arise, such as the aim adopted at the EU level to have an unambiguous mandate for EU BG deployments in accordance with the European Security Strategy. What if it is not possible to ensure that mandate? What if it were necessary to act more quickly than time allows for a slow-to-act UN to authorise a mandate?

Of course, several of our own faults were encountered while preparing and planning Slovak contributions to both BGs. For instance, faults connected with the previously mentioned excessive bureaucracy, unsystematic communication with potential partners, unsatisfactory legislative action, poor identification of capable personnel, the lack of set priorities, poor financing, outdated equipment and equipment approaching the end of its life span and a great number of national restrictions. I could carry on to name and analyse those imperfections and mistakes, but if we want to create a common Visegrad EU BG or a Visegrad+ (the V4 countries and other potential partners joining) EU BG in the future, we must analyse all those problems in advance, prior to the start of fulfilling the ambitious expectations of politicians.

At the meeting of defence ministers of the Visegrad Group in Budapest in October 2009, the ministers expressed their interest in the establishment of a common Visegrad BG in the future. From my point of view, it is a tangible and real goal in practical terms as well. After all, military cooperation has been part of the Visegrad cooperation since its foundation. Besides, each one of the Visegrad countries has had enough experience from mutual cooperation. In Slovakia's case, that experience includes the Slovak–Czech–Polish multinational brigade 10 years ago, the Czech–Slovak battalion in Kosovo, the Czech–Slovak EU BG in 2009, the Polish–German–Slovak–Latvian–Lithuanian EU BG in 2010 and the Slovak–Hungarian cooperation in the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) in Cyprus.

Probably the best example of the useful cooperation in this region is the project "TISZA." It refers to the multinational battalion of engineers, which was founded by the agreement of the governments of Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine in January 2002. Its principal roles are to help local citizens and to participate in catastrophic damage reduction in the Tisza River basin.

This battalion is composed of a multinational HQ and modules of national troops. There are up to 800 troops in the battalion, so it means that the national contribution is up to 200 troops. This project could be a good model for the potential Visegrad BG or Visegrad+ EU BG as well.

In conclusion, Slovakia has accepted the common Visegrad BG project, but our experience from EU BGs in 2009 and 2010 as well as our current financial capabilities—Slovakia mainly supports ISAF—implies that it will not be able participate in this project before 2015.

Arunas Molis

A Baltic approach to security and defence issues
in the context of NATO and the EU after Lisbon

For a long time "the European choice" in security and defence affairs was not an option for the Baltic states. In fact they shared the assessment of a previous report by the Finnish Institute for International Affairs that concluded that "for now, any military EU security guarantees are largely theoretical." In other words, the Baltic states welcomed the strengthening of EU solidarity, but they did not believe in the relevance of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) as an instrument to bolster their security. Due to their historical experience dealing with a large neighbour to the east, the Baltic countries traditionally trusted and relied on Article 5 of the Washington Treaty.

Today, the relations between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and Moscow remain generally calm. Russia has urged NATO to reconsider the contingency plan of the Alliance to defend the three Baltic member nations against military attack and has demanded the inclusion of the Baltic States into the Russian controlled "security sector" within the envisaged joint (together with NATO) European missile defence system. To illustrate the perceived need for real security guarantees, examples cited include constant violations of Baltic states' airspace, cyberattacks, the manipulation of Russian minorities on Baltic soil and energy blackmail. In this context, NATO (and the U.S. in particular) was, and still is, considered to be the institution with the effective instruments to containing Moscow and keeping it from intervening. Some other factors keeping the three Baltic countries from converting the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) into an efficient instrument in their foreign or security policies are no less important:

− *For quite a long time, ESDP was perceived as an "imposed" choice on the Baltic states*; in other words, they were not the ones who initiated the ESDP project or the ones who were very much interested in its progress;

− *The EU was not fully prepared to act independently in all high intensity operations*; this was determined by not only the drawbacks in the implementation of operations but also in the control over their planning, command, and supervision;

− *The geography of EU involvements did not fully correspond to the interests of Baltic states;* three Baltic countries are not able to compete with

Mediterranean EU Member States who are more interested in the southern (instead of eastern) dimension of the Union; and

– ***EU external policy was too heavily dependent on Russia's interests***;[1] in other words, some large EU Member States take into consideration Russian regional or even global interests as a condition for their approval of common EU foreign policy positions despite the clearly undemocratic actions of Russia regarding Ukraine, South Caucasus and the Baltic States.

Nevertheless, circumstances, seemingly permanent and dominant, can change sometimes with stunning rapidity. Baltic states today notice that NATO as an organization has changed in the last 10–15 years considerably. On the one hand, the Alliance took the fears of the Baltic States into account: NATO committed to the development of defence plans for the Baltic countries in 2010 and organized the first extensive military exercise in the region. The Lithuanian proposal to create a national Energy Security Centre that could become a Centre for Excellence of NATO received very positive response as well.

However, welcome or not, NATO today is more of an international crisis manager than the defensive alliance the Baltic States very much wanted to join. Therefore, sceptical conclusions about the research of NATO's commitment to defend Estonia in the case of military aggression are taken very seriously in the Baltic region. Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia asked for a broadening of the understanding of "armed attack" in the forthcoming new strategic concept of the North Atlantic alliance. They wanted the allies to agree and to fix in place the new, broader interpretation of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. This is not because a closer look at the text of those provisions give grounds to believe that NATO would not automatically come to the defence of a member under "armed attack," but because the "armed attack" referred to in Article 5 isn't clear about a wide range of actions to which the three Baltic states already have been subjected. However, it is clear that even after the adoption of the new NATO strategic concept, the Baltic countries will have to press on with their efforts to earn more recognition for cyberterrorism, informational warfare, energy blockades and similar risks as not only "Baltic" problems but as common challenges to NATO.

As a consequence, while remaining highly interested in the effectiveness of NATO, the Baltic states do not intend to avoid or stay away from the CSDP

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[1] As a vivid example, after the Baltic States and Poland suggested that the border-monitoring mission in Georgia should be taken over from the OSCE, other countries rejected the suggestion due to the possibly negative attitude of Russia to this initiative. Latvia experienced a similar reaction to its suggestion regarding EU involvement in the Transnistrian conflict.

development any longer. The declared EU principle that the best conflict resolution mechanism is the establishment of an efficiently operating democratic state appeared to be quite successful and, therefore, attractive to the Baltic countries.[2] The Lisbon Treaty only strengthens this impression. In other words, despite being "in the process of interpretation," the Lisbon Treaty increased the trust of Baltic states in the EU as a means to address the most relevant risks to their security. There are several reasons for that.

First of all, the Baltic states favour the major changes contained in the Lisbon Treaty with respect to common security and defence policy: the extension of the scope of the so-called "Petersberg tasks" (conceivable EU missions) and the introduction of a collective defence obligation that binds all member states to the provision of aid and assistance "by all means in their power" in the event of another Member State becoming a victim of armed aggression.

Second, the Baltic states hope that the EU will link CSDP priorities and undertakings with the external dimension of the common EU energy policy. If so, risks related to Gazprom's monopoly position and resistance to market liberalization (hindering the full application of EU gas-market reform directives) could be effectively mitigated.

Third, a very important innovation for the Baltic states is the so-called "Permanent Structured Cooperation," which foresees the possibility for willing-and-able EU Member States to deepen their collaboration. This may allow a more flexible and more effective development of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in the future. The same applies to the so-called "enhanced cooperation" clause, on the basis of which the Council may entrust a group of Member States to protect the values of the European Union.

Another essential reason for why the Baltic States could support the development of CSDP is their wish "to be at the tables where the decisions are made." In this context, it seems that the decision-making place could shift from the North Atlantic Council to the Foreign Affairs Council of the EU and its External Action Service, which will be installed in the near future. Besides that, modifications introduced by the Lisbon Treaty concentrate more power in the hands of the European Commission rather than in those of the Council. This circumstance is beneficial for the Baltic states since the EU Council is dominated by larger and more powerful EU Member States. A few years ago, the Baltic countries suspected France and Germany were forming a kind of EU "avant-garde" in the area of security and defence that later could be

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[2] "Conflict resolution in South Caucasus: The EU's role," *Europe Report* No. 17, 20 March 2006, www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/europe/caucasus/173_conflict_resolution_south _caucasus.pdf.

transformed into an organization to compete with NATO. They criticized the so-called EU "core group," which held periodic informal meetings to discuss security issues without Central and Eastern European EU members. Now all these subjects are settled in the Treaty, and it is up to the Baltic diplomats to negotiate favourable conditions for joining permanent or enhanced cooperation agreements and to streamline the creation of real European collective security commitments.

Certainly, the fear that some, more powerful EU Member States could move towards the two-speed CSDP is not completely gone. Therefore, while supporting the idea of "one voice speaking for Europe," the Baltic states are no less concerned about what this "common voice" will say. Another concern regarding the development of CSDP relates to the capacities of European crises-management structures, which despite the ongoing transformation in many cases remain conscript-based, inflexible, unprepared and complicated to deploy. Nevertheless, the Baltic countries continue to think that the opportunity to develop a European response to the most relevant risks and implement a truly strategic approach towards defence cooperation and partnership has not been missed. Economic crises once again bring reminders that cooperation that takes such forms as the creation of joint units, specialization as well as joint armament and procurement programmes may be the only solution in pursuit of the real mitigation of threats.

With a view to streamlining the "European voice," the Baltic States are, first of all, interested in cooperation with other small EU Member States (or a grouping of these countries). Along with Nordic countries, possible allies in this regard could be the Visegrad states. Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia have similar interests, experience and fears as the Baltic states, which at the same time differ from those of the larger and more distant EU Member States. Both the Baltic and Visegrad regions suffered a series of invasions by foreign powers and a number of unsuccessful attempts to regain national independence. After their NATO and EU accession, their security situation improved, but "holes" in the security "umbrella" remained. What is also noticeable is that the governments of Baltic and Visegrad countries lean towards the American approach, stating that CSDP should not replace NATO while at the same time being very keen to increase the role of Europe in the world. Therefore, if Baltic and Visegrad countries were to manage to make compromises, they may succeed at initiating or supporting certain policy formations in the area of the CSDP. In its absence, at least they could oppose those policy proposals that may put them in a disadvantageous position. However, to achieve this goal, aspiration and desire alone are not enough—a clear strategy of and commitment to cooperation will be required.

Mykhailo Samus

The new Ukrainian security and defence vision: between NATO and Russia

An "out-of-blocs" perception

After the last presidential election in 2010, Ukrainian security and defence policy started to change in a significant way. Previous proclamations about the strong aspiration to join NATO were not repeated or confirmed. Instead of the Euro–Atlantic integration priority, the new presidential team declared a "neutrality" or an "out-of-blocs" (non-aligned) position.

In general, President Victor Yanukovich stated that the so-called "out-of-blocs" policy is the most adequate and real answer for the current geopolitical situation around Ukraine. In line with this concept, Yanukovich prefers to build the defence and security system of Ukraine on the principle of a "sufficient defence" that will determine the real level of modernization and development in the armed forces of the country.

On the basis of this idea, Yanukovich proposes that Ukraine should develop its own concept of a new European security system, taking into account the interests of all European members of political blocs as well as those of neutral states. Also, he referred to the possibility to organize an OSCE summit to discuss this new European security architecture. It is clear that this idea was very close to the proposal of Russian President Dmitry Medvedev concerning a new European security system "from Vancouver to Vladivostok."

As for relations with NATO, Yanukovich suggested keeping the same level of cooperation, but the main goal of the new Ukraine–NATO relationship will remain just cooperation, not membership. Furthermore, Yanukovich said Ukraine needs to plan relations with NATO from short-term to middle-term programmes. This means that Yanukovich could propose a change in the current method of Annual National Programmes for some less obligatory roadmap.

As for EU–Ukrainian relations, Yanukovich said several times that European integration continues to be a key priority for his team and for Ukraine. He identified the process of rapprochement with the EU as part of the strategy for reforms in Ukraine. For the moment, the president defined the main goal in

EU–Ukraine relations to be the elaboration of an association agreement for the creation of free-trade and visa-free travel regimes with the EU.

For now, I can say Ukrainian foreign and security policy is rather naďve or simplified. After more than 1,000 years of trying to be "out-of-blocs," Ukraine should strongly understand that it is not possible. Geopolitically, Ukraine needs to be on one side or the other, otherwise Ukrainian territory will be the ideal theatre for political, economic, diplomatic or informational conflicts. I would not like to speak about military conflicts. Nevertheless, the case of Georgia gave us a real understanding of the potential escalation of conflict situations in post-Soviet territory.

Theoretically, in order to be "neutral," Ukraine needs to change its military doctrine and strategic concept of building and using the national armed forces. Previously, the Ukrainian armed forces were developed especially for the requirements of cooperation with, and ultimately membership in NATO. It means that the armed forces of the country were prepared to be part of a collective security and defence system that could guarantee common defence and security.

A "neutral" state has to guarantee its own defence and security itself. It means that the Ukrainian armed forces need to have strategic intelligence with reconnaissance satellites, early warning radars, a strong aerial defence, substrategic and high-precision weapons systems and a modern air force, army and navy. If we take into consideration the real situation of the Ukrainian armed forces we will see that these capabilities belong absolutely to the world of fantasy. Our Centre for Army, Conversion and Disarmament Studies made just very initial research and assessments into this scenario and found that even to build very basic elements of the national armed forces for "all-round defence," Ukraine would need to invest from \$45 billion to \$65 billion for the next seven to ten years. This is an entirely impossible figure if we remember the consequences of the economic crisis and that the real annual defence budget of Ukraine is around \$1.5 billion.

The Lisbon moment of truth for Ukraine

The NATO summit in Lisbon demonstrated how Western countries would perceive a "non-aligned" or "out-of-blocs" Ukraine. It seems that the West clearly understood and accepted that it is much easier to negotiate directly with Russia. I can say, convergence between Russia and NATO began quite unexpectedly. Although during 2010 some sources in the Kremlin gave pretty fuzzy comments about the possibility of a change in Medvedev's strategy

towards NATO, it was still surprising to see it in reality. At the Lisbon Summit, NATO and Russia took a decisive step forward. Despite the remaining fundamental differences in issues related to Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, progress in other areas has become obvious.

First, the NATO Summit gave a start to the reformulation process of the NATO–Russia Council (NRC). This structure is going to become a platform for the further harmonization and coordination of joint actions in all fields. "We all agree that the NRC member states can benefit from visionary and transparent policies aiming at strengthening security and stability in the Euro–Atlantic area, including through existing institutions and instruments," according to the Russia and NATO joint statement after the NRC meeting. Particular interest here was given to the phrase "through existing institutions and instruments"—a direct allusion to the idea of Medvedev's new security architecture in Europe, or rather the refusal of it. Although it is difficult to assume that Russia really has abandoned the idea of a new "European security architecture," which is Medvedev's "trump card" in the international arena, the fact that Russia can accept the notion to forget about it in its joint statement with NATO is quite telling.

Among the results of the NRC meeting should be mentioned the signing of the first ever Joint Review of 21st Century Common Security Challenges and the declared intentions to enhance cooperation in Afghanistan, such as expanding the transit of non-lethal freight to Afghanistan through Russian territory, intensifying efforts to train Afghan law-enforcement to combat drug trafficking.

But the most significant and important moment was the breakthrough in relations between Russia and NATO on missile defence. If we remember that Moscow only recently considered U.S. missile defence deployment in Central Europe to be a direct threat to Russia, NATO's invitation for Russia to participate in the collective missile defence system looked rather like a quite radical change. "We agreed on a joint ballistic missile threat assessment and to continue dialogue in this area. The NRC also will resume Theatre Missile Defence Cooperation. We have tasked the NRC to develop a comprehensive Joint Analysis of the future framework for missile defence cooperation. The progress of this Analysis will be assessed at the June 2011 meeting of NRC Defence Ministers," stated the text of the joint statement of the NRC following the Lisbon Summit.

However, there still are a number of questions about further cooperation between Moscow and Brussels to create a joint missile-defence umbrella. The two sides have not even found the same name for a future, joint missile-

defence system, yet. Medvedev was speaking about "Euro Missile Defence," and in official documents of the Alliance, it is called "NATO Missile Defence."

It is absolutely clear that Moscow is looking for an equal partnership, not a takeover of the Russian system. It was made unambiguous when the Russian president expressed his position on the issue: "Europeans themselves have not fully understood how it might look, this Euro Missile Defence system. However we can participate in the system only as a partner. No other possibilities. [We] fully participate, share information, responsibility for solving certain problems, or we do not participate at all. But if we do not participate at all, for obvious reasons we are going to defend ourselves."

A Russian diplomatic source reportedly said that currently they are not talking about integration or the joint operation of the missile-defence systems of Russia and NATO. The two sides generally discussed how to create a common security perimeter of missile and air defences. Under this concept, Moscow could agree to shoot down missiles that may approach Europe through Russia or through the sector of Russian responsibility. Similarly, NATO will have to commit to the defence of Russia in their sectors that may overlap and extend beyond national borders. At this stage it will be the most efficient way to use existing missile and air defence systems. In addition, both Russia and NATO can be confident that they do not threaten each other, which is a situation still feared by Moscow.

This friendly event in Lisbon looked quite unusual without Ukraine. Over the last decade, Ukraine always has been an active subject in European security processes. This time, everything was different. Russia and NATO began to converge, but Ukraine disappeared from the scene. From the geopolitical point of view, it is absolutely clear that after turning to an "out-of-blocs" position Ukraine finally became just an object of European policy in which great neighbours will decide its fate. In other words, NATO and Russia will agree on everything with each other and Ukraine will simply be notified about the decisions. What is the most interesting aspect is that Ukraine voluntarily accepted this status by declaring itself "out-of-blocs." European states also helped push Ukraine to the geopolitical roadside. Initially, it was during the Bucharest NATO Summit in 2008 when Ukraine was refused preparation for NATO membership. Then, the usual talks followed about the inadmissibility of the existence of "spheres of influence" in Europe.

What we have got as a result? The old Russian dream about returning former Soviet Union space under its full control, it seems, is becoming

a reality. During his visit to Moscow on the eve of the Lisbon Summit, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen raised the possibility of Ukrainian participation in the collective missile defence system: "I talked about cooperation with Russia, but it seems to me that this invitation should be open to our Euro–Atlantic partners. The invitation will also be open to Ukraine if Ukraine wishes. We do not exclude that possibility." But these words, spoken at a Moscow press conference, just emphasized the "secondary" nature of Ukraine's position. It looked like NATO and Russia would decide everything themselves, and Ukraine, if it wished, would be able to participate in this case under certain conditions. These conditions are already known. Given that the United States has repeatedly stated that it will not include out-of-blocs countries in the national missile-defence system, there is only one option: Ukraine will have to return their early warning radars in Sevastopol and Mukachevo to the Russian missile-defence system. Only together with Russia, can Ukraine pretend to participate in the global missile-defence system.

Actually, Ukrainian officials recently confirmed this scenario. When Rayisa Bogatyriova, the secretary of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine, visited Poland on 23 November 2010, she said that Ukraine is ready to participate in the NATO missile-defence system. But just less than one month later, Ms. Bogatyriova's deputy, Stepan Gavrish, made Ukraine's position clear. During a meeting on 14 December 2010 of the NATO–Ukraine working group on military reform in Brussels, Mr. Gavrish said the participation of Ukraine in a future NATO missile-defence system is impossible without Russia. Ukraine may offer two radars (in Mukachevo and Sevastopol) but can not ensure they would work independently. According to Mr. Gavrish, Russia already has proposed that Ukraine buy these stations or take them on lease, but for Ukraine, a variant of a joint Russian–NATO–Ukrainian operation of these stations is more suitable.

Ukrainian potentials for a joint missile-defence system

However, Ukraine still retains considerable capabilities for missile defence. The U.S. already studied the suitability of Ukrainian participation in missile defence during the term of U.S. President George W. Bush. In March 2007, a special group of American experts led by the director of the Missile Defence Agency, Lt. Gen. Henry Obering, visited Kyiv. The U.S. delegation held a series of negotiations with Ukrainian officials. It was publicly reported that the U.S. delegation arrived in Kyiv to explain the characteristics of the U.S. missile-defence deployment in Poland and Czech Republic. However,

independent experts have argued that the parties could have discussed prospects for Ukrainian capabilities in a future missile-defence system.

These assumptions were confirmed in October 2009, when Barack Obama considerably corrected the plans to deploy elements of the U.S. missile defence system in Central Europe. U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Alexander Vershbow said that he had "added Ukraine to the list of possible sites for placement of early warning radars." Vershbow said that Ukrainian officials have allegedly expressed interest in this type of participation. The ambassador of Ukraine, Oleh Shamshur confirmed that the issue—under working discussion—is in the "very initial phase." The results of these negotiations are unknown. Although Ukraine does have capabilities that may significantly strengthen the global missile-defence system.

First, the early warning radar in Sevastopol could be used for by the joint missile-defence system. The radar station in Mukachevo probably will not be useful because it is oriented towards Western Europe. Secondly, a number of Ukrainian companies may join industrial projects within the program for the creation of European Missile Defence. Third, for testing the effectiveness of the joint missile defence system, a target space-launch vehicle developed by Ukraine can be used.

In addition to these aspects, specialists from the Kiev Centre for Army Conversion and Disarmament Studies propose to deploy an International Sea Missile Defence Platform in the Black Sea involving NATO, Ukraine and Russia capabilities. The project includes the use of an unfinished missile cruiser, the Type 1164 (Slava Class), which is in the Mykolayiv Shipyards (Ukraine). In in Soviet times, the Type 1164 missile cruiser was classified as an "aircraft carrier killer." Naturally, Ukraine does not need it anymore because of the ship's explicit specifications for Cold War confrontation.

The underlying concept can be summarised as follows. The NATO Missile Defence System needs to have infrastructure as close as possible to eventual ballistic missile threats from Iran and that region. The Black Sea is the most proper place to set up radars and interceptors to this effect. The missile cruiser would be a Ukrainian flagged ship so it will comply with the restrictions under the Montreux Convention as sailing under the control of a Black Sea state. The 1164 type cruiser, as a maritime platform with a displacement of 11,000 tons, is almost complete but lacks its main weapons systems, including air defences. It is proposed that the U.S. Aegis system be installed on the ship. The Aegis system is an organic part of the current U.S. Phased Adaptive Approach for
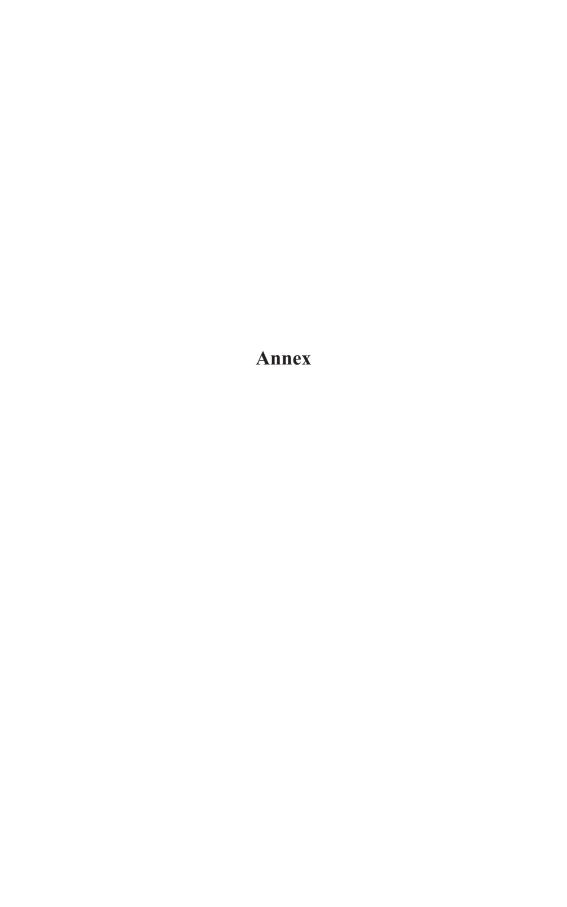
Missile Defence, was developed especially to equip ships and has the best technical characteristics for use from an international naval platform.

Naturally, this idea must overcome several technical problems with the integration of Aegis to a Soviet-type cruiser. However, through the joint efforts and contributions of potential partner organizations and countries (NATO, EU and especially Ukraine, the U.S. and Russia) these difficulties will be able to be solved. These include the following contributions:

− Ukraine: transformation of the ship (design, dismantling of unneeded weapons, the installation of new hull designs and cables and the provision of systems and domestic weapons production) and delivery of the ship to the U.S. for additional equipment;

− U.S.: the provision and installation of the Aegis system aboard the cruiser;

− NATO and EU: participation in the financing of the project and maintenance of the ship's during its lifecycle; and,

− Russia: the provision of systems for the exchange of information from ground and space facilities and comprehensive tests of the ship after its return to the Black Sea from the U.S.

In addition, an International Sea Missile Defence Platform will need new radar and navigation systems, a new Combat Management System and command, control, communications and intelligence systems. It will guarantee new contracts for companies in NATO, EU countries as well as in Ukraine and Russia.

This project could become a kind of start of cooperation with the U.S., Europe and Russia to create a joint missile-defence system with Ukrainian involvement in this project as a central participant in spite of its rather strange "out-of-blocs" status.

Annex

International Conference:
Past lessons, current issues and future prospects of Visegrad cooperation within NATO and ESDP
Budapest, 8–9 April 2010

SUMMARY OF SPEECHES AND DISCUSSION

THE OPENING KEYNOTE SPEECH
DR. PÉTER BALÁZS, *Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hungary*

In his opening keynote address to the conference, Mr. Balázs reviewed the most important characteristics of Visegrad cooperation and the agenda of the Hungarian Visegrad presidency (between July 2009 and June 2010). He also gave an assessment of the security situation and challenges affecting all the Visegrad countries (V4).

In his explanation of the utility and legitimacy of almost two decades of cooperation among V4 partners, the Minister spoke in detail about this forum, which provides the opportunity for consultation in an informal regional framework. The heads of state and government as well as the foreign ministers of the four countries meet on a regular basis. Since all participants are also members of various European organizations, it is also possible for them to consult on occasions apart from their regular quadrilateral meetings. For instance, the NATO, EU, OSCE and European Council sessions can serve as opportunities for these consultations.

At the time of the conference, the Hungarian Visegrad presidency's term was drawing to an end, therefore, it was possible for the minister to give an account of the results. First of all, Foreign Minister Balázs emphasised that Visegrad cooperation is less and less confined to the four member states. It is more frequent that it includes other countries in consultations within the so-called Visegrad Plus framework on projects in which they may be interested. The Energy Summit of February 2010 can serve as an example where the Visegrad countries invited other states from Central and Eastern Europe to exchange ideas and discuss energy matters of shared interests.

The Hungarian foreign minister also mentioned the Danube Program to illustrate the possibility for macro-regional cooperation. He pointed out that Poland, as one of the Visegrad partners, also takes part in the Baltic Sea

Project, therefore, the Visegrad region can be perceived as a bridge between the Danube and the Baltic regions. He added that the Visegrad countries also try to find common solutions for social problems existing in all of them. For instance, they already have initiated the discussion about a common strategy to elaborate solutions to the pressing social issues of the Roma population.

Mr. Balázs delivered an overview of the main foreign and security issues for the Visegrad region. He started from the generally applied premise of the region as a set of states with common geopolitical interests. On the grounds of their geographic location, all four Visegrad states are directly interested in the assessment of the European Neighbourhood Policy in its eastern dimension as well as in the stable settlement of previous ethnic conflicts of the Western Balkans. The Hungarian foreign minister stressed that the Hungarian Visegrad presidency scored some real diplomatic goals in October 2009 when it convened a summit dedicated to the Western Balkans with the participation of the V4 partners, the EU trio presidency (Spain, Belgium and Hungary) and the countries of the region. He also laid out the possibility of establishing joint missions of the Visegrad countries in some parts of the world.

With regard to the redefinition of NATO's strategic role, the foreign minister outlined the key points of the Hungarian contribution to the elaboration of the new strategic concept of NATO concerning Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. He noted that while the collective security mechanism is based on the principle of territorial defence, supranational threats characterise the contemporary security environment Mr. Balázs added that, according to the Hungarian proposal, the most urgent task is to harmonize these two different aspects of security. He underlined that the Visegrad countries stand on the same ground with respect to several issues on the NATO agenda. For instance, the admission of Bosnia Herzegovina is favoured by all four of them, because the Visegrad countries are convinced that the integrative force of a unified army could effectively prevent the renewal of ethnic conflicts.

The Hungarian foreign minister also commented upon the problematic questions of the relationship between the countries of the region and Russia. He summarized the complex nature of this relationship as follows: "Russia is an extremely important neighbour, an extremely important economic actor, but at the same time it is also an unanswered question." He added that neither the time nor the conditions are suitable to adopt the collective security treaty initiated by the Russian president in 2009.

The minister welcomed the institutional innovations of the Lisbon Treaty, and remarked that the ongoing consultations on the new NATO strategy can

offer a great opportunity to redefine the relationship between the EU and NATO with their largely overlapping European memberships, and to coordinate more closely the updated NATO policies with an evolving European foreign policy.

On the eve of the Hungarian parliamentary elections and as a final point in his address, Mr. Balázs forecast no significant change in Hungarian foreign policy and despite the probable change of government also presumed a strong continuity in foreign affairs in regard to Hungary's relations with its Visegrad, EU and NATO partners.

PANEL I.

The Visegrad Group and the strategic redefinition of NATO's mission: national contributions to the new Strategic Concept of the Atlantic Alliance

Panellists:
KAREL ZETOCHA, Institute for Strategic and Defence Studies, Defence University, Brno
Dr. ZOLTÁN SZENES, former Chief of General Staff, Hungary, and professor at the Zrínyi Miklós National Defence University, Budapest
ROBERT VASS, Secretary General of the Slovak Atlantic Commission
TOMASZ ŁĘKARSKI, Deputy Director, Department of Security Policy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Poland
Mr. JANUSZ ONYSZKIEWICZ, President of the Euro-Atlantic Association, Poland, and former National Defence Minister of Poland

In his introductory remarks to the panel, Mr. Onyszkiewicz examined the evolution of the European–Russian relationship and perspectives of the NATO–Russia relationship. Within this framework of reference, he undertook to outline the role and place of Central Europe in the present security environment.

The speaker founded his views on the common historical experiences of Central and Eastern Europeans. He argued that it is not only the former Communist rule that connects these countries but also because the Visegrad states share a need for an alliance even if the role of NATO is redefined and adjusted to the current conditions and future requirements of collective security. With regard to changes in the nature of security threats, Mr. Onyszkiewicz emphasized that non-military threats have come to the forefront. Along this line, he argued for the expansion of the terms of understanding of an "armed attack" under Article 5. For his purpose, the keynote speaker considered it essential to elaborate on an adapted NATO defence strategy for responses to cyberattacks as well as other non-conventional threats.

According to the assessment presented by Mr. Onyszkiewicz, current Russian foreign policy is determined by a traditional great-power attitude based on spheres of interests and the balance of power. He acknowledged that, in theory, Russia is willing to manage a triangular diplomacy with the European Union and the United States as partners. The speaker argued that Russian foreign policy, in practice, has a rather anti-American purpose as Russia is obviously aspiring to the status of a global power by gaining recognition and acceptance of these ambitions from Europe, separately from the United States.

M. Onyszkiewicz did not deny the importance of discussions with Russia, though he insisted that the primary forums for consultations should be the common institutions of NATO and the EU. In his view, the most important task of European–Russian discussions is to ease Russian concerns about NATO's enlargement. At the same time, he emphasized that the elaboration of the new NATO strategic doctrine would be advisable to include the definition of common ground for relations with Russia.

Summary of issues discussed in the panel

In connection with the cooperation between NATO and the European Union, some panellists called the late 1990s a most fruitful era from a military point of view, when all four Visegrad countries were NATO candidates and endeavoured to harmonize their tasks and preparations on the way to membership. The process of debate and elaboration of the new strategic concept within the Transatlantic alliance was considered to be another opportunity for consultation and an approximation of national standpoints. What makes cooperation more reasonable is that all four countries have suffered from the negative effects of the economic crisis, therefore all of them must rely on scarce resources.

It emerged from the discussion that the most important task for the Visegrad countries in the forthcoming years should be the redefinition of their Transatlantic relations. In this regard, three contesting views that can be in some cases thoroughly divergent came to be identified: those of Central Europe, Western Europe and the United States. Some would like to see an increased European emphasis on defence policy with more focus on Central Europe, while others support a more traditional role and a passive defence posture and certain members are more eager to stress the importance of non-conventional missions and tasks as the most effective responses to the transformed threat environment of the contemporary world. The three main perceptions of the continued role of NATO were distinguished by the panellists: the organisation and management of expeditionary operations, the preparation and guarantee of a continued collective defence of all members and a vehicle for institutionalised and close Transatlantic strategic relations.

Some panellists reminded the audience about the centrality of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty as an expression of the commitment to collective defence and the continued sustaining rationale of the Transatlantic alliance.

There are significant differences among the members of the Atlantic alliance in their perceptions of Russian intentions, the war in Afghanistan and the American presence in Europe. Western Europeans tend to regard the

participation in the mission in Afghanistan rather as a choice than an obligation. It is a source of real discord. Many European governments openly call for a continued American military presence in Europe, but the United States seems more and more inclined to do so only if Europeans take on their share of the active provision of global security. The panellists stressed the importance of the recognition and acceptance of European responsibility in matters of transnational security in cooperation with the United States as equal partners.

In this respect, panellists pointed out that the military capabilities of the Visegrad countries were actively engaged in expeditionary missions as part of the European contributions to global security and regional crisis management. As long as NATO focuses on territorial defence, further capability developments will be necessary because their current level is not sufficient for the credible and efficient accomplishment of both kinds of tasks.

In the context of various challenges to the successful implementation of an updated NATO strategy, the financial conditions and budgetary aspects of collective security also were raised in the panel. The Hungarian panellist recommended the Pápa airlift base as an example where international cooperation may be used as a working model as well as in other cases of shared benefits at the regional and Alliance levels.

The panellists underlined the utility and importance of NATO partnerships with countries from various regions. The demonstrated willingness of the Alliance to maintain its "open door" policy towards several countries willing and able to work towards meeting the conditions of membership was considered an important asset to extending the political impact of NATO far beyond the circle of its membership.

Ambassador Jerzy Nowak, in his comments, presented his points of view on eight matters:

1. It is in the common interests of NATO member states to define measures to prevent the weakening of security guarantees by the Atlantic Alliance and these should be implemented in a predefined manner as an "automatic response" in the form effective airspace protection, military exercises, etc;

2. Besides the new generation of security threats (such as cyberattacks) and external political intimidation, other forms of threats also can represent highly dangerous contingencies, including the so-called "interdependent instability" from the Balkans or the territories of unsettled conflicts in the crisis zones of the former Soviet Union (for example, in Transnistria);

3. The V4 states should develop the proper balance between territorial defence and stabilizing security missions; the real difficulty, however, arises from the determination of the right proportions of commitments and capabilities in the implementation of these different responsibilities;

4. Although the relations between Europe and the U.S. are not limited to NATO, the cohesion of the Transatlantic community calls for the renewal of a firm American commitment to European security;

5. NATO must work out a common position on Russia and its role in Europe and NATO–Russian relations should be based on a few core values such as reciprocity, responsibility and reassurance; the role of the NATO-Russia Council must be better defined to prevent Russia from blocking NATO enlargement or decision-making;

6. NATO should further develop its partnerships and find more partners in order to widen the security network of the continent, though it is not able to do the job alone, and is not able to do everything through military means;

7. NATO has to maintain open doors and offer the perspective of inclusion in the longer term even if certain countries (such as Ukraine) are not yet ready to become members; and,

8. There are quite big differences among the member countries in terms of their defence spending, which should reach at least 2% of the national budget as an obligation for NATO countries.

PANEL II.

The sustaining tasks of Atlantic associations in the Visegrad countries: raising public awareness and generating intellectual discourse on the continued importance of Transatlantic relations and solidarity

Speakers:
ZBYNĚK PAVLAČÍK, Secretary General of Jagello 2000 Czech Euro–Atlantic Council
Prof. E. SZILVESZTER VIZI, President of the Hungarian Atlantic Council
Amb. JERZY NOWAK, President, Polish Euro–Atlantic Association, Warsaw
Amb. RASTISLAV KÁČER, President of the Slovak Atlantic Commission

The presidents of the Hungarian Atlantic Council, the Polish Euro–Atlantic Association and the Slovak Atlantic Commission as well as the Secretary General of Jagello 2000 Czech Euro–Atlantic Council adopted a joint statement with regard to the central questions of the conference:

The Declaration of the Presidents of the Jagello 2000 Czech Euro-Atlantic Council, the Hungarian Atlantic Council, the Polish Euro–Atlantic Association and the Slovak **Atlantic Commission:**

We, the "Visegrad Four" Atlantic Treaty Association Presidents representing our national organisations, hereby declare:

As members of our wider international organisation (ATA), which for more than 55 years has served as the leading Transatlantic, non-governmental organisation promoting public awareness on the North Atlantic Alliance, and additionally, as representatives of the Central-Eastern European regional organisation the "Visegrad Four" fully support and wish to contribute to the elaboration of NATO's New Strategic Concept of NATO. On behalf of our associations, we would like to highlight our most important interests.

The "Visegrad Four" countries are interested in reconfirming, as part of the New Strategic Concept, Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. For a thousand years, countries in the Eastern part of Europe have had to contend with the pain of countless foreign occupations. While the current political climate is not exposed to possible overt aggression against our countries, the fear of a foreign attack has remained among our citizens and passed from generation to generation In order to help remove this fear for the coming thousand years, let every person in our societies receive a powerful message from the members of NATO, which is: We need to enhance and reconfirm NATO's commitment as enshrined in Article 5. The countries of our region should enjoy a security status equal to that of other members of our Alliance.

Russia is an important factor in European security and stability. It is with hope that we look ahead to developing the closest possible strategic and practical

partnership between NATO and the Russian Federation on the basis of existing agreements. NATO has on numerous occasions expressed its willingness to deepen cooperation, both in the political and the practical fields. Our aim is to develop relations based on an equal footing, reciprocity, common interests and mutual respect. In this regard, we expect Russia to observe international legal and democratic standards, to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations as well as the rule of law, the right of nations to pursue their own path in the field of foreign relations, including their sovereign decision to join any international organization or to remain neutral. Importantly, we must enhance our cooperation with Russia without sacrificing the core principles and values for which NATO as a whole and we as part of it stand for.

Ukraine is a strategically important neighbour of the "Visegrad Four" region, and our relations with this country are a priority for all of us. We continue to strongly support maintaining the policy of an "open door" for Ukraine, Georgia and those states of the Western Balkans that have not yet joined the Alliance, as well as other states that comply with standards set out in the Washington Treaty.

The Balkans region is our neighbour, and stability, peace and democracy in this region are a vital national interest of ours. Europe cannot be whole and free without a stable and peaceful Balkans. This is a historic mission that we have not yet completed. We can achieve this goal only through the integration of the Western Balkans countries into the institutions of the Euro–Atlantic integration. NATO, with its tools and partnership policies, can do much to promote this goal. We appreciate the enormous efforts undertaken and the assistance that the Alliance and all European and international organisations have been giving to the countries of the Western Balkans in the last two decades. We ask all countries to continue contributing to the wide-scale efforts to stabilise that area.

We are interested in reformulating, in particular, those parts of the Strategic Concept where such reformulations are required due to significant changes that have taken place in the security environment and new threats and challenges facing the Alliance. In the spirit of Article 4 of the Washington Treaty, we are ready to address any uncertainties or fear that other Allies may feel. We wish to strengthen the cohesion of the societies of NATO's 28 nations. NATO has been the most successful political-military alliance in history and we want to maintain it on the basis of a strong Transatlantic link. Lastly, if our ATA member colleagues from the Central-East European region and the Balkans agree with our declaration, let them join us.

PANEL III.

Perceptions of ESDP in the Visegrad countries and among their neighbours with regard to current and future EU–NATO relations

Panellists:
Dr. VÍT STŘÍTECKÝ, Research Fellow, Institute of International Relations, ÚMV, Prague, Dr. ARUNAS MOLIS, Department of Political & Strategic Studies, Baltic Defence College, Tartu
PÉTER SZTÁRAY, Head of the Department of Security Policy and Non-proliferation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hungary
Dr. TADEUSZ CHABIERA, Deputy-Director of the Institute of International Law, European Union and International Relations, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw and Vice-President of the Euro–Atlantic Association)
Dr. RÓBERT ONDREJCSÁK (Executive director, Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs, CENAA, Bratislava)

Summary of issues discussed in the panel

In the course of the exchange of opinion, a general agreement emerged that the four countries have strong ties, which maintain the Visegrad cooperation. These ties include shared values, the same Central European background and cultural heritage and similar regional interests. All four countries are members of NATO and the EU, which demonstrates they are not only partners, but allies. After all, the V4 cooperation in the past 20 years has proven to be one of the most successful cooperation formats in Europe, especially in Central Europe.

There are some differences in regional priorities: Some of the Visegrad partners are more focused on the Western Balkans while others have priorities in other regions. The difference in military weights within the group does not cause any problems with cooperation. Even the occasional bilateral disagreements on certain issues are natural phenomena for neighbouring countries.

The panellists agreed that the Visegrad countries have differences in their approaches to Russia, which turns up in most of the discussions. Russia is related to many aspects and issues of security policy. Some of the V4 countries have a less concerned approach to Russia while others display a more concerned approach. Nevertheless, these differences do not create any major obstacle in the way of closer cooperation.

With regard to the broader context of security policy cooperation within the European Union, the discourse in the panel reflected the considerations of the new reformed framework under the Lisbon Treaty. The historically new face of integration in Europe was accepted as bringing further integration,

more responsibilities and more possibilities to integrate security and defence policy within the EU.

At the same time, the comments by the panellists made it clear that even the Lisbon Treaty did not solve the ultimate security demands and interests of the V4 countries. It provides no credible security guarantee such as NATO is able to sustain. Therefore, even in the long run, Article 5 of the Washington Treaty will remain the major guarantee of the security of those EU members that also are members of NATO.

In the panel debate it was stressed that credible security guarantees under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty should mean a rule of non-discrimination for any member of the Alliance. It is especially true in the case of the contingency plans and planning to be done upon the request of a particular country. It directly affects the cohesion of the Alliance.

Despite the inherent limitations of the security functions of the European Union, it has increasing importance in crisis management, which is one of the major instruments with a more autonomous role in the Union in security and defence policy. Various debates among the EU members will continue, but new conditions and options for joint engagement would offer a clearer picture about how the Visegrad countries can do more at the EU level in security policy.

In the panel debate it also was stressed that until now a European option in security and defence affairs was not considered to be an alternative to NATO for the Baltic States. These countries did not perceive that the security function of the EU can in any way be exercised to provide for the collective defence of its member states. Although the Lisbon Treaty does not create a European army, the possibility of Permanent Structured Cooperation would enable willing and capable member states to deepen their collaboration within the European Union. This can offer more flexible and more effective participation of Central European and Baltic countries in the development of CSDP in the future. Since Visegrad and Baltic states have similar interests, similar experience as well as similar security challenges, it should motivate more coordination among these countries in security and defence issues both within the EU and NATO.

From the point of view of the V4 partners, the panellists concurred that the current state of EU-NATO cooperation is at a minimum. The political conditions are static and unfavourable, and the prospects for improvement also are not very positive. The panellists observed a real tendency to make the EU more functional in areas where NATO has an important role as well. Since

NATO is not interested in all areas where the EU might be engaged, this could result in some kind of burden-sharing principle to be applied consciously between the two organizations. At the same time and although there are political difficulties in cooperation at a strategic level, cooperation in missions is usually excellent at a practical level even when there is a lack of a security agreement between the two organizations.

Some of the panellists noted the importance of Turkey, especially for V4 countries. A positive attitude towards Turkey would resolve many of the problems in EU–NATO relations. The lack of political unity within the EU on the extent of Turkish participation in the European Defence Agency continues to present a large stumbling block to better cooperation with NATO. Until EU members agree on that issue, it will be very difficult to make any progress in NATO–EU relations.

A *comprehensive approach* also was stressed in contemporary security missions by NATO as well as those by the EU. It is getting more and more obvious that now both NATO and the EU lack a proper, integrated civilian-military capacity capable of planning and commanding a full spectrum of operations. The main goal is to address conflicts more efficiently, which depends on better coordination in the EU–NATO nexus.

One of the challenges in the field of security policy that can be expected to emerge is that the demand for capabilities and enhanced defence contributions to collective tasks is going to increase in NATO and, in future missions, also in the EU. Similar to almost all NATO and EU members, the V4 countries have limited defence budgets that probably will further shrink. With no perspective for growth or, in many cases, even maintaining the same level of defence spending, it will become very difficult to live up to the new and growing demands in terms of crisis management and defence-capability development.

Another challenge is the scarcity of resources available for security policy purposes and tasks. This, again, is very important since the Central European region and other EU countries are still suffering from the impacts of the financial crisis. Any big plan on defence capability development cannot be realized because of the crisis, which also will not help cooperation between NATO and the EU.

A further challenge is the possibility for duplication between the EU and NATO, which may be expected to increase in the future. The move towards a more autonomous European security and defence policy were endorsed as generally welcome progress because it corresponds to the ambitions to do more on behalf of the EU. At the same time, opinions voiced on the panel

stressed the important consequences of these aspirations and the accompanying demands. Some panellists predicted serious problems in responding to the growing demands from NATO and EU operations. Since both organisations have largely overlapping European memberships, which have only one set of armed forces, the resources are the same to mobilize and commit to NATO or EU security missions. Some panellists expressed their fears that if EU members intend to create more autonomous European defence structures and capabilities then it may inevitably lead to more duplication.

With regard to the strategies of the two organizations, the diverging elements and the lack of harmonization in these strategies also were determined to be sources of difficulties that the Visegrad countries would like to help overcome. As an example, when the EU security strategy was reviewed in 2008, there was actually no discussion with NATO about where the two organizations were moving and which aspects should be harmonized. The panellists pointed out that the preparation of the new NATO strategic concept illustrated a better version of cooperation between the two organizations in strategic reviews because the EU could become involved in that exercise. This sort of strategic coordination was laid out in the panel as an area where the V4 should seek to have influence on the desirable direction of the evolution of relations in the future.

Various proposals for improving V4 security and defence coordination took shape by the end of the panel discussion:
- Intensification of the already existing security policy consultations at different levels;
- More display of V4 unity within the EU and NATO;
- Harmonization of the programmes of successive V4 presidencies;
- Sharing best practices;
- Development of joint military and civilian capability programmes; and,
- Intensified cooperation in the field of training and exercises.

PANEL IV.

The possibilities for the cooperation of the Visegrad countries and their Eastern Neighbours in the development of security and defence policy in the EU and beyond

Panellists:
Dr. MAREK MADEJ, Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM), Warsaw
VLADIMÍR TARASOVIČ, Senior Research Fellow, Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs (CENAA), Bratislava
Dr. GUSTAV LINDSTRÖM, Geneva Centre for Security Policy, Geneva
MYKHAILO SAMUS, Head of office in Prague, Centre for Army, Conversion and Disarmament Studies (CACDS), Kiev
Am. and Prof. ISTVÁN GYARMATI, President and CEO, International Centre for Democratic Transition, Budapest

In his introductory remarks to the panel, Amb. Gyarmati addressed the cooperation of the four Visegrad countries in the area of security both within the EU and the NATO. In his opinion, V4 cooperation has become quite successful. But since NATO accession and in the field of security, it has not been as active as several other areas of coordination within the EU. He voiced his conviction that questions about this cooperation are timely because there is certainly room for security cooperation among the V4 partners.

The keynote speaker argued that if the V4 does not start that cooperation, the group would not have a real future, especially within NATO. He stressed that security was going to remain a core question for European countries, both externally and internally. In the past several decades, the four countries did not face the challenges they should have because their politicians followed public opinion rather than shaped it. Also, the threats of today are much more complicated than others before them. Amb. Gyarmati expressed his belief that fighting terrorism is not equally important among the U.S. and its allies, such as Hungary. In his view, Americans are making a big mistake by trying to convince all the other countries that terrorism is the number one threat.

In his view, the V4 countries have some common interest in the field of security, however, it is not as strong as once was their their common goal of joining NATO. Further, the new members are still not full members of the EU and, to some extent, NATO in terms of how seriously they are taken compared to the older members. So, they need to change that through cooperation. He said there is some interest in bringing the V4 countries together, which can be demonstrated, for example, by the process of creating NATO's new strategic concept. In his assessment, NATO had no clear idea how the concept should look like—at least, there were many different opinions within the Alliance regarding the content of the conceptual issues. He stressed that in a rapidly

changing world, NATO needs a concept as well-built as the Harmel report in the 1960s. A simply updated version of the Washington Strategy of 1999 would not suffice.

The keynote speaker continued, arguing that the first common interest of the V4 is the need for a serious concept of their security interests, not only within NATO but also in the EU as well. Amb. Gyarmati urged the Visegrad Group to use NATO for goals other than missions such as the one in Afghanistan. In his opinion, the V4 countries are participants in these operations mostly because they want to be good NATO members. He warned that the public would not accept this indefinitely. Therefore, he argued, Central European countries need a version of NATO that understandably serves the interests of all of its members.

Furthermore, in many cases members need to create a compromise within NATO. He offered two examples to illustrate his point. The first was what to do about Russia, which was identified by Amb. Gyarmati as probably the most controversial issue for NATO. At the same time, he pointed out that it remains a relatively unimportant one. He suggested that if the Member States of the Alliance had a policy followed by all, it could be easily handled. He believed a compromise can be brokered between the "German extreme" and the "Baltic extreme" (respectively, "Russia as a strategic partner" or "Russia as the enemy"). The keynote speaker stressed that without all members trying to broker an agreement, there would be no compromise. He shared his thoughts about the desirable policy towards Russia, which he determined to be "cooperative containment." But it is a difficult concept that needs unity within the EU and NATO as well. In that respect, Amb. Gyarmati noted that the V4 countries have similar views and interests.

The keynote speaker mentioned energy security as another issue with relevance to shared interests. He talked about strong economic interests behind that issue, which unfortunately usually overwrite security interests. He stressed that the V4 countries need to make clear that on that field, the economic interest of some countries is a security interest for many others and, therefore, is a matter for the entire membership of NATO and the EU. He argued that if NATO were exposed to blackmail its decision-making process could be paralysed. The changing prices of natural gas and oil complicate the situation even further. Amb. Gyarmati suggested the V4 should pay more attention to the coordination of energy security, because Visegrad countries have different interests in that field than other members who also are a part of both the EU and NATO.

He also underlined that cooperation with partners around the V4 group is extremely important, both in the cases of the Western Balkans and the countries of the Eastern Partnership. In the first case, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria and Austria can be obvious allies, and the Baltic countries and Sweden for the second, the eastern neighbourhood. He emphasised that V4 countries are likely to have a better understanding of these neighbours than other countries and have a direct interest in promoting their partners' future possible integration into the EU and NATO. He added that the V4 group should work much closely together than before on matters involving Ukraine.

Amb. Gyarmati stressed that V4 countries do have common interests and they have to work for them. If they are shy to present those interests to each other and to the rest of the EU and NATO members, nobody else will do it for them.

The keynote speaker concluded his speech with an example of the tenseness in Hungarian–Slovakian relations. He sees it as the only relationship between V4 countries that looks difficult. If one compares Slovakian and Hungarian policies within the EU and NATO, one will find that not only are there many more similarities than conflicts but also that those similarities are overwhelming. But the two neighbours are not able to deliver this picture to either their publics or abroad, to Brussels, Washington, Berlin and others. Amb. Gyarmati expressed that he was happy that no major Hungarian party used the Slovakia card during the parliamentary election campaign of this year. He added that the case was not the same in Slovakia.

He shared his thoughts about a way to defuse a conflict that could hamper and delay cooperation within the V4. The primary interest for Hungary and Slovakia is to use the V4 group as an opportunity for continued coordination on various issues. He sees this as a great avenue for cooperation without giving up the positions of either side in the conflict while challenging public opinion in both countries.

The keynote speaker stressed that for the V4 group it is essential to have results that demonstrate the four countries, including Slovakia and Hungary, are able to cooperate on real issues, from climate change to security. Amb. Gyarmati finished his speech by saying if the V4 countries cannot cooperate in the area of security, they will not be taken seriously in the long run, at least not in NATO and increasingly not in the EU either.

Summary of issues discussed in the panel

As part of a possible V4 cooperation experience in EU common security and defence policy, the concept of the Visegrad Battlegroup was examined and evaluated by the panel.

All Visegrad countries underwent, or are going through, a test of the EU Battle Group project. Hungary was the first Visegrad country to participate in the battlegroups, along with Italy and Slovenia in 2007. Two countries, the Czech Republic and Poland, will have experience from their roles as battlegroup lead nations. Slovakia is a member of the two following battlegroups: one with the Czech Republic in a two-member battle group and a second with Poland, Germany, Lithuania and Latvia in a five-member battle group.

The whole V4 Battle Group project started in January 2007 with a declaration made in Slovakia by the Visegrad defence ministers, but no substantial progress had been achieved. The years 2009 and 2010 should have been a period of reflection about the feasibility of the project, conceptualization of the group or a time for setting basic organizational principles. (For example, even the selection of a leading nation, if any, as the definition of the basic characteristics of the group is still an open question.)

If a common Visegrad EU Battle Group or Visegrad Plus Battle Group is to be created in the future, the partners must analyze all the identifiable problems —faults connected with excessive bureaucracy, unsystematic communication with potential partners, unsatisfactory legislative, poor identification of capable personnel, a lack of priorities, poor financing and outdated equipment—in advance and, therefore, before the start of the fulfilment of the ambitions of politicians. At the meeting of the ministers of defence of the Visegrad Group countries in Budapest in October 2009, the ministers reaffirmed their interest in creating a common Visegrad Battle Group in the future.

After all, military cooperation has been a significant part of the Visegrad Group's activity since it was founded. Besides, each one of the Visegrad countries has enough experience from mutual cooperation. In Slovakia's case, that experience comes from the Slovak–Czech–Polish multinational brigade from 10 years ago, the Czech and Slovak battalion in Kosovo, the Czech–Slovak battlegroup last year, the Polish–German–Slovak–Lithuanian–Latvian EU battlegroup this year and the Slovak–Hungarian cooperation in the United Nations peacekeeping force in Cyprus. Probably the best example of useful cooperation in this region is the Tisza project. It refers to the multinational battalion of engineers, which was founded by the agreement of governments of Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine in January 2002. Its

principle role is to help the local citizens and to participate in catastrophic damage reduction in the Tisza river basin. Panel experts viewed this project as a good model for the potential Visegrad Battle Group or the Visegrad Plus Battle Group as well.

Some experts on the panel expressed a more sceptical opinion on the prospects for a Visegrad battlegroup. In their view, the original interest of the V4 members in the battle group project is in decline by now. Their general evaluation highlighted that not much has developed out of the initiative, yet, and that it still stands for an intention rather than real achievement. Various reasons were identified.

When the declaration about the V4 Battle Group was made, there was a climate of enthusiasm about the idea of establishing one. The enthusiasm was based on some achievements in the ESDP (now, the CSDP): Some countries accomplished the establishment of battlegroups and implemented ESDP operations of battlegroup size. The creation of battlegroups was perceived as a way to manifest the will among the V4 partners to develop the CSDP and to cooperate with partners perceived as being the closest.

The perception of the battle group project changed with the new circumstances of the economic crisis, the growing operational burden in Afghanistan and also the rather limited success of some EU endeavours, such as the EUFOR operation in Chad. The ongoing NATO mission has greatly influenced the possibility of cooperation not only among the V4 countries, but also with other European countries. So the situation is different and the enthusiasm has at least diminished.

Another reason was also explained in the panel debate. The date of full operational capabilities is rather distant: 2015 and beyond. It has, to some extent, a demobilizing effect and is a convenient excuse for inaction.

Another specific reason for delay and declining interest in the formation of the Visegrad Battle Group is the diminishing prospects for the involvement of other partners, not only from V4 countries. From a Polish perspective, it can be primarily Ukraine. The possibility to engage Ukraine not only in a battlegroup, but in general in the context of defence cooperation within the V4 framework was a significant factor for Poland to move on with the project. As the prospect is changing, so is the perception of the utility of a V4 Battle Group. The panel discourse posed the question about the rationale for such a group. It was concerned with the extent of the added value of a battlegroup constituted by Visegrad countries and the expected benefits for the entire EU and V4 countries in particular.

From the perspective of the Visegrad countries, the political impact, the military usefulness and the modernization effect of such a proposal should be taken into account. From a political point of view, the creation of such a group could have an added value as the manifestation of the V4's ability to extend its effective cooperation into defence matters. However, from the point of view of the EU, this group would not be established before 2015, therefore it could not bring about substantial change in the current European capabilities.

The panel debate revealed another important limitation of the possible consequences of a Visegrad Battle Group. It probably could not be expected to serve as an effective trigger for the modernization of the countries' armed forces. It worked in the case of the Swedish army to create stimulus for important renewal outside NATO. In the case of the V4 countries, though, the creation of a multinational unit, which would not exceed a maximum of 3,000 troops, would not in itself provide the stimulus for this transformation unless it coincided as well with the demands of NATO for capability development.

The panellists reviewed other international projects that could be alternatives for the battlegroup. Particularly, in the context of battlegroups, all of the Visegrad countries could choose or have already developed cooperation with other countries that could be even more interesting and beneficial for them. For Poland, it's the Weimar Triangle, while for Hungary, it is the cooperation with the Slovenians, Romanians and Italians. From both a military point of view and for political reasons these presumed transformations are more effective and more useful. The same is the case when engaging other partners with whom the V4 countries have started to work. It should be considered how best to engage Ukraine, and maybe to do it in a different way, for example, in cooperation with Baltic states, as an alternative to the battlegroup.

Experts from the panel pointed out that the battlegroup idea may not be the best and only way for cooperation on defence issues. The Visegrad partners should look for other alternatives, maybe on the civilian side of the CSDP or through engagement in common operations and coordination, but not through the battlegroup mechanism and instead through training or the development of some kind of military Erasmus.

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