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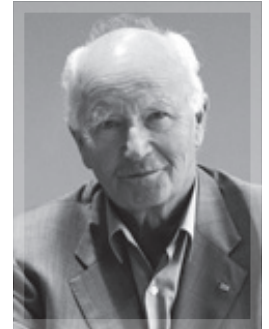
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TOWARDS A SMARTER V4: HOW TO IMPROVE DEFENCE COLLABORATION AMONG THE CZECH REPUBLIC, HUNGARY, POLAND AND SLOVAKIA

DAV4 EXPERT GROUP REPORT

FOREWORD



In June 2008 I was asked by the five Nordic foreign ministers to draw up proposals for foreign policy and security policy co-operation. At that time the Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish chiefs of staff had already drawn up a report on co-operation to ensure that defence spending was used as cost effective as possible.

My report was presented to the governments in February 2009. It contained 13 proposals, including a suggested Nordic declaration of solidarity in which the Nordic countries should commit themselves to clarify how they would react if subject to an external attack or undue pressure.

In April 2011 the Nordic governments adopted a Nordic declaration of solidarity. This gave an impetus for efforts to develop joint instruments, notably in the field of cyber defence. Today, the so-called Nordic Cyber Security Initiative is on the political agenda in all Nordic countries. A number of my other proposals are subject to discussions in the Nordic capitals.

Earlier this year I noticed with much interest that a similar report was being prepared by a group of researchers and experts of the Visegrad countries. I have now read the final report. It is a good report, and I hope and think it will stimulate the same process among the Visegrad countries that we experience in the Nordic area.

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TOWARDS A SMARTER V4: HOW TO IMPROVE DEFENCE COLLABORATION AMONG THE CZECH REPUBLIC, HUNGARY, POLAND AND SLOVAKIA

Since the beginning of the economic crisis, NATO and EU countries have cut tens of billions of euros from defence budgets. Many abolished entire capabilities such as tanks or maritime patrol aircraft. European countries' capacity to project stability and defend their interest in the neighbourhood and beyond is being tested as never before. With economic growth projected to stagnate for the foreseeable future, NATO and EU defence establishments, more than ever, need to seek greater efficiencies. Cross-border collaboration is one of the most promising solutions. By aligning the use of their fixed military infrastructure, sharing facilities and services, or buying and maintaining next generation of weapons together, countries can maintain capabilities which would otherwise be threatened by budget cuts. Such collaboration has also become an important test of the member-states' commitment to the alliance.

Some nations like the Netherlands, Belgium or the Nordic countries have been co-operating for years; a few more including Britain and France have started since the crisis began. But many others including the countries of Central Europe have been slower to respond. Collaboration, or 'pooling and sharing', remains a delicate matter, which requires considerable trust and acceptance of shared control over sensitive assets. Past experience shows that it is best pursued among groups of like-minded states.

The Visegrad 4 countries (V4) are well positioned to become one such 'cluster of co-operation'. They share a commitment to supporting NATO and EU solidarity through active participation in missions, some have worked together closely on operations, and the four already have a fruitful political relationship in other policy areas such as energy security. They are also bound by geography, overlapping threat assessments, and a common legacy of Warsaw Pact equipment. While some V4 countries are closer to each other than others, and while individual Visegrad countries also have active military links with non-Visegrad nations, the V4 format is well suited to serve as a heart of regional co-operation: a tight but inclusive network of collaborative defence projects. For the V4, military collaboration not only holds the promise of improving defence capacity but it could also strengthen the participating countries' political weight in NATO and EU, and

position the four members as states that approach defence with seriousness and dedication. Recently, the governments have clearly stated a preference for a close military relationship in their April 2012 declaration 'Responsibility for a Strong NATO'.

In the coming months and years, the V4 should make good on their declaration by making military pooling and sharing a subject of daily, rigorous work at the expert level, assessed and overseen at regular intervals by ministers and heads of states. Without such top-down attention, cultural and bureaucratic obstacles might scupper collaborative projects. The Visegrad countries' overall goal should be to identify and actively pursue every feasible opportunity to reduce the expenses of military education, procurement, training and operations through the sharing of costs. At the same time, the V4 governments should also start systematically removing obstacles to even deeper collaboration in the future, for example by harmonising timelines for replacing aging weapons or aligning technical requirements for future military equipment. Their eventual ambition should be to permanently merge certain military facilities and regularly procure equipment together.

The alternative to such 'deep' pooling and sharing, as the 2009 'Stoltenberg' report on Nordic defence collaboration notes, is a Europe in which only a handful of countries such as the UK and France are left with meaningful militaries. The rest, including the V4, might be reduced to possessing showcase forces: sufficient to preserve the illusion of national sovereignty but incapable of helping the EU and NATO to safeguard the member-states' values and interests. For the V4, whose prosperity and stability are inextricably linked to the presence of strong NATO and EU defences, this would be a dangerous outcome.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The purpose of this report is to suggest practical areas and modalities for deepening existing co-operation. How countries approach pooling and sharing is often just as important as the object of their collaboration and their chosen partner. Over the past several months, a group of experts from the V4 nations, including two former chiefs of defence and current as well as former deputy ministers surveyed the nations' military needs, strategic cultures, mutual relationships and past lessons with co-operation. Their research suggests that several key 'operating principles' should apply to current and future V4 defence collaboration:

- **Caution yet ambition:** Military collaboration is a politically delicate exercise, which raises fears of denial of access to capabilities. To build trust, the V4 countries should start collaborating on capabilities such as training and education that will raise fewer sensitivities than co-operation in other military activities. But they should not stop here; their goal should be to convert the trust that smaller projects generate into a determination to pursue more ambitious projects. Real economies of scale lie not in small steps such as academic exchanges but in deeper co-operation, such as partial or complete integration of units or facilities. This report therefore groups its recommendations into two categories: it starts with relatively modest proposals for the near-term time frame (0-3 years), on the understanding that success in those areas will allow the V4 to proceed into the second category: that of 'game-changing' projects.
- **Pragmatism:** V4 defence collaboration must bring real military benefits, not be undertaken for co-operation's sake. Countries should focus on those initiatives that allow them to preserve existing capabilities, or to gain access to capabilities which they typically would not be able to procure independently.
- **NATO and EU focus:** These two institutions remain the key drivers of defence planning, and the most likely vehicles for deployment of V4 armed forces. The purpose of Visegrad collaboration is not to create a regional alternative to NATO or the EU but to reinforce the two organisations by improving the V4 countries' ability to contribute to collective missions and ambitions. To this end, the Visegrad collaborative projects should aim to directly address NATO's and EU's capability gaps, or to free up resources, which will permit the V4 countries to plug those gaps individually. As much as possible, the V4 should seek to embed future collaboration within the NATO and EU frameworks such as 'smart defence' or the European Defence Agency's multinational projects. Such integration may make it easier to implement future collaborative proposals as the

V4 could make use of existing funds and know-how in NATO and the EU.

- **Variable geometry:** Because the V4 countries are of different size and have different equipment, they will not all co-operate to the same depth, and on the same projects. One key organising principle should be that of 'variable geometry': while all projects should be open to all interested V4 parties, countries should be free not to join, and allow a smaller cluster to proceed without them. Equally, the V4 format must not be exclusive – each of the countries involved has other bilateral relationships that it will want to preserve. Countries from outside V4 should be allowed to join on a project-by-project basis.
- **Align defence mindsets and strategic cultures:** Defence collaboration is as much about mindsets as about specific projects. It requires that countries start to think of defence capabilities as something that they build on a regional basis, rather than a purely national one. This approach is quite different from how the V4 defence and political establishments operate today. But the governments can and should start taking measures that will overtime establish collaboration as the default position, not an exception. These 'strategic alignment' measures (listed below) should include expanded co-ordination of defence policies, leading to the closest possible harmonisation of defence planning.
- **Undercapacity and overcapacity both need to be addressed:** The V4 countries have facilities and capabilities, which are not being used to their fullest potential, and the sharing of which can create significant economies of scale. Conversely, the V4 also have significant shortfalls in certain skills and equipment, and where those needs overlap, they should explore the possibility of joint acquisition, maintenance and personnel training aimed at closing those shortfalls. Measures addressing overcapacity tend to raise fewer sensitivities, and could be undertaken first. Measures addressing shortfalls, such as joint acquisition and operation of defence equipment, will be more politically delicate but could make the difference between V4 countries possessing certain capabilities in future or losing them to the economic crisis. They should be undertaken in mid-term perspective, with emphasis on pragmatism, NATO and EU needs, and observation of the 'variable geometry' principle.
- **Smart industrial approach:** Each of the V4 countries has somewhat different defence industry and different attitudes to defence industry. This is a challenge, but not an obstacle to co-operation: other clusters of countries have managed to work together quite

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closely despite industrial differences. In distributing industrial participation, the V4 should eschew the 'juste retour' approach, under which each country seeks a share of each project (which has led to cost overruns in the past). Instead, they should adopt the principle of 'global balance': countries should accept that joint orders will go entirely to the country that is best suited to produce the given good, but over the lifetime of co-operation, each country should receive a proportionally fair share of such orders. This approach assumes that the V4 preserve healthy defence industrial sectors. They have more reasons than ever to do so: the EU directive on defence procurement (2009/81) is starting to inject more cross-border competition into defence procurement. The V4, along with the rest of the EU, will need to work hard to improve competitiveness of defence companies, including through greater collaboration.

- **Lay the political and legal ground for co-operation:** Truly deep forms of military collaboration such as integration of military assets or joint procurement require that the participating governments believe that their defence relationship has a future. One way to make sure

that it does is for the governments to sign a declaration, memorandum of understanding or – ideally – a long-term treaty on co-operation (as Britain and France did recently). Equally, the V4 would have more confidence in their collaboration if each government, individually, agreed a binding, national multi-year defence budget and procurement perspective. Such arrangement, whose different versions are already in place in Poland or France, for example, would send a signal that collaborative projects will be properly resourced.

- **Learning from others, exporting lessons:** Defence collaboration is new to most countries in Europe. Many others are grappling with dilemmas similar to those of the V4: looking for new approaches, ideas, and solutions to problems. In exploring future collaboration, the V4 should make full recourse to lessons learned in other countries. Moreover, they should take the lead in the EU and NATO in designing a structured way to identify, distribute and harvest experiences from defence collaboration in all parts of the EU and NATO, using the respective organisations' capacities. To the V4, defence collaboration is also an opportunity to be among the thought leaders on this important security issue.



PROJECTS

Over the past several months, the group of experts has studied a number of possible joint projects. They have drawn on many useful ideas developed by the V4 governments, including those contained in the 'Responsibility for a strong NATO' declaration or the (draft) Czech-Slovak agreement on defence collaboration. The list below develops this work by offering a sense of timelines and suggesting the order of

priorities. The list is not meant to be comprehensive – other collaborative projects are possible and will no doubt materialise. The reason for selecting some ideas over others was to highlight the most important areas for co-operation: those, which most directly address NATO and EU capability shortfalls or hold the promise of creating substantial economies of scale.

CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT

Short-term (0-3 years):

- **The V4 chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) defence battalion:** a permanent capability, drawing on expertise contained in the Joint CBRN Defence Centre of Excellence in Vyškov, Czech Republic and Polish leadership of the counter-CBRN NATO Response Force module in 2009, as well as existing CBRN knowledge in Hungary and Slovakia. While the inauguration of such battalion, and certainly its lifetime, will fall outside the 0-3 years' time horizon, the V4 countries should in the near term agree the modalities of its work, identify the division of labour, and start investing into those national CBRN elements that will form a part of the joint battalion. Regional co-operation on CBRN will provide the V4 with the opportunity to further develop their relevant capabilities even at the time of constrained finances, and to implement their stated ambition to become the leading CBRN specialists in NATO. CBRN is a sought-after capability for both out-of-area and territorial defence missions; moreover, a quickly deployable CBRN battalion will also be highly useful in cases of industrial disasters in the V4 and beyond.
- **The V4 cyber defence initiative:** the V4 should consider developing a long-term mechanism for regional cyber security co-operation: regular exchange of information, joint training and the establishment of procedures for mutual assistance in the event of a large-scale cyber-attack. At its core should be close co-operation among the V4 Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERTs), responsible for governmental communication networks and large-area systems running the critical infrastructure, as well as their military counterparts, responsible for protecting military communication and information networks. The initiative should make full use of the experience and capabilities of the NATO cyber defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn as well as other allied institutions dealing

with cyber security; it should also be open to co-operation with the EU's ENISA agency (European Network and Security Information Agency). The V4 collaboration on cyber security makes all the more sense because elements of the participating countries' vital networks are already interconnected, and the protection of those bits requires co-operation. Further, increased cyber security co-operation would also add to the V4 countries' political weight in NATO.

Long-term (3+ years):

- **The V4 (+ Ukraine) EU Battlegroup (BG):** already agreed at the V4 level, the Battlegroup is the most significant short-term project; it also holds a real long-term transformative value. In order to preserve the relationships and the habit of co-operation that will have been fostered in the process of building the BG, the participating states should turn it into a semi-permanent asset, which will be on rotation on a predictable basis (for example every four years), in the V4+ format. They should also launch, at earliest possible time, a continuous lessons-learned process to accompany the preparatory work and the Battlegroup's 2016 stand-up period: this would enable early identification of emerging problems, which might hamper the timely establishment of the BG. A proper lesson-learned process would also allow the V4 to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges of mutual military co-operation in general. In the long run, the V4 should aim at permanently integrating some nucleus capabilities required to build a BG, which could then also be used independently of the Battlegroup – the most promising seem to be medical support, logistics, engineering or even command and control capability for the BG. The Battlegroup could also be established as a more flexible force than the original BG concept foresees, with additional civilian components, and assigned a broader scope of tasks (which would

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allow the V4 states to make use of BG components for non-military duties, too). The emphasis on the Battlegroup is not to suggest that the V4 countries prioritise EU over NATO: when it comes to capabilities, what is good for the EU is also good for NATO. Both institutions will benefit if the V4 use collaboration to preserve high intensity, short readiness capabilities, which would otherwise fall victim to budget cuts.

- **Joint V4 air policing:** to be initiated by filling in the emerging Slovak capability gap with fighters from Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary. While, self-evidently, it would come into existence only if Slovakia made a decision to retire its Mig-29 fighters without replacement, the launch of joint V4 air policing over Slovakia would need to be preceded by considerable preparatory work

including legal, operational and financial modalities. The V4 could start a feasibility study now, without predetermining whether the air policing would eventually materialise. This study could be based on experiences from other NATO air policing operations such as the one in the Baltic states, in which Poland and Czech Republic took part. If implemented, a joint V4 air policing arrangement would allow Slovakia to use the money that would otherwise go to new fighter aircraft to take the lead in developing another niche capabilities for the benefit of the V4, such as counter improvised explosive devices (IED) technology. Over time, V4 air policing over Slovakia could become a common effort to guard the whole V4 airspace on a collaborative basis, under a system of rotational combat duties, followed by joint pilot training and exercises.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Short-term (0-3 years):

- **Multinational aviation training centre for helicopter pilots:** it would build on existing assets, primarily in the Czech Republic and Hungary, and specialise in training Mil helicopter pilots, not only from the V4 but also from NATO partner countries. The project is already listed among NATO 'Tier 1' smart defence projects, with the Czech Republic as lead nation and Hungary a participant, alongside others.
- **Joint counter-IED centre:** it would build on the V4 countries' experience in operations, and the knowledge contained in the explosive ordnance disposal Centre of Excellence in Slovakia. The V4 would pool their research and training in the centre, use it to conduct lessons learned exercises, and to develop new counter IED technologies.
- **Tighter collaboration among defence academies:** as a first step towards the partial integration of higher military education, the V4 should agree to specialise in particular courses (this would also allow the V4 states to exploit their niche capabilities and share their unique experiences from developing and using them). A co-ordinated approach

to specialisation would create a virtual 'common curriculum'. English should be the common language – this also means that specialisation, at least initially, should apply only to the most senior staff courses, whose participants are expected to speak advanced English.

Long-term (3+ years):

- **V4 military academy:** a common, multinational institution of higher learning for senior staff courses; with English as common language, based on the territory of one of the V4 states. It could be modelled after the Baltic Defence College in Tartu, which educates general staff officers and senior civil servants from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The creation of such joint college would eliminate the need for the existence of duplicate senior level courses in the four countries, allowing the governments to re-focus some of their resources away from education towards other capabilities. At the same time, a joint college – assuming that the participating states send their best instructors to it – would improve the quality of senior level military education and narrow differences among the V4 countries' strategic cultures.

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STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Short-term (0-3 years):

- **A joint declaration, memorandum of understanding or a treaty:** this would outline a vision for future co-operation as well as its structure and the general principles to guide it, along the lines of those offered above. A legal agreement, especially if underpinned with parliamentary approval, would also steel collaborative projects against the effects of political changes in the V4 governments, and give participating countries greater confidence that they will have access in the future to commonly built capabilities.
- **Closer V4 co-ordination on the political level:** the four countries, via the offices of political directors at the ministries of defence, should work towards the establishment of joint positions on the distribution of staff positions in NATO and EU military structures, and on allocation of common funds.
- **Joint V4 proposal for how to strengthen further NATO's ability to encourage defence collaboration beyond Chicago:** the Visegrad countries should

collaborate on addressing the key challenges involved: how can NATO identify and evaluate opportunities for cross-border collaboration? How can it better monitor progress in implementing joint projects and facilitate the sharing of lesson-learned on overcoming obstacles to pooling and sharing? Can the alliance address the challenge of start-up costs of collaboration projects, and that of countries losing access to needed equipment when they embrace specialisation?

Long-term (3+ years):

- **Agreement on embedding defence planners at each other's defence ministries:** this would allow countries to better understand each other's equipment needs and replacement timelines, laying the ground for future harmonisation of procurement cycles. This, in turn, is a key prerequisite for common acquisition of future defence equipment. The postings should take place on a reciprocal and flexible basis: some tandems within V4, such as the Czech and Slovaks, may be more open to such cross-posting than other combinations of countries.



ABOUT

DAV4 PROJECT

DAV4, or „Defence Austerity: A New Paradigm for Defence and Security Cooperation in the Visegrad Region“ is a project of the Slovak Atlantic Commission and its Visegrad partners (International Centre for Democratic Transition, Jagello 2000 and Polish Institute of International Affairs), supported by the International Visegrad Fund. It was initiated with two goals in mind: First, to explore the most cost-effective, politically feasible and militarily useful areas of defence co-operation among the Visegrad coun-

tries. Second, to establish regional defence collaboration as one of the top priorities for the Visegrad framework, and to build its top-down support. The final output of the project is a report composed of two parts: The present Report contains a set of principles and projects, which the DAV4 expert group recommends the governments focus on. The extended Study contains a more in-depth analysis of the possible collaboration initiatives based on the specific needs of the Visegrad countries.

THE MAKING OF THE REPORT

The Expert Group first gathered in autumn 2011 at the **Smart Security** conference in Bratislava and soon after at the **Chateau Bela Strategic Forum** held in southern Slovakia, in order to elaborate research methodology and set the agenda of the project. The experts started their research by exploring best practices from other countries. In January 2012, they undertook a trip to **Norway and Sweden** to discuss Nordic Defence Co-operation with senior defence officials including the Norwegian minister of defence. A month later, the group undertook a visit to **Brussels**, for conversations with senior officials and diplomats about NATO's expectations for the Chicago Summit. In the meantime, the experts were conducting **ground research at home**: they were consulting their respective ministries about procurement plans and schedules, military ambitions and appetite for collaboration. During the **Visegrad**

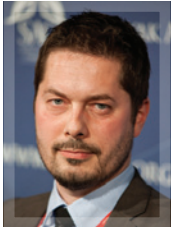
Ministerial Meeting held in Prague in March 2012, the expert group members met with top figures in the Visegrad foreign ministries and of the Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic. This helped them to formulate politically realistic yet ambitious recommendations for mutual collaboration among the V4 countries. The preliminary results were presented at the **GLOBSEC Bratislava Global Security Forum**, held on April 12-14, 2012. The GLOBSEC Forum was the last of the major security-related conferences before the NATO Chicago Summit and was an ideal platform to discuss common Visegrad military projects for the alliance's meeting. The time between GLOBSEC and the **NATO Chicago Summit** was used by the expert group and the representatives of the V4 ministries of foreign affairs and defence for co-operation and discussion on the final version of the document as well as its use in the official positions for the Summit.



ABOUT

EXPERT GROUP

The DAV4 Expert Group on defence collaboration includes current and former senior officials and analysts from Visegrad countries:



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Slovak Atlantic Commission is a founding member of the Central European Policy Institute.
This report was published with the support of the International Visegrad Fund.