

**THE MAKING OF THE VISEGRAD INITIATIVE: CRISES AND
SURVIVALS, DILEMMAS AND PROSPECTS**

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ABSTRACT

THE MAKING OF THE VISEGRAD INITIATIVE: CRISES AND SURVIVALS, DILEMMAS AND PROSPECTS

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This thesis aims to scrutinize the Visegrad Quadruple Initiative as a device of the Central European countries in the process of involving into the re-negotiations in Europe and in world politics. The thesis argues that the Visegrad group was built in order to respond the demands of changing Europe and Euro-Atlantic structures, and thus to overcome the double process of transition and integration. However that was not the only reason to launch the Visegrad regional cooperation. The group produced an affirmative discourse that its members are distinguished from the other countries in transition, so that they are constantly one step forward to ‘return to Europe’. In the aftermath of the eastern enlargements of NATO and the EU alike, the original mission of the group, integration with the West, was achieved. That created a profound discussion about the survival of the group. As it is argued in this thesis, the group, as a prosperous and substantial regional cooperation, should rather continue to work in order to have more words to say in the re-negotiations processes. Another argument of the thesis is that the Visegrad group, taking Benelux group as a model in its continuity, is beneficial to produce a common foreign policy tendency among its members as long as the interests of its members are overlapping,

otherwise the group is just being a political platform in which its members can share their views in such areas as regional regulations.

KEYWORDS: The Visegrad Group, the Neighbourhood Policy of the EU, NATO and EU Enlargements, Security and Central Europe, the Iraqi Crisis and the Transatlantic drift, the Convention on Future of Europe.

ÖZ

VİSEGRAD GRUBUNUN OLUŞUMU: KRİZLER VE BEKALAR, İKİLEMLER VE BEKLENTİLER

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Bu tez, Orta Avrupa Ülkeleri'nin dünya politikalarına ve Avrupa'daki yeniden müzakerelere katılma sürecinde bir araç olarak Visegrad Dörtlü Girişimi'nin incelenmesini amaçlamaktadır. Tez, Visegrad grubunun değişim halindeki Avrupa ve Avro-Atlantik yapılarının taleplerine cevap vermek ve böylece geçiş ve bütünleşmenin çifte sürecini atlatmak için kurulduğunu savunmaktadır. Ancak bu, Visegrad bölgesel işbirliğini başlatmak için tek geçerli sebep değildir. Grup, üyelerinin geçiş sürecindeki diğer ülkelerden ayırt eden ve bu sayede üyelerinin 'Avrupa'ya dönüş'te bir hep bir adım önde olduklarını içeren olumlu bir argüman üretmiştir. Hem NATO hem de AB'nin doğu genişlemeleri sonucunda grubun Batıyla bütünleşmek şeklindeki temel görevi başarıyla yerine getirildi ve bu grubun bekası hakkında derin bir tartışma yarattı. Bu tezde de savunulduğu gibi, başarılı ve önemli bir bölgesel işbirliği olan grup, yeniden müzakereler sürecinde daha fazla söz sahibi olmak için işlemeye devam etmelidir. Tezin bir başka argümanı da, devamlılığı açısından Benelux grubunu kendine örnek alan Visegrad grubu, üyelerinin çıkarları örtüştüğü sürece ortak dış politika eğilimi üretmek için yararlı olmaktadır, yoksa grup, üyelerinin bölgesel düzenlemeler gibi alanlarda fikirlerini paylaşabilecekleri siyasi platformdan başka bir şey değildir.

ANAHTAR KELİMELER: Visegrad Grubu, AB'nin Yakın Çevre Politikası, NATO ve AB Genişlemeleri, Güvenlik ve Orta Avrupa, Irak Krizi ve Transatlantik Çatlağı, Konvansiyon.

to my mother and father

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Visegrad quadruple initiative has been an apparent reflection of efforts of the Central Europeans to harmonize themselves into the process of re-negotiations within changing Europe in the post-Cold War era.

The former socialist countries of Central Europe, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, were unequivocal to pronounce their priority: 'Return to Europe'. The mixture of the historical experiences, being stuck between two great powers: Germany and Russia, and the then contemporary conjuncture of politics, economy and security, fearing to fail the transition process and removing the hard and soft security threats, inclined the Central Europeans to transcend the isolation in the region. Whilst transcending the isolation, the most realistic and pragmatic device was integrating with the European Union and Euro-Atlantic structure in which the Central Europeans, or according to their own allegation the 'Kidnapped West', were once an indispensable part. Within this context, the Central Europeans were also cognizant that this path that they drew was not an easy one to complete. Thus, they preferred to cooperate instead of working individually in the case, because they were of the opinion that they could increase their chance to integrate when they worked together in synchronization. Consequently, similar tendencies and above all similar attitudes of the Central Europeans drove them to cooperate in a regional structure. This structure should have been limited by the countries of the 'kidnapped West', i.e. would-be Visegrad countries, because they were the most developed and therefore closest to a successful integration with the West *inter-alia* in transition. The initiative, for these reasons, was launched by Poland, Hungary and the then Czechoslovakia in the wake of the collapse of socialist regimes, in other words in post-Cold War era in which the world witnessed profound changes.

The West, however, did change when the Central Europeans labelled their bid as returning to Europe. Throughout the Cold War, Western Europe was under

the United States tutelage with various institutional mechanisms. The continental Europe had been involved within a great peace process so that the arms in Europe would never be loaded again. Through the charming wind of functionalism, Europe began to focus on the deep problem that caused two terrible snatches, which destroyed almost entire Europe: crude resources for the industries. Then the Europeans went on. The cooperation increased and it turned out to be an economic partnership: European Economic Community. The Community became the milestone of the European Community in which Europeans turned out to be too close to materializing the Kant's perpetual peace. The end of the Cold War, and laudable summons of the Eastern Europeans brought a new wind of change into the western edge of Europe. The East became instable by disintegrating and the West, on the contrary, became more stable by reunifications. In this milieu, two crucial steps determined the path of Europe: the Treaty of Maastricht (1992) and the Copenhagen Criteria (1993). With the former, the European Community became the European Union and made the politics, based on European values, more pronounced, and the latter put the political development as a prerequisite for those who aimed to be a member of the Union. The most eminent elements of the Criteria, about the political domain, were building strong and working democracies based on human rights, and concluding the problems existing between aspiring candidates.

In this atmosphere, for the Central Europeans, indeed, there were no many viable options. In the one edge of them, in the East, destabilization occurred through disintegrations, e.g. USSR and Yugoslavia, and in the other edge, in the West stabilization increased through reunification, trend towards political integration of the EU. Therefore, the Visegrad countries, of course, opted the more pragmatic one, i.e. the integration with the West. The Visegrad group, in this regard, became a political platform for the Central Europeans to integrate with Europe under these underlined changes. The re-negotiations in the post-Cold War era in Europe created a new political Union. What the Union wanted was to build democracies in former socialist countries and create stability in its very doorstep. The countries that founded the Visegrad group were cognizant of the fact that what the Union put as pre-conditions could be best realized through cooperation among each other.

The group, thus, became a significant platform, and even a pattern, for regional cooperation to realize the smooth transition and to provide the stability in the region as responses to the Europe's demands. Firstly, the group handled the issue of the democratization. All of the western values that were once introduced as the biggest jeopardy for the survival of the socialist regimes were accepted as a *sine qua non*. Instituting democracy and freedom, removing the former totalitarian implementations, applying modern State requisites, e.g. rule of law, respect for human rights, protecting minorities...so on so forth, and creating free market economies turned out to be the enshrined objectives of the Visegrad group. These objectives were determined as the paths that would render the major goal more viable in the greater picture, which was purported as integrating with Europe. Secondly, establishing good relations among each other played an important role in order to return to Europe. The problems, coming from the past and newly emerged in the post-Cold War era, among the Visegrad countries, in the first hand, were handled. The group, in this regard, was used as a communication channel that the member countries needed. The group's members began to solve their troubled issues among each other, and, they then promoted their regional cooperation as a *quasi*-proof that they managed to provide stability in the region.

The victorious Euro-Atlantic institution of the previous Cold War left the West without enemy by the collapses of the socialist regimes. But, the Central Europeans levied on NATO a new role. Through expressing their clear bids to be full members, NATO was eligible to reduce the critiques that had been made on its survival in the new era. NATO turn out to be *de rigueur* for the Central Europeans for two motivations: historical traumas and political and security conjuncture of the post-Cold War era. As a matter of fact, the Visegrad countries sought tangible security guarantees in the conventional meaning, and the only eligible structure to provide this was NATO. Earlier, the alliance was caught unprepared when the aspirations of the former Warsaw pact member taken into consideration, but then the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (1991) and Partnership for Peace (1994) processes alike were introduced to meet the bids of the former socialist countries, particularly of the more eligible ones to be full members, i.e. Poland, Czechoslovakia (subsequently the Czech Republic) and Hungary. However, these

processes left short to meet the expectations of the afore-named Visegrad countries, and their full-fledged memberships were achieved five years earlier than the other former Warsaw Pact members. At the same time, NATO also began to shift its strategies and understandings. New Security Concept of the alliance focused on asymmetric threats instead of concrete threats stemming from specific states, and launched a process to go 'out of area'. Through the integration process, therefore, the Visegrad countries, working together under the regional cooperation structure, succeeded to amalgamate themselves into this re-negotiation process of shifting NATO under new security understandings.

In the second part of the story, the achieved goals and new re-negotiations take the salient roles. The Visegrad group was successful to achieve the objective that it put forward in advance. The group differentiated its members from the other transition countries, constructed a prosperous regional cooperation structure in which its members coordinated their efforts in the paths of transition and integration alike, created a platform for democratic and liberal developments for its members, contributed solving the conflicts among its members, provided security for the region whose vicinity troubled in clashes, rendered the integration and transition quicker, and paved the way for its members to attain homeostasis: being an indispensable part of the Euro-Atlantic structures. Under these circumstances, the group completed its mission, so it might be dissolved since the need for it has been expired. However, the pragmatic perspective of the Visegrad countries did not allow this prospective end to happen. The motivation has been defined in favour of the continuity of the group in order to respond the new internal demands, differently from the previous demands of the West, of the group's members. The Central Europeans pronounced their will to take a significant role in the process of next re-negotiations in Europe, and beyond.

The European Union, in the aftermath of being a political Union, drew its way to be an effective global actor in US led world affairs. Hence, the position of the Union during the Yugoslav crisis displayed how far the EU was being in an effective global actor. To be so, the Union should have strengthened and what is more important is that it should have had a 'European Foreign Policy'. In order to do that, the EU began to alter its structures through the constructive treaties, which

formed the double processes of deepening and widening, and to develop a ‘Common Foreign and Security Policy’ (CFSP) to respond the world affairs with a single voice. As an economic giant, the Union could play a leading global role, yet it was cognizant that producing a defence and security policy for Europe would pave the way for this objective. Subsequent development of ‘European Security and Defence Policy’ (ESDP) became a key step in the path of gaining a status as a global actor. Thus, the Union has been involved in a re-negotiation process while it was enlarging towards the East.

As aspirant candidates and later on members of the Union, the Visegrad countries have constantly involved in this re-negotiation in Europe. The Visegrad countries created new rooms for cooperation pertaining to the new agendas of the EU. Before being members, they consulted among each other in the context of their contributions to shifting European objective. The political elite followed the developments of the CFSP and ESDP and worked on possible contributions of the region into those processes. In spite of a few reservations, in the fields of discrimination of non-EU members, duplication of existing security structures in which they took their places, and decoupling of the US, with whom they built close ties, from Europe, the Visegrad countries supported EU’s improvements in the field of being a global actor both economically and politically.

Hence, after being members, new tasks for the Visegrad initiative have been specified in order to take part in re-negotiation process in Europe, and this *per se* have turned out be a convincing reason for the continuity of the group that has been discussed a lot when it succeeded to complete its original chore. The Visegrad countries, first of all, with the fear of turning into the ‘colonies’ of this growing Union, decided that their grouping could continue to work as a regional lobby just like it happens in the case of Benelux cooperation. The relatively small Visegrad countries *vis-à-vis* the great power of the EU developed the idea to stand united before the leading powers in order to be more powerful to insist on their interests and not to be underestimated. The group, in this regard, have been aware of the fact that as long as they continue to be supplicants of the Union’s benefits they will not be lucrative to take part in the re-negotiation process of Europe. The new cooperation areas in which the group can continue to work, therefore, have been

determined to contribute to the new architecture of Europe. These areas have been Eastern and Balkan Policies of the EU. The Visegrad countries, constituting an 'Eastern Dimension', levied on themselves special responsibilities to shape the developing 'Eastern Policy of the EU'. Since the eastern borders of Visegrad countries, with the exception of the Czech Republic, are the eastern borders of the Union they have to contribute to the development of the Union's policy to the East, particularly towards Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. Moreover, the Central Europeans share a common culture and political past with the East Europeans, and this is another justification to participate in the forming the Eastern policy of the EU. The Balkans, on the other, is another dimension that has to be attached importance as an area that the Visegrad group can contribute to the EU's policies. With the historical and past political experiences and cultural affinities the Central Europeans are determining actors in the region. Thus, they can contribute into processes of stabilization of the Balkans and transcending the transition in the Balkans, and subsequently integration with the West.

The group, on the other hand, in transatlantic relation, perceived the shift of US foreign policy from 'hegemony' to 'empire'. The close relations with the US, built right after the end of the Cold War, granted hard security guarantees for the Visegrad countries, and the US demonstrated that it was with the Central Europeans. But, the shift of the US foreign policy became more apparent with the incident of September 11, and subsequent US response. The Visegrad countries supported the US in its post-September 11 struggles, therefore they, in turn, demonstrated that they are with the US. The Visegrad group, in this connection, gave its full support to the US in Afghanistan, and later on in Iraq. The war in Iraq displayed a new re-negotiation process in which the EU, namely Franco-German bloc, working on being an effective global actor, challenged the US. In this process, as aspirant states, the Visegrad countries, particularly Poland, flaunted that they are the parts of new world politics, and took their sides with the US, in spite of relentless critiques coming from the Franco-German bloc.

Within all these contexts, this thesis aims to display the strategies of the Visegrad countries to take an eminent part in the re-negotiation processes. In this connection, main argument of the thesis is that the Visegrad countries perceived the

changes in the world affairs, and they formed the Visegrad quadruple initiative, and renewing it, in order to response past and contemporary shifts.

In this study, a very brief and general background of the shifts in the Central Europe is given in order to pave the way to understand the later changes and responses of the Visegrad countries. Subsequently, the Central Europeans' tool, (sub)regional cooperation, and its theoretical framework are given along with the Visegrad's later transformation, turning to a regional initiative in the EU, and its theoretical approach may well be defined as realism within institutional framework.

The argument that the Central Europeans formed the group in order to respond the demand of the changing Europe and therefore realize the motto of 'return to Europe' is being put forward in the thesis. Hence, after achieving the original mission, integration with the West in all means, the group's existence began to be questioned. The Visegrad countries, with their pragmatic standpoint, levied on the group new tasks, which will be conducive to the continuity of the successful regional cooperation. In this regard, the discussion on the survival of the group is scrutinized in the chapter four. The discussions are delineated under two major topics as minimalist and maximalist views over the group's survival. The minimalist approach has a pessimist point of view on the function and survival of the group, whereas the maximalist approach perceives the continuity of the group as a beneficial transformation. In the thesis, in this respect, it will be argued that the survival of the group is more beneficial than its end, and this survival is possible through the regrouping of the Visegrad initiative in the EU, which is shifting. Moreover, the new areas in which the Visegrad countries can continue to cooperate are outlined and examined. This challenge for the survival ought to be considered as the Visegrad countries efforts to take part in the re-negotiation process as it has been noted above.

The security understandings of the Visegrad countries are handled to demonstrate the response of the countries to the changing world order. In this respect, it is argued in this thesis that the Visegrad countries pursue a 'double guarantee strategy' based on two pillars: Europe, and transatlantic dimension. The facets of the strategy, ends and means particularly, are examined in details in chapter

five. Thus, the afore-mentioned shifts in the EU and NATO and the group's responses are inspected as key elements of the thesis.

In order to demonstrate the tangible policies of the Visegrad countries as being the responses for the re-negotiations in world politics, two case studies are done in this thesis. The first case study is the war in Iraq and transatlantic drift. The attitude of the group and its reflections are touched upon to display the members' reaction as the new actors of the new milieu of the world politics. The second case study is the Convention on the Future of Europe and responses of the Visegrad in this process. The common and divergent point of views of the Visegrad countries are given to show how deep they are involved with the recent re-negotiation process in Europe, and chapter six deals with the cases.

The thesis concludes that the Visegrad countries are seeking to possess a significant place for themselves in the re-negotiation processes in the European context in the first place and in the transatlantic context in the second place.

CHAPTER 2

THE BACKGROUND AND THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Where is Central Europe?

The concept of Central Europe is controversial and therefore there is not a clear-cut definition of Central Europe. But, what is well conceded is that the term Central Europe is not a definite geographical notion. There are manifold elements making the concept Central Europe. The combination of these various elements make the difference that Central Europe is neither Western European nor Eastern European.

The geographical definition of Central Europe is relatively easier than its definition for identity. Nevertheless, in the geographical perspective, there is an obstacle in the means of borders, since there are no natural boundaries for the region. Central Europe, geographically, covers the area between the Baltic, in the north, and the Adriatic, in the south, Sea. Nonetheless, these boundaries do not give strict and defined geographical zone for Central Europe, since the Balkans, too, included in this territory. In the East-West dimension, on the other hand, there is even no such a natural border to determine the zone of the region. So the term Central Europe is becoming more important in its description in political, socio-economic and historical approach. Thus, one can come to this conclusion that the concept of Central Europe is artificial. It is true of being to larger extent. Paul Lewis, for instance, comes to this conclusion and underlines that the later concept of Central Europe was one developed by peoples, and, eventually, nations located between the greater powers and more extensive states of Germany and Russia. “In this sense, the idea of Central Europe is one that is more political and cultural than geographic in origin. It is a region that does lie in the middle of Europe...but geographical form has not been its most important characteristic.”¹

¹ Paul G.Lewis, *Central Europe Since 1945*, London, Longman, 1994, p. 8.

Still, the term Central Europe is not clear in its artificial body. The concept of Central Europe, thus, is vague, and it has ideological rather than strictly geographical connotations, although “geography seems to set limits beyond which it would be difficult to locate Central Europe. Usually Central Europe is understood as an historical and political entity with some common traits but with uncertain borders.”²

The development of the concept, on the other hand, is also noteworthy. The strength of Germanic power in the very middle of the continent came to apply a major influence in the nineteenth century and so forth and gave the idea of Central Europe a particular connotation. “Since this has emerged more recently than Russian regional presence it was in distinction to the German conception of *Mitteleuropa* that a contrasting modern conception of Central Europe was developed.”³

All along, the concept began to be used to distinguish the specific countries from the other Eastern Europeans even before the fall of the wall. In this regard, in the last stage of the Cold War, during 1980s, the concept has increasingly become more pronounced. In the 1980s, the term Central Europe implied that there was something in between East and West. The uprisings against Soviet domination repeated decade after decade in Hungary in 1956, in Czechoslovakia in 1968, and in Poland in 1981, demonstrated that these countries were reluctant to consent for Soviet domination, and that made them different than the other East Europeans.⁴ The dissidents began to distinguish Central Europe as an indispensable part of the Europe, which was left in the other side of the ‘curtain’ by demarches in Yalta. One of the pre-eminent advocates of this perspective is Czech dissident and satirist

² Kristian Gerner, ‘A Movable Place With A Moveable Past: Perspectives on Central Europe’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 45, No. 1, 1999, p. 5.

³ Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 27. In German language there are three different names to call Central Europe: *Mitteleuropa*, *Zwischeneuropa*, and *Zentraleuropa*. “Usually the first name is meant to indicate German preponderance, the second a *quantité négligeable* between Germany and Russia and the third something that exist in its own right and for itself –alas with a very vague territorial fixation. Whereas the first two concepts refer to an object without any identity of its own, the third –Central Europe – suggests a region in its own right.” Gerner, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁴ Lonnie Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 9.

Milan Kundera. He differentiates Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia with his famous diversification concept: 'the kidnapped West'. These countries were kidnapped by the Soviet Union, though they were Westerners in many senses.

What does Europe mean to a Hungarian, a Czech, a Pole: for thousands of years their nations have belonged to a part of Europe rooted in Roman Christianity. They have participated in every period of its history. For them the word 'Europe' does not represent a phenomenon of geography but a spiritual notion synonymous with the West.⁵

But not only Cold War experience makes them different than the others. There are several features exist to differentiate Central Europe from the East Europe. First of all, geographically, Central Europe is the closest lands of the East to the West, and this created deep ties and inter-communication. Secondly, in the domain of culture, particularly religion, the Roman Catholic Central Europeans are close the Western Europeans and away from the Orthodox East Europeans, as Kundera outlines. Thirdly, historical expansions and dynasties in the region created another dividing line. Central Europe witnessed the Habsburg rein, whereas the South Eastern Europe was under the Ottoman rule. Fourthly, Central Europe, in the means of economy and economic development, caught a visible higher level than the East Europeans, but still they are far from being like Western economic powers. Fifthly, as noted before, Central Europe, in political understanding, created numerous dissidents against authoritarian regimes throughout the socialist rules, and three upheavals occurred in the region. And sixthly, when the former regimes fell, the region, peculiarly, involved in a process of 'redemocratisation' process, referring the post WWII regimes, rather than 'democratisation' process like faced in the rest of the East Europe.⁶

Under the light of all these elements, Poland, the Czech Republic⁷, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Austria and Germany, in a broader sense, are becoming

⁵ Milan Kundera, 'The Tragedy of Central Europe', *New York Review of Books*, 26 April 1984, p. 22.

⁶ Atilla Agh, *The Politics of Central Europe*, London, Sage, 1998, pp. 4-5, and Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-5.

‘Central Europeans’. But Yugoslav pasts of Slovenia and Croatia make them different than the Visegrad Four –V4. Western experiences during the Cold War and development levels of Austria and Germany, on the other hand, distinguish them from the V4 countries, too. In this study, thus, the concept Central Europe is used as referring merely the Visegrad countries, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary.

2.2. The Modern History of the Visegrad Countries

The modern history of the region begins after the World War I, since the history of the region, theretofore, was written by the powerful empires of both East and West Europe.⁸

After the WWI, the newly independent or reconstructed nation-states were born into the complex political milieu of Europe. The Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy was dismembered and the ‘Paris Peace Treaties’: the Versailles, St. Germain, Neuilly and Trianon signed between 1919 and 1920, by and large, shaped the new territorial, ethnical and cultural characteristics of the region: trouble-making ethnic minorities left within the independent states that were not hospitable to them. Through the Trianon, Hungary lost two-thirds of its territories. Transylvania and Banat to Romania; the Vojvodina, Croatia and parts of Dalmatia to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Yugoslavia since 1929); Slovakia, or upper Hungary, to Czechoslovakia; and Burgenland to Austria. After the war, Poland was resurrected and she gained accession to the Baltic Sea. The eastern borders of Poland determined only after the war against Red Army in 1920, and the ethnic Polish area

⁷ The upper house of the Czech parliament held a public hearing in May 2004 to promote a short version of the Czech Republic as ‘*česko*’ in Czech and ‘Czechia’ in English. Source; Reuters. It is available at the address of <http://www.reuters.co.uk/newsArticle.jhtml?type=correctedNews&storyID=5131104§ion=news>, accessed on 15.05.2004. In this thesis, ‘Czechia’ is going to be used to refer to the Czech lands, whereas ‘the Czech Republic’ to refer to the Czech state.

⁸ The modern and brief history of the region told here is arranged from three sources: Joseph Rothschild, *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East Central Europe Since World War II*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1993, Paul G.Lewis, *Central Europe Since 1945*, London, Longman, 1994, and Lonnie Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1996.

of Teschen was lost to Czechoslovakia as a result of France policy of 'divide and rule'. Poland, in turn, occupied Vilnius and thus reached its eighteenth century pre-partition borders. Czechoslovakia, on the other hand, was born as a newly independent state. The idea of Czechoslovak nation was developed by the nationalists in exile in the US and France. The Czech and Slovak leaders concluded that it was better to be united than being apart. The Czechs were motivated by the fear of German influence and expansionism. Strategically, wider territories and bigger population could deter the Germans, to some extent, from attacking the Czech lands. The Slovaks, for their part, if not the best option, were in favour of joining their powers with their Czech cousins against Magyarising tutelage of Hungary.⁹

Between the wars, in the first decade, the region faced a power vacuum because Germany and Soviet Russia were weak to impose a regional influence. France came into region in parallel with its containment strategy against Germany. France established a network of bilateral treaties with Czechoslovakia (1924) and Poland (1921), and these countries, thus, turned out to be *status quo* powers. But Hungary, with the frustration and ambition, as a legacy of the Trianon Treaty, joined the revisionist camp. When the Little Entente concluded in 1920-21 between pro-*status quo* countries, i.e. Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Romania, Poland hesitated to be involved. The problem was the region of Teschen left in Czech lands. Subsequently, Poland made fatal mistakes to conclude non-aggression pacts with the Soviet Russia and Germany alike, and in 1939 Poland undermined the Anglo-French initiative to gain USSR on their bloc against Germany by refusing to take place in a military cooperation with the Russians. Furthermore, in the same year, Poland took part in the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia at Munich Conference in order to regain Teschen. The 1939 German-Soviet protocol, thus, brought the devastation to Poland by its fourth partition.¹⁰

⁹ Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 171-196.

¹⁰ Lewis, *op.cit.*, pp. 21-48.

Hitler's Germany shaped Central Europe, as well as entire Europe, once again between 1938 and 1945. Hungary fought together with Germans, Slovakia became an independent for the first time but a puppet state of the Nazis, Czech lands were occupied by the Germans, and Poland was once again partitioned. These four nations were emancipated by the Red Army in the year of 1945, and however the Soviet domination stayed in the region as well as the Soviet army, as it was decided at the notorious Yalta conference in 1945 that the Central Europeans considered it as a betrayal of the West. Poland was moved bodily to westwards, to the line of Oder-Neisse rivers. Czechoslovakia restored within its pre-Munich frontiers, with the exception of Carpatho-Ukraine, which ceded to the USSR. Hungary, as an enemy, left under Soviet controlled allied occupation force until the 1947 Paris Treaty. To large extent, minorities within the Central European states were expelled, and these countries became more homogeneous in ethnical means.¹¹

The local resistance against the Nazis was organized by the *Partizan* groups, i.e. the communists, so when the Germans withdrew from the region, and the Red Army came, the domestic politics, except the governments in exile, were gradually developed in favour of the local socialists. The socialists, more organized with the spirit of brotherhood in the war, gradually demonstrated their power. In the first stages, they did not seek to occupy high ministries in the governments, but controlled such ministries that could maximise their goal and tie the hands of their opponents as Interior (police), Information (propaganda), Agriculture (land reform) and Social Affairs. This gradualism gave it benefits in 1948 in the region. Socialists reached the majority of the parliaments, and thus first steps for the authoritarian regimes were taken. The story then developed as the one-party rule, revolution's eating of its own children, reducing power of native socialists and Stalin's control.¹²

Stalin's death and Krushchev's leadership in the Soviets incepted a new path for the socialist political development and resistance against Soviet pressure. The speech of Krushchev at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet

¹¹ Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 204-232.

¹² Rothschild, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-104.

Union in 1956, and withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary triggered the reform demands –social change – of Hungarian intellectuals. By mid-October 1956, a revolutionary and de-Stalinization atmosphere arose in Budapest streets, and the reformist government of Imre Nagy, with the support of the Hungarian public, began its bold reform movement. It even proposed free and multi-party elections and above all withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact. The Soviets could not tolerate that, and the result was notorious Soviet intervention into Hungary and bloody smash of the movement. A similar challenge against the authoritarian regime came from Czechoslovakia under the leadership of Alexander Dubček. The Prague Spring, under his aspiration, aimed to build a sort of ‘socialism with a humanitarian face’, which brings the party closer to the society and adopts it to new life. This limited programme *vis-à-vis* the Hungarian movement, was perceived as a threat by the Soviet leadership. Thus, the Prague Spring was faded by the military intervention of Soviet and other Warsaw Pact armies.¹³ The growing power of the *Solidarność* (Solidarity) in Poland brought another serious challenge against pressing socialist rule. The disciplined wave of non-violent strikes, for fundamental rights of the workers and for free trade unions from the party, under the control of Solidarity movement with the leadership of Lech Wałęsa gained impetus in 1980, and the movement spread to all levels of the society. The result, with reinforcing pressures of a deteriorating domestic situation and a mounting external –Soviet –threat, was the declaration of martial law in December 1981, and quelling the movement, but not forever.¹⁴

These three cyclical movements were the earlier steps taken to ‘return to diversity’. But the return happened in 1989, when the external and internal conjunctures were accurate. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in 1975, as a result of *Ostpolitik*, and its third basket dealing with humanitarian issues, like respect for human rights including freedom of thought, conscience, religion or conviction became a milestone in the process of change in the Eastern bloc. Subsequent reform wind in the USSR with Gorbachev, called as

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 145-173.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 199-232.

Glasnost and *Perestroika*, created an understanding of tolerance in socialist regimes to reconsider their own systems, and the Soviets began to make the Brezhnev Doctrine obsolete. The growing intensification of the Cold War, with the inception of Soviet intervention into Afghanistan, and the ‘Star Wars’ project caused economic hardship in the delicate Soviet economy. All these major external factors overlapped with the domestic reform attempts, which turned into a systemic change. When the wall fell in Berlin in 1989, the Central Europeans already geared up to change the regimes.

‘Return to diversity’ came cross with the famous motto of ‘return to Europe’, and the Central Europeans demonstrated their aspiration to integrate with the West in all meanings, in which all of them became successful. The Central Europeans overcome the ‘double process of transition and integration’. All the Visegrad countries successfully concluded their membership adventure for the EU, and they are now, since May 1, 2004, full members of the Union. Poland, The Czech Republic and Hungary became the full members of NATO in 1999, and Slovakia as latecomer became the full member of the Alliance in April 2004. Thus the Visegrad countries turned out to be eligible to harmonize themselves into shifting Europe within the re-negotiation process.

2.3. The Theoretical Framework

The will of the Central Europeans to incorporate into the shifting system of the world affairs under a (sub)regional framework can be examined within different, but inter-related, frameworks.

Sub-Regionalism, in this connection, is a sub-category of regionalism. The sub-regionalist approaches became more pronounced particularly after the collapse of one of the rival blocs, i.e. the Eastern Bloc. Nevertheless, throughout the East and West conflict, sub-regions had involved in a process of regionalism. For instance, in the Western Europe, as a sub-region of Europe, capitalist countries united under European Community whereas in the East, as another sub-region of Europe, socialist countries did the same under COMECON.

The growing importance of sub-regionalism, however, is embedded within the post-Cold War era. The newly occurred fault lines in East Europe created a tiny frontier between ‘cosmos and chaos’ and sub-regionalism became a crucial tool for the transition countries in order to take place in ‘cosmos’.¹⁵ Sub-regional groupings, in this regard, began to have leading role in these sub-regional tendencies. Sub-regional groups, first of all, are able to make a significant and growing contribution to European security architecture in the means of soft security concerns, because sub-regions are both too small (strategically unbalanced) and too large (diverse) to be able to convey hard security guarantees.¹⁶ “Regional meetings and the creation of personal ties encourage *esprit de corps*, create channels of communication which might also be to defuse crises, and should at least unconsciously strengthen taboos against the use of force”, and thus to some extent, the sub-regional groupings contribute in European security architecture by positive meanings.¹⁷

The most eminent motivation behind this sub-regional cooperation in the East Europe is being a part of the supra-region, i.e. Europe, and therefore removing the dividing lines in Europe in the post-Cold War era.¹⁸ Thus the main topics of these groups, along with creating soft security guarantees such as developing principles and mechanisms of cooperation on new threats (like terrorism, organized crime, drug and other smugglings, refuges and migration, and humanitarian aid), are economic development, transnational planning for infra structure and transport, environmental problems and natural resource management, and human contacts especially in the fields of tourism, culture and education.¹⁹

¹⁵ For the process of ‘cosmos and chaos’ see, Ola Tunander, ‘Post-Cold War Europe: A Synthesis of a Bi-polar Friend-Foe Structure and a Hierarchic Cosmos-Chaos Structure?’, Ola Tunander, Pavel K. Baev and Victoria Ingrid Einagel (eds.), *Geopolitics in Post-Wall Europe*, Oslo, Peace Research Institute, 1997.

¹⁶ See, Andrew Cottey, ‘Europe’s New Subregionalism’, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2, June 2000, pp. 24-5, and, Ian Bremmer and Alyson Bailes, ‘Sub-Regionalism in the Newly Independent States’, *International Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 1, January 1998, pp. 133-4.

¹⁷ Bremmer and Bailes, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

¹⁸ Cottey, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

¹⁹ Bremmer and Bailes, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

Within this context, Europe, as a crucial region, has such two main sub-regions as Western and Eastern Europe. However, with the end of the Cold War the overlapping double process, transition and integration, “resulted in the reconfiguration of whole Eastern Europe into tangible sub-regions, such as East Central Europe, South Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans.”²⁰ In this study, Central Europe –being the Visegrad countries, as discussed above – is examined as a sub-region of Europe, and its tendencies are occupying great importance.

In Central Europe, there are three main sub-regional groups: Central European Initiative (CEI), the Visegrad quadruple initiative, and Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA). The CEI is the larger Central European grouping. The CEI dates back to the year of 1978 in which the Alpe-Adrai Working Group was established between Italy, Austria, Yugoslavia and Hungary to promote cooperation in the region. In November 1989, the group became the CEI and through the fall of the wall, the other East Central European countries gradually joined the group and it became the CEI.²¹ Since the Visegrad group is occupying the whole interest area of this thesis, a detailed analysis of it is given in the next sections. CEFTA, on the other hand, was established by the Visegrad countries and it came into force on 1 March 1993. CEFTA, thenceforth has expanded. Slovenia (1 January 1996), Romania (1 July 1997) and Bulgaria (1 January 1999) became members. Different from the Visegrad cooperation, CEFTA represented a shift in the concept of sub-regional cooperation in which the implementation of a sub-regional free trade area replaced political cooperation and policy coordination as the most efficient way for those countries to collectively approach the EU. Since cooperation in the framework of CEFTA has been ongoing for more than a decade and some governments in the region have been re-assessing their approaches to sub-regional cooperation, these facts alone justify some reflection on CEFTA’s impact

²⁰ Mustafa Türkeş, ‘Double Process: Transition and Integration and Its Impact on the Balkans’, *Towards Non-Violence and Dialogue Culture in Southeast Europe*, Ivan Hadjisky (ed.), Sofia, The Institute for Social Values and Structures Publications, 2004, p. 13.

²¹ For more information about the CEI see, *infra*, p. 70.

so far.²² However, to date, “CEFTA has remained simply as a free trade area, with no longer economic and political role.” Furthermore, memberships of the EU aspirant countries, e.g. Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia are purported as the end of CEFTA, since the EU’s common external trade policy precludes membership of separate trade arrangements.²³

The very key point in the Central European sub-regional groupings is that there is no place for the great powers of Russia and Germany that have dominated the region for a very long time.²⁴

Another dimension of the theoretical framework is realism, but realism within a given institutional framework. The integration process of the EU is well defined with the neo-functionalism²⁵, which distinguish the new regionalism in Europe from the former patterns as imperialism and developmentalism.²⁶ The EU put its emphasis on neo-functionalist regional integration, but from the perspective of the Central Europeans the motivation was far from being as neo-functionalist. Since the pattern of the neo-functionalism that became successful in making the EU based on the initial economic cooperation, *de facto* between France and Germany, and then forming a political union, the relationship between the EU and the V4 countries do not fit into this framework. Thus, the V4 countries met with a given institutional framework as an aspiration, and they, in a pure realist perspective, fixed themselves into this framework.

The end of the Cold War brought profound changes in strategies of states and institutions alike. As Keohane and Nye mention, western and eastern governments developed new strategies to cope with the end of the Cold War. They had to adapt to the new circumstances. So, the end of the Cold War brought about changes in state

²² Matthew Rhodes, ‘Post-Visegrad Cooperation in East Central Europe’, *East European Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 1, March 1999, pp. 56-57.

²³ Cottey, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

²⁵ David Mitrany, *A Working Peace System*, Chicago, Quadrangle Books, 1943.

²⁶ Wendy Larner and William Walters, ‘The Political Rationality of “New Regionalism”’: Toward a Genealogy of the Region’, *Theory and Society*, Vol. 31, 2002, pp 395-407.

strategies. In addition to that, there have been also important changes in many international organizations. Just like states, international institutions had to adapt to the new environment during the-Post Cold War era.²⁷

Rosenau, on the other hand, handles the post-Cold War era as ‘turbulence in world politics’. To him, high degrees of complexity and dynamisms are the main characteristics of turbulent politics and such dynamisms are not new to world politics. There have always been wars, revolutions. But, what makes contemporary transformation different is “parametric change.”²⁸ That is to say after the Cold War, today the world is witnessing that traditional parameters of world politics, namely structures and relationships, have begun to crumble. According to Rosenau, such a transformation has not been experienced for three hundred years. (Since 1648 Westphalia Treaty) He mentions that three main parameters of the world politics are in the process of transformation today. “One of these operates at the micro level of individuals, one functions at the macro level of collectivities, and the third involves a mix of the two levels.”²⁹ So, one can claim that the world is being involved in a process profound change at micro and macro levels today. That means changes are taking place at individual level and structural level simultaneously.

During the post-Cold War era many crucial changes occurred in terms of the state strategies and the organization of international institutions. As Keohane and Nye put it, “west Europe was densely institutionalized when the Cold War came to an end.”³⁰ On the contrary with the end of the Cold War the institutions established by the Eastern Bloc became obsolete, and eventually they were formally dissolved after 1989, such as The Warsaw Treaty Organization. Although western institutions continue to play important roles today, many of them had to adapt to the new circumstances. The most striking event was the restructuring of NATO. As the

²⁷ Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, ‘Introduction: The End of the Cold War in Europe’, *After the Cold War*, R.O. Keohane, J.S. Nye and S. Hoffman (ed), Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1993, p. 1.

²⁸ J. N. Rosenau, *Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change and Stability*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1990, pp. 10-11.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

³⁰ R. O. Keohane and J. S. Nye, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

Soviet Union collapsed, NATO had to assume new responsibilities, because traditional power politics have almost come to an end. Within this context, NATO adopted the 'new strategic concept'. With the adoption of it, the organization has undertaken new responsibilities with regard to the terrorist activities, ethnic conflicts, environmental problems so on so forth.

One of the most significant changes during the post-Cold War era was related with the state strategies. These strategies are linked with the international institutions. During the post-Cold War era, Germany had become reflexively institutionalist. She has attached importance to the international institutions. The Russian Federation became sceptical about any institution in which she was not a member. The U.S. has tried to adapt NATO into the post-Cold War environment. These examples about institutions can be extended towards Central Europe, as well.

The Central Europeans reflected their pragmatic perspectives in institutions as their state strategies. The Visegrad group's original mission was to realize the smooth transition and thus integrate with the Euro-Atlantic institutions, and they did everything possible to reach that aim. The expectations of the V4 countries, in this process, were realist. They did not seek to establish the peace in Europe like the Westerners desired, or did not want to be dominant powers of the Central Europe. What they wanted, quite pragmatically, is integrating with the West and transcending the isolation in the region. In the second episode of this aspiration, i.e. with accessions into the Euro-Atlantic institutions, the Central Europeans has begun to use realism within the institutional framework. As it is going to be seen, the Visegrad countries are seeking to transform the group into a regional lobbying group, but not yet a bloc, so that they might advocate their interest easier, and overcome the jeopardy of being seen as the colonies of the trigger powers of Europe, most likely of Germany. This realist standpoint of the Visegrad countries thus finds a place within the process of European integration. And that is what this study is examining in the later sections.

CHAPTER 3

THE MAKING OF THE VISEGRAD QUADRUPLE INITIATIVE

3.1. Building the Group

“We are mutually dependent on each other.”

Lech Wałęsa

The idea of uniting the smaller countries located between Germany and Russia *per se* is not new. Concrete proposals to create close co-operation and even a federation date back to 1918 and even before. The most noteworthy is of Czechoslovakia’s first president Thomas Garrigue Masaryk’s suggestion. He called for a ‘New Europe’ and was aware of the risks involved in bringing together a large number of small countries. “Therefore, he considered a new democratically-oriented Central European federation.”³¹

The ‘kidnapped west’ in Central Europe was more eager to return to Europe than any other former socialist country, and they, *quid pro quo*, were perceived as the most eligible countries to be first to integrate with the West. At this stage, they concluded that they could best promote their motto –back to Europe – by acting together, rather than singly and competitively. Thus, to create stabilization and security in the region would bring them closer to achieve that goal. Poland, Hungary and the then Czechoslovakia decided to co-operate pragmatically on political grounds, i.e. in the means of transition and integration. But then, it was decided to strengthen the co-operation with a historical and organizational basis. There were references to the first Czechoslovak President Masaryk’s ideas of co-operation among the Central Europeans, as noted above. There were also proposals for forms

³¹ Jiri Musil, ‘Visegrad: Wanted or Not?’, *New Presence: The Prague Journal of Central European Affairs*, Vol. 3, Issue 3, Autumn 2001, p. 6.

of practical ‘low politics’ co-operation, which will then be precisely implemented within the Visegrad framework.³²

The name ‘Visegrad’³³ comes from a castle in northern Hungary, on the side of the Danube, where the Polish, Hungarian and Czech kings met in 1335 to agree to establish a regional cooperation, and 656 years later, on 15 February 1991, the Polish, Hungarian and Czechoslovak heads of state met in the same place to declare a similar cooperation in the region. At this first meeting, the document that is indicating the foundation of the Visegrad group was released: ‘Declaration On Cooperation Between The Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, The Republic of Poland and The Republic Of Hungary in Striving For European Integration.’³⁴

The objectives of the group, according to the declaration, are full restitution of state independence, democracy and freedom; elimination of all existing social, economic and spiritual aspects of the totalitarian system; construction of a parliamentary democracy, a modern State of Law, respect for human rights and freedoms; creation of a modern free market economy; full involvement in the European political and economic system, as well as the system of security and legislation.

According to Geza Jeszenszky, former Foreign Minister of Hungary (1990-94), and Ambassador to the United States in 1998-2002, the summit of 1991 meant much more than coordinating policies for certain immediate objectives.

It was a positive alternative to earlier, bad arrangements for the region: direct foreign domination combined with the partition of the Polish nation (the Habsburg Empire before 1867 and, in a far more brutal version, Hitler's Third Reich), the attempt at non-democratic integration (the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, 1867-1918), or one group ganging up against another and seeking support from selfish great powers (the so-called Little Entente

³² John Fitzmaurice, *Politics and Government in the Visegrad Countries: Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1998, pp. 182-183.

³³ There is also another city, which is called Visegrad, in Bosnia-Herzegovina in *Republika Srpska*, where turned to be well-known owing to Nobel Prize awarded novel of Ivo Andrić titled ‘Na Drini ćuprija/The Bridge on the Drina’ –1944 –but then became notorious due to the massacres of the Bosnians during the Yugoslav civil war.

³⁴ See, Appendix B.

in 1921-1938 and the alliance of Austria, Hungary and Italy in the mid-1930s).³⁵

The constitution of the Visegrad group was, to a large degree, based on the ‘idea of Central Europe’ – striving for the idea of peaceful co-existence in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious environment, which in the 20th century fascinated many intellectuals and politicians alike. But its original reasons were quite pragmatic – regional co-operation within the V3 (later on V4) format was intended to help the countries involved to overcome the aftermaths of the complicated and in many respects uncertain political development after 1989 – including the withdrawal of the Warsaw Treaty troops, the collapse of the Warsaw Treaty and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), the disintegration of the Soviet Union, efforts for a ‘return to Europe’ – i.e. for enlargement of NATO and the EU to include the post-communist countries, and so on and so forth. In this regard, the goal of the group is to assist and accelerate the transition from the Soviet orbit to the Euro-Atlantic structures, and therefore refrain from being isolated by monitoring each other, learning from the others' methods, coordinating foreign policy in all directions, and serving as a model of regional cooperation for other states and groups of states that may be interested to establish regional cooperation.³⁶

After overcoming the first shocks of the collapse of the former regimes, in the path of transition, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia created the Visegrad idea. Though the intent behind the idea was, as noted earlier, to unite the Central European countries on their common road towards NATO and the EU, the idea itself emanated from another crucial dimension. This source was the feeling isolation, which was deeply-rooted in national consciousness. “Each nation had experienced the terror of imperial violence, which went on before the eyes of the world. For

³⁵ Geza Jeszenszky, *The “Visegrad Idea”: A Model for Cooperation*, in Euro-Atlantic Security Workshop 27 September 2002, http://www.csis.org/iac/euroatl/ev_020927.htm, accessed on 23.11.2003.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Czechoslovakia this was the years 1938 and 1968, for Hungary 1956, for Poland 1939.”³⁷

3.2. Working of the Group

3.2.1. Establishment of the Group

3.2.1.1. Structure

Visegrad is not an institution. It has no formal organization, except the International Visegrad Fund, not even a secretary, and thus the bureaucracy does not hamper prompt action. Visegrad works owing to the personal affinity among the leaders of the countries involved, and the common purposes that they champion. The founders were all staunch anti-Communists, committed to regional cooperation and to the Visegrad ideal. “The affinity and friendship of the leaders has strong popular support, going back to older and recent history, particularly to solidarity in opposing the Communist system.”³⁸

With its lacking of an institutional base, the co-operation is based on rotating leadership and meetings of the representatives of the four member countries on different levels. Only the International Visegrad Fund (IVF), with its headquarters in Bratislava, is the founded structure of the group. The appointment in 2000 of the IVF was aimed at strengthening the civic initiatives and activities of NGOs in V4 countries. The IVF (with a current annual budget of over 2.4 million Euro; since its establishment in 2000, this figure has increased by 2.5 times), supports the realization of projects proposed from time to time by groups of enthusiasts from at least three member countries. These include seminars or meetings, as well as large-scale events. An agreement was initiated as regards the Visegrad scholarship fund - in autumn 2003, the first students have already taken advantage of these scholarships (scholarship funds enabling a wider scale of student exchanges have

³⁷ Jiri Dienstbier and Adam Michnik, ‘Why We Need Visegrad’, *New Presence: The Prague Journal of Central European Affairs*, Vol. 3, Issue 3, Autumn 2001, p. 11.

³⁸ Jeszenszky, *op.cit.*

played a significant role in the tightening of French-German relations). That *per se* demonstrates the significance of the IVF for the region.³⁹

In the 'Contents of Visegrad Co-operation', 14 May 1999, the structure of the Visegrad group was stated explicitly. According to this document, the Prime Ministers meet with a coordinating chairmanship on a rotating basis mandate for one year and main topics that they discuss is the state of co-operation, EU accession talks, strategic questions of Central Europe. The other government members meet when the need arises and they discuss particular questions in charge of corresponding ministries. The State Secretaries of Foreign Affairs meet twice a year and they discuss preparation of prime ministers' meetings, working out draft recommendations for the tactic and strategy to be pursued in the co-operation. The ambassadors meet regularly, in the chairing country at least 4 times a year and they discuss the state of Visegrad co-operation. The Visegrad Co-ordinators meet twice a year, as and when the need arises, alternately in the four countries and they discuss reviewing and co-ordinating the co-operation, preparation of the state secretaries' and prime ministers' meetings. On the other hand, it is foreseen that the Visegrad co-operation will not develop only between the governments, but also other forms of co-operation will be encouraged, such as the meetings of the heads of state, the regular communication between the parliaments, the intensive contacts between 'intermediary bodies' of civil society, so on so forth.⁴⁰

According to an annex to the same document, the role of the Presidency is based on following principles. In respect to the external dimension, if a proposal is made for a top-level meeting in the V4+1 format⁴¹, such initiative will first be discussed among the Visegrad countries and only then presented to a third country by the V4 presiding country; the same mechanism will apply to meetings at lower

³⁹ Patrycja Bukalska, 'A new Visegrad Group in the new European Union- Possibilities and Opportunities for Development', <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/epub/epunkt/2003/05/030513.htm>, accessed on 15.12.2003. For more information about the IVF, see <http://www.visegradfund.org/>

⁴⁰ Contents of Visegrad cooperation, 14 May 1999, available at <http://www.visegradgroup.org/contents.php>, accessed on 21.11.2003.

⁴¹ *Infra.*, p. 62.

levels or expert talks held in the V4+1 format. In respect to the internal dimension, expert talks (e.g. at the level of departments of individual ministries) can any time be called by any V4 country; the presiding country at the beginning of its mandate, works out a document summing up the priorities of its Presidency and call expert consultations on this document that will include a part devoted to planned inter-ministerial cooperation in the drafting of which all parties will participate. The Prime Ministers at their summit assess results of the implementation of the document and take relevant political decisions in those cases where needed. The fulfilment of such decisions is a subject of assessment of the next Summit.⁴²

The consultation process, in this regard, is of great importance within the group. The process is a key apparatus to make agendas for the group and above all to shape, or harmonize, the policies in regional and broad frameworks. However, one has to bear in mind that agenda-making and policy-shaping mechanisms within consultation process is carrying out a shifting characteristic. The priorities for these mechanisms are differing from one V4 country to another, and thus all the structure related with the group is of incrementalist speciality.

3.2.1.2. Functions

Since the main objective of the V4 countries has been to be full members of the EU and NATO, the salient function of the group has been a political form to discuss and consul on the path of these integrations, and therefore paving the way for the V4 countries in their bids. Thus, the Visegrad group has been a mean to reach the end. The group, as a tool, has been levied on several functions and the V4 countries have been unequivocal to pronounce these functions of the group.

At the international stage, as triumph of ‘marketing’, the group has been a quasi-proof that Central Europe was the most stable and secure region in the post-Cold War era among the other former socialist countries. Having of these characteristics, Central Europe claimed and was perceived as the most eligible vicinity for the EU and NATO to enlarge.

⁴² Contents of Visegrad cooperation, 14 May 1999, *op. cit.*

We, the representatives of the Parliaments of the Central European countries, re-confirm our belief that the co-operation in the field of European integration and common responsibility for building stability and security on our continent constitutes our common interest. We believe that our co-operation within the Visegrad group brings us closer to the membership in the European Union.⁴³

Evidently, the Visegrad group has been so successful in producing affirmative discourses about themselves as well as disseminating such discourses in Europe wide.

The group provides possibilities for the member countries to create a regional policy, provided that the national interests are overlapped. The Contents of Visegrad Co-operation, for instance, indicated that in the field of foreign affairs, regular meetings and consultations of experts (on bi-, tri-, or quadrilateral basis) are to be made to exchange of information on long-term strategies and concepts of foreign, security and defence policy, exchange of views on the stability and security of the Central and Eastern European region. And in the field of internal affairs, co-operation in border and immigration affairs in the context of EU accession, and harmonization in combating illegal migration, illicit drugs transport and distribution, weapon smuggling, organized crime and terrorism are purported as functions of the group.

Similarly, the group, to some extent, is beneficial to build a Central European identity. It is stated that,

Enhancing public awareness of and greater civic involvement in the Visegrad cooperation remain among our future objectives. Cooperation at regional and local levels focused on intensified everyday contacts will therefore represent an important dimension of the V4 activities. In today's rapidly changing world it is important to develop and strengthen the Central European identity. Active involvement of representatives of local self-governments and non-governmental organizations in programmes of Visegrad Cooperation could significantly promote these efforts.⁴⁴

⁴³ Joint Statement of the Chairmen of the Committees of the Foreign Affairs, of the Defence and of the European Integration of the Parliaments of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland, Warsaw, 18 December 2000, available at <http://www.visegradgroup.org/events.php?kdy=1718december2000>, accessed on 21.11.2003.

In the content of the Visegrad co-operation, the domains of education, culture, society, youth, sport, science and technology, environment, and infrastructure were given priority to build, or augment, the idea and the identity of Central Europe.

The Report of Slovakia for her Presidency in 2002/2003 outlines the functions of the group. In the fields of integration and security (these are the key elements of the double guarantee strategy), the group has been levied on serious functions. In the priority 'Integration', the Visegrad co-operation achieved: common agreement on time co-ordination of the referenda on the EU accession; creation of Visegrad Scholarship Programme; common will to discuss about the future of V4 in enlarged European Union. In the priority 'security', the Visegrad Group achieved: support for the NATO membership of Slovak Republic before the NATO summit in Prague; development of defence industrial co-operation and in the field of internal security, the continual discussion of relevant authorities on the issues concerning implementation of regulation of European Union in the Home and Justice Affairs.⁴⁵ It is clear that the Visegrad group played a large role in the formation of identity and helped increasing consciousness on common regional priorities in the process of integration to the Euro-Atlantic structures.

3.2.2. Developments and Crises in the Group

A classical scenario can also be written for the Visegrad initiative as for other groupings. The scenario has a promising start with enthusiasm, the gradual dominance of particular interests, crises in cooperation, dead-ends, and finally a moderate revival. Such a picture, more or less, is a good example to make an explanation of the process of the Visegrad quadruple.

Throughout the meetings in V3 format in Bratislava in 1990, in Visegrad 1991 and in Krakow in 1991, a great enthusiasm covered the region. However, at the

⁴⁴ Joint Statement of the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Countries Prague, Czech Republic, 9 June 2000, available at <http://www.visegradgroup.org/events.php?kdy=9june2000>, accessed on 21.11.2003.

⁴⁵ Annual Report of the Slovak Presidency in the Visegrad Group 2002-2003, available at http://www.visegradgroup.org/annual_cont.php?stranka=2003, accessed on 18.04.2004.

Prague Summit of May 1992, *au contraire*, this sort of wishful thinking faced with serious problems. The then Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus of the Czech Republic cast shadow to this promising start. After the first open call for admission into NATO made in Prague, co-operation weakened due to rhetoric of Klaus.⁴⁶ As it is going to be touched upon in details below, he was of the opinion that the Czechs, who were, to him, the most wanted nation for Europe and the most Westernised of the post-socialism, could protect their national interests best by themselves, and therefore they did not need any co-operation with relatively backward countries in her east, e.g. Poland and Hungary. Even, such cooperation, to him, could let the Czechs be unsuccessful in their bid to be first to return to Europe. However, this crisis may also well be explained by culminating domestic crisis in Czechoslovakia, which ended up with a peaceful divorce by the end of 1992.

Following this crisis in the group, the break-up of Czechoslovakia on January 1, 1993, after that V3 format became V4, turned out to be another negative component of this multi-faceted co-operation. The addendum of this event was the two nationalist leaders in former Czechoslovakia: Klaus in the Czech Republic and Vladimir Meciar in Slovakia. There were other hindrances too: Hungarian minority in southern Slovakia (around 600 thousands) was negatively affected from nationalist policies and together with Gabčíkovo dam project on the Danube relationship between Slovakia and Hungary was overwhelmingly strained. Hungary, on the other hand, began to speak in tougher, and even provocative, voice in order to protect her compatriots living abroad and Josef Antall, the then premier of Hungary, introduced himself as the prime minister of 15 million Hungarian, i.e. also of Hungarian minorities living in neighbouring countries.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, during this time of strain in the bi-lateral relations, the group managed not to lose sight of the principle goal: integration with West. Between 1992 and 1998, the group continued to hold regular meetings in manifold levels for

⁴⁶ Jeszenszky, *op.cit.*

⁴⁷ Andrew Cottey, 'Central Europe After NATO Enlargement', *NATO Final Report*, June 1998, p. 18. Available at <http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/96-98/cottey.pdf>, accessed on 12.03.2003.

various issues that did not bring anything tangible.⁴⁸ Economic and governmental changes in almost all Visegrad group seem to have been given a way to a fresh start: 1997 crash of the Czech economic miracle and the fall of PM Klaus –replaced by social democrat Milos Zeman, turned out to be a spark for the revitalization of the group. The Czech, thenceforth, have not alleged that they are the stars of the transition process, and perceived that Poland is more important for the EU, in particular for Germany, with her aspiring outcomes in transition and large market. Following 1997, in 1998 the Meciar government was ‘dethroned’ by a democratic coalition led by Mikulas Dzurinda. On 28 October 1998, a tri-lateral summit of the Presidents of the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary was held in Budapest, and the participants embodied their support to the revitalization of the group, not only in political domain but also in other fields.⁴⁹ After the ‘re-democratisation’ of Slovakia, the four countries convened on 14 May 1999 and proclaimed a fresh start for the Visegrad group.⁵⁰ At this summit, the Contents of Visegrad cooperation, as noted above, was endorsed as the re-founding document of the group.

The reason behind this resurrection was clear: taking the first seats within EU’s enlargement. Still, the motivation for this principal goal differed in various sources. On the one hand, Gabor Iklody, a Hungarian diplomat, argued that, “no one told us to [co-operate], but we realized long ago –even before Madrid [at the summit of 1997, the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary invited to join NATO], that if we can, it will be very well received both in NATO and the EU.”⁵¹ On the other hand, “the EU told the Visegrad bunch that regional co-operation is almost a precondition for joining the club. And Poles, Czechs and Hungarians have had to become more

⁴⁸ See, <http://www.visegradgroup.org>

⁴⁹ ‘Visegrad Group and Its History’, <http://www.celodin.hu/read.php?lang=en&pid=1699>, accessed on 03.02.2004.

⁵⁰ ‘Come Back, Visegrad’, *The Economist*, 22 May 1999, p. 56.

⁵¹ Jeremy Druker, ‘Vestiges of Visegrad’, *Transitions Online*, 15 September 1998, available at <http://archive.tol.cz/transitions/sep98/vestiges.html>, accessed on 03.02.2004.

neighbourly by virtue of their recent advent in NATO.”⁵² Evidently, external ‘advisers’ also played some roles in reactivation of the Visegrad group’s activities.

This recovery provided a momentum for the V4 countries in their bids for integrations. The three became full members of NATO and began to support Slovakia’s bid. All of the V4 countries developed a tight co-operation in the path of EU. Nonetheless, in 2002, the group witnessed two crises. The first one was related with post-WWII regulations of Czechoslovakia. The regulations of the second president of Czechoslovakia, Edvard Benes, called with his name the ‘Benes Decrees’⁵³ was conducive to expel 2.5 million Sudeten Germans, and to a lesser degree Hungarians, from Czechoslovakia. In 2002, this decree came into the agenda, both for Germany and Hungary, and it was claimed that the expulsions were illegal. In this respect, Victor Orban, former premier of Hungary, summoned to annul the decree. *Quid pro quo*, the Czech and Slovak PMs, fearing of a rising Berlin-Vienna-Budapest triangle with the connation of the Habsburg rein, pulled out of a summit in February 2002.⁵⁴ The second one was during the ‘race of the negotiations’ at the EU summit in Copenhagen that exposed that each of the four member countries had its own priorities and will look out for them in the EU.⁵⁵ The Prime Ministers of the four declared that they would negotiate *en bloc* with the EU in the course of the Copenhagen Summit, but the final of negotiations was too specific for every country to keep such a promise. And that was purported as a crisis.

Although the EU negotiated with the Visegrad countries on individual basis, nevertheless the EU took the message that the Visegrad group might act as a group when and if possible.

⁵² Come Back, Visegrad, *op. cit.*

⁵³ For the full text of the Decrees, *q.v.* <http://sudetengermans.freeyellow.com/documents.html>, accessed on 05.05.2004.

⁵⁴ Jakub Jedras, ‘Visegrad: Quo Vadis?’, *Transitions Online*, 14 June 2003, available at <http://www.tol.cz/look/TOL/article.tpl?IdLanguage=1&IdPublication=4&NrIssue=47&NrSection=2&NrArticle=9816>, accessed on 05.10.2003.

⁵⁵ Bukalska, *op.cit.*

CHAPTER 4

VISEGRAD: *QUO VADIS?*

The original motivations to launch such an initiative for these four countries have been gradually done. The *raison d'être* for the Visegrad group was to transcend isolation and subsequently, or in the meanwhile, to integrate with the West where the Central Europeans consider themselves as an indispensable part of it. In 1999, three of the four, i.e. the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland –as ex-socialist and rival countries against the Western bloc – took place in the historical enlargement of NATO. Slovakia –as a latecomer – followed them in 2004. All of the V4 countries became EU members on 1 May 2004. Therefore, the original missions of the Visegrad group were successfully achieved. The most important task was achieved. Did this mean the end of the Visegrad group, or a new start for other tasks?

Even before the EU accessions, the future of the group was being discussed by the analysts from the region. There appeared two views on the subject in question. First one is the pessimist view on the group, and the second one is the optimist view. Herein, the former is labelled as the minimalist view, whereas the latter labelled as the maximalist view.

4.1. The Minimalist View

4.1.1. No Need Since the Onset

Those who advocate that the Visegrad quadruple was ‘an artificial mistake’ argue that what the V4 countries has achieved hitherto was the result of their individual endeavours, otherwise not the outcome of a romantic regional gathering. Moreover, the V4 countries were/are unable to contribute to interests of each other, so that the Visegrad has turned out to be nothing more than a discussion forum.

For instance, as Petr Robejsek, the Director of the International Institute for Politics and Economics in Hamburg, argued for more than ten years, the Visegrad project has been a fixed star in the constellation of ‘Central European initiatives’.

“These structures have provided fodder for political essays, which at the beginning of the nineties mesmerized readers with expressions such as ‘a common European house’, ‘the end of history’, ‘the peace divined’, and the ‘Paris charter’. Visegrad has never recovered from this excessive romanticism.”⁵⁶ According to him, the Visegrad initiative has never gone beyond of its declaration in February 1991. On the issue of that the V4 members have not contributed to their individual interests, he claims that apart from common antagonisms, memories and objectives, the Visegrad countries had nothing to offer each other. On the contrary –from the promising tone of political essays there emerged the sharp curves of national interests. The initial enthusiasm concealed the hidden understanding that members of Visegrad are actually in competition for the quickest entry into European structures. “The spontaneous feeling of community was gradually replaced by the understanding that in truth we don’t fit together that well, and that harmony is difficult, because we understand each other too well.”⁵⁷

The V4 countries have begun their ways from similar starting points through common goal, back to Europe, but they have found themselves in different roads. From a classic realist point of view, Robejsek criticizes the standpoints that assert the Visegrad group was a product of a common fate and common aspirations. To him, states seek their own national interests by themselves. In this connection, Hungary, for example, is closer to Austria than to other member of the Visegrad group and that is a by-product of attitude that the Visegrad group, *en masse*, has not concrete and ambiguous tendencies.⁵⁸

As a final remark in order to display that the Visegrad group has never worked as it has been alleged, and therefore it is not possible to upgrade the group after EU accession he argues that the Visegrad was a consequence of good plans and mistaken ends. Today it is a weakening entity of the post-Cold War wishes that were indeed about to avoid a new division in Europe.

⁵⁶ Petr Robejsek, ‘Between Vision and Illusion’, *New Presence: The Prague Journal of Central European Affairs*, Vol. 3, Issue 3, Autumn 2001, p. 10.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 11.

On the other hand, it was not only a scholar who claims that the group, *ab ovo*, was a meaningless composition. The then prime minister, current president, of the Czech Republic Vaclav Klaus was of the same opinion with Robejsek. Klaus was of the opinion that the Czech Republic was ‘the most westernised’ state in Central Europe, so that the Czech would have been more successful in their bid of the EU, had they acted independently from the other V4 countries. Thus, “Visegrad cooperation broke down when the Czech government of Vaclav Klaus rejected deepening or expanding Visegrad, on the logic that the superstar Czechs could get into the west more rapidly without their Visegrad partners.”⁵⁹ In addition to this aspect, according to Klaus, the group is not just weak –it is artificial, and it was an idea of the West to East away, hence the Visegrad group would be a buffer zone between the West and East.⁶⁰

4.1.2. No Need Since the EU Accession

The argument of this sort of views is that after accession to the EU, by which the Central Europeans are reunited, the V4 countries will not have common interests, and consequently the Visegrad initiative will lose its motivation and meaning. Namely, what has kept them together will not appear anymore. In this regard, the V4 countries will have nothing in common but their history and geography that are solely inadequate to build, or survive, a ground for co-operation. As Robejsek argues that international relations are complex system of pressures and counter-pressures. “Quite simply friendship isn’t a political goal, interests are. Only a foreign policy that is blinded by ignorance looks for conditions that will lead to a reincarnation of the former ‘brotherly countries’.”⁶¹

⁵⁹ Milada Anna Vachudova, ‘The Division of Central Europe’, *New Presence: The Prague Journal of Central European Affairs*, Vol. 3, Issue 3, Autumn 2001, p. 12.

⁶⁰ Jakub Jedras, ‘Visegrad: Quo Vadis?’, *Transitions Online*, 14 June 2003, available at <http://www.tol.cz/look/TOL/article.tpl?IdLanguage=1&IdPublication=4&NrIssue=47&NrSection=2&NrArticle=9816>, accessed on 05.10.2003.

⁶¹ Robejsek, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

-Competition and Different Goals Among the V4 Countries

Of the reasons why the group's future is ill-fated is that the V4 countries will not only lose their will to cooperate, but also will begin to compete with one another in manifold domains. A crucial field on which the V4 countries will compete is the funds expected from the EU. "All of them [the V4 countries] will seek maximum funding for their poor regions from the EU's Structural and Cohesion funds."⁶²

There are also different approaches of the V4 countries to such various issues as agricultural, social, monetary, immigration and foreign policy. For example, more industrialized Czech economy's expectation from the EU and its funds, and relatively agriculture based Polish economy's are different, and Polish policy on agriculture to provide more subventions is not primary one for the Czechs.⁶³ Or, whilst Czech and Slovak governments were more rapid to apply Schengen visa procedures against Ukraine, Hungary and Poland were reluctant. Unsuccessful attempt to coordinate V4 visa policy towards Ukraine in the year 2000 is an example of failure. As the Czech Republic raised the issue of implementing visa regime for Ukrainians, Slovaks were more or less forced to joint them due to 'green' border between both countries. But imposing visa was unacceptable for Poland and Hungary mainly due to the considerable higher minority and other links to Ukraine. "Despite common declarations of V4 Presidents, the coordination of visa policy was impossible due to different national interests."⁶⁴ Or, the other V4 countries did not share the same intensified sense about the minority rights as much as the Hungarians, because they do not have many compatriots abroad as the Hungarians have. Or, during the negotiations with the EU, promises that had been made in order to be stronger before EU's greater members did not keep. For example, during the press conference after the Prime Ministers summit in Smolenice castle in December 2002, they declared common position on negotiation prior to the Copenhagen

⁶² Vachudova , *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁶³ Hana Daňková, 'Regional Cooperation in the European Union – Benelux and Visegrad', <http://www.visegrad.info/index.php?ID=clanek&IDc=30>, accessed on 15.12.2003.

⁶⁴ Urban Rusnák, 'Is There Any Future For Visegrad Cooperation Within EU?', http://www.europeum.org/EN/Analyses/EPF_future_of_Visegrad.pdf, accessed on 02.04.2004.

European Council. Prime Ministers assured to go 'shoulder by shoulder' until the conclusion of the negotiation to demonstrate common fortitude of the Visegrad group. If the truth be told, the conclusion of negotiations was too specific for every country, so that such promise was more a political will than justified position. Unsurprisingly, displeased prospects raised a wave of criticism and many of commentaries were declaring the Visegrad idea dead.⁶⁵

Under these circumstances, the minimalists about the Visegrad's future come across in the idea that the V4 countries will find new partners among the old members in the EU that share their own interests, while their shared origins in Central Europe will become more and more irrelevant.⁶⁶

-Poland's Culpa?

As some state Poland is too big *vis-à-vis* the other V4 countries and she has tendencies to act like one of the great powers of the EU. Jiri Pehe, political scientist and the Director of New York University in Prague, is one of the forerunners of this sort of approach. To him, the Visegrad group will not continue to work after EU accession, because Poland is too large, not an organic part of Central Europe, and its power purpose do not go along with the interests of the other V4 countries.⁶⁷ Pehe argues that Poland has tendencies to be a big country and act like this that makes her different than the other V4 countries. During NATO and EU enlargement processes, these inequalities between Poland and the other three were neutralized in order to display a tough position before great powers, but now that has changed.⁶⁸ To him, Poland, on the other hand, does not belong to Central Europe, she is a part of the Baltic area and has security vacuum between reunified Germany and disintegrated Russia. "After Poland accession to the EU, other Visegrad countries will be more

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Vachudova , *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁶⁷ Jiří Vykoukal, 'The End of Visegrad Cooperation, or Don't Kill the Messenger', <http://www.visegrad.info/index.php?ID=clanek&IDc=59>, accessed on 06.04.2004.

⁶⁸ Jiří Pehe, 'Is the End of Visegrad in the Offing?', <http://www.visegrad.info/index.php?ID=nazor>, accessed on 06.04.2004.

and more frequently confronted with Polish stances that may not necessarily be in their interests.”⁶⁹

Pehe asserts that Poland’s insistence over ‘Euroconstitution’ jeopardizes the future of the Visegrad group and helps the eurosceptics in the V4 countries (stances of the V4 countries will be given in detail later on but to briefly touch upon the issue now is necessary to discuss the future of the Visegrad group). The Brussels Summit in 2003 demonstrated in which direction Poland might go. Whilst the negotiators from Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia asked limited changes in the draft of the European Constitution, they were, at the same time, willing to make compromises. Poland purposefully guarded its own interests; the other Visegrad countries were not her partners. She rather cooperated with Spain, which is an equal country of Poland in the means of size, from the other corner of Europe.⁷⁰ Moreover, some government politicians in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia have already embodied that they would like to take part in the hardcore of European enlargement, whereas Poland has chosen to stay out. That might create a new ‘dividing line’, which would definitely bury Visegrad cooperation. As a result of all these circumstances that Poland had created, for the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia, a solid teamwork with Poland may not be the finest approach to safeguard and promote their interests in the EU, as long as interests of those small countries and a big, self-confident Poland may not be overlapped. It would be much more natural for the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia to endeavour for a solid regional cooperation with Austria and Slovenia, the contours of which one can already realize in some existing regional groupings. “Such a regional group, whose members would be connected by the virtue of a long common history and compatible interests, would be much more organic than the current Visegrad initiative—an organization that lumps together three small states with a country that

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

has more inhabitants than its three partners put together, plus its own power agenda.”⁷¹

As the above-noted diversification has indicated, Poland takes place in a so-called different Central Europe concept. Whilst Germany and Poland as large, confident and relatively dynamic countries construct ‘Cosmopolitan Central Europe’, Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia and Croatia as small, post-Habsburg nation states assemble ‘Provincial Central Europe’.⁷² Therefore, the strategies and political bias of Poland *vis-à-vis* the other V4 countries are different, and that creates a transparent dividing line, which demonstrates the ill-fated future of the Visegrad group.

4.2. The Maximalist View

4.2.1. The Future of the Group in Visegrad Statements

First of all, apart from the discussion about the group’s future, the political elite of the V4 countries robustly support the idea of Visegrad and its continuity after EU accession. Slovak Presidency’s report on the activities of the group indicates that during the last year accomplishment of the fundamental objectives of the Visegrad co-operation was met. Therefore, new principles and mechanisms of co-operation were due to apply into the Visegrad four countries collaboration in the near future. Nowadays the Visegrad group is facing new challenges and opportunities in the EU. The group hope that the historical national assets of the V4 countries and previous experience of mutual co-operation will be a significant contribution to their future in the common European home. Moreover, all Visegrad countries welcome the beginning of a discussion on the options for the Visegrad co-operation in the enlarged Europe.⁷³ The prime ministers of the V4 countries, on the other hand, met at Komeriz castle on 12 May 2004 in the east of the Czech Republic

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Vachudova , *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁷³ Annual Report of the Slovak Presidency in the Visegrad Group 2002-2003, available at http://www.visegradgroup.org/annual_cont.php?stranka=2003, accessed on 18.04.2004.

to discuss the future role of the regional grouping and agreed to continue cooperating within the grouping even as EU member states.⁷⁴ In an interview at the Czech radio with Ivan Jancerek, director of the EU section at the Czech Foreign Ministry, after this summit, the maximalist point of view of the V4 ruling elite is unequivocal. Jancerek argues that there is a possibility to have a common position then why not present it as a joint stand of the Visegrad Four but, most of all, “the Visegrad Group is an important platform where we can test our views before we go to an EU session and say this is how we think things should develop. We see Visegrad cooperation as a forum where you can listen, cooperate and sometimes support each other.”⁷⁵ Before this meeting in May, the ministers of the governments of the V4 countries were unequivocal to express this standpoint in their meeting in Mariánské Lázně (Czechia) on 5 March 2004.

The Parties share the view that it is essential to prepare carefully the principles of a new cohesion policy in order to ensure fast and sustainable development with emphasis on enhancing competitiveness and efficiency of Visegrad area. Given this goal, the Parties will take joint efforts, both within the EU and in the framework of bi- and multilateral relations, to ensure that the ultimate arrangements best reflect needs of Visegrad Group states and regions and that the countries of are able to pursue and active and effective regional policy.⁷⁶

From this statement it is evident to understand that the V4 countries desire to continue the co-operation under new circumstances that have been arisen after 1 May 2004. The V4 countries try to develop a common policy, or stance, within the EU on the issue of EU regional and cohesion policy.

Similarly, the participants declared that they recognize a number of areas and issues of common interests in the field of regional policy and cohesion policy and wish to safeguard the common interests of the countries of the Visegrad group. They

⁷⁴ <http://www.radio.cz/en/news/53819#1>, accessed on 12.05.2004.

⁷⁵ Daniela Lazarova and David Vaughan, ‘The future of the Visegrad Group within the EU’, [14.05.2004], <http://www.radio.cz/en/article/53898>, accessed on 14.05.2004.

⁷⁶ Declaration on Fundamental Directions in Shaping Regional Policy, 5 March 2004, available at <http://www.visegradgroup.org/events.php?kdy=05032004>, accessed on 26.04.2004.

also indicated that the group should try to redefine the areas and forms of cooperation, especially in co-ordinating regional policy targets and creation of development documents.

After the revitalization of the group in 1998, the belief on the future of the group has always been clear, and furthermore it has been noted clearly:

We [the Chairmen of the Committees on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security, and European Integration of the Parliaments of the V4 countries] declare our determination to continue the cooperation between the V4 countries in the present way *also after joining the European Union*. We do consider the V4 cooperation as an important stabilizing factor of the Central European region. We express our readiness to cooperate also with other countries.⁷⁷

Aside from the importance of emphasized expression of ‘also after joining the EU’, another crucial point, which must not be omitted is that the participants were too sure about the future of group and its achievements that they expressed their will to ‘widen’ the group, as it is going to be explained below.

In the Annual Report of the Hungarian Presidency (2001-2002) on the Activities of the Visegrad Group, proposals for future co-operation take place. The V4 countries propose enhanced co-operation in the field of fight against terrorism. They suggest - in the field of Justice and Home Affairs co-operation – that they pay special attention to the following: “organised crime, corruption, with special regard to the possibilities of taking steps against smuggling people, spreading children’s pornography through the Internet; refugee matters, migration; border control; disaster prevention; ministerial meeting in the field of co-ordination drug affairs.”⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Joint Statement adopted at the 9th Meeting of Chairmen of the Committees on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security, and European Integration of the Parliaments of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia Bratislava, Slovakia 12 - 13 January 2003, <http://www.visegradgroup.org/events.php?kdy=1213january2003>, accessed on 16.10.2003 (emphasis added).

⁷⁸ Annual Report of the Hungarian Presidency on the Activities of the Visegrad Group 2001/2002, http://www.visegradgroup.org/annual_cont.php?stranka=2002, accessed on 21.11.2003.

4.2.2. Discussions on the Future of the Group

The more the accession date for the EU has come to close, the more the discussion about the group's future has been sparked among the analysts concerned with the initiative. The common denominator for the optimists for the future co-operation of the Visegrad group is that new challenges lie ahead for the V4 countries and as long as they continue to work together they are more eligible to overcome the issues. The Visegrad has achieved its original missions declared initially, but to take the advantages of this functioning initiative would be more beneficial. Above all, the V4 countries are relatively small vis-à-vis the leading powers of the EU, and individually they are weaker to preserve their interests. That *per se* creates a room for future co-operation for the V4 countries. Therefore, through a transformation, the group can turn out to be a lobby, or a bloc within the enlarged EU in order to overcome disadvantages of being small states of the Union. That means that a new Visegrad group in the new EU would be a strategic step for the V4 countries. Hereby, it is significant to stress that the group, immediately, will not turn out to be a well-organized bloc to advocate national interests of the V4 countries. It is definitely going to take time to find out overlapping national interests of all V4 countries.

However, to predict this is easier than to realize it. First of all, the V4 countries are compelled to be cognizant of this situation, and as it has been displayed in the previous section, they are so. Nevertheless, to bring these wishful thought to tangible grounds seems a tough task to fulfil for the V4 countries due to the matters, which have been delineated in the section of the minimalist views.

4.2.2.1. The New Visegrad in the New EU

The V4 countries will be more or less in the same path of transformation as new EU members in order to harmonize themselves to the club so that strengthening the co-operation, or even turning it into a regional lobby within the EU is much of importance. Jan Urban, a former Czech dissident, argues that there is a "strong case

for some kind of bloc tactic, even within the European Union.”⁷⁹ Population, *in toto*, of the V4 countries is almost 65 million, still less than Germany. In this regard, the Visegrad group *en bloc* will have 58 votes in the Council as it was stipulated at Nice Summit. This number, naturally, is going to give some advantages to the V4 countries *vis-à-vis* their individual voting power. *Ipsa facto*, the group’s survival will contribute the individual interests of its members. However, it is still a matter whether the V4 countries will succeed to join their votes, or power, in manifold issues in respect of EU affairs. Nevertheless, according to Urban Rusnak, who is deputy director of the analyses and planning department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic and served as the Executive Director of the International Visegrad Fund between 2000 and 2003, “with EU accession, the Visegrad countries will be entering a club with 15 well-established members. As they endeavor to entrench themselves in the European community, the Visegrad alliance can be used by them to deal *en masse* with other regional groupings.”⁸⁰ For this end, group needs a more organized framework. Now, with new conditions, loose co-operation is inadequate. The group has to be re-organized and new structures have to be created in order to make the initiative more operational and give a viable role to the group in relations to the rest of Europe.⁸¹

Within this crucial context, a new structural framework under new circumstances after EU accession is needed. As it has been noted above, the Visegrad co-operation, which is based on ad hoc conferences, is a non-institutional group, except the IVF. In this connection, institutionalisation of the group –just an idea, not even a project yet – could change the future nature of the co-operation within the EU. In the future, a sort of institutionalisation in the V4 framework could for instance help eliminate the risk of a weakening of the co-operation due to the removal of the political elite in member states and its replacement by a different one.

⁷⁹ Jedras, *op. cit.*

⁸⁰ Cólín O’Connor, ‘The Status of Visegrad’, *New Presence: The Prague Journal of Central European Affairs*, Vol. 5 Issue 1, Spring 2003, p. 33.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

“Institutionalisation at the same time need not necessarily involve any extra red tape: ideally it could consist in setting up some sorts of ‘rules of the game’, the breach of which would be paid for by loss of political prestige.”⁸² When considering the future of the Visegrad and its new tasks, following twelve years of existence, one may also consider its structure should not be given a more formal shape. While the establishment of an office network may decrease the effectiveness of the V4's operation, the appointment of formal bodies responsible for specific issues, an information bank or permanent advisory groups seems necessary. It would also be pointless to appoint V4 representatives (a type of regional government), until the co-operation of the Visegrad countries begins to base on permanent long-term guiding principles instead of temporary interests. Discussing this matter can only lead to the creation of false problems and disputes. It seems most likely, in this case, the V4's hitherto operation framework - meetings of politicians and consultations with experts, with pressure on an increase in the intensity of the latter - would be maintained.

Aside such an initiative to make the group institutionalized, a basic treaty for the Visegrad co-operation that seeks to unequivocally declare their common interests would be a withstanding step for the future of the group. If the Visegrad countries can, for instance when signing ‘the basic V4 treaty’, reach an accord on common interests of the V4 countries, which it will ‘pay off’ to move forward jointly within both the EU and NATO, Visegrad could survive its own success and lay the basis for further deepening of co-operation in the region. “In the opposite case, Central Europe could once again ‘dissolve’ behind the door of the enlarged European Union - which itself still has a long way to go before it becomes truly single and integrated.”⁸³ In this regard, one can purport the issue relevant to free labour move for the new members of the EU as a domain for the V4 countries. Germany’s restriction for the workers from the East causes a view that new comers are second class citizens of the EU. In this connection, the Visegrad group can work

⁸²Barbora Gabelová, ‘The end of Central Europe? Visions and Illusions’, <http://www.visegrad.info/index.php?ID=clanek&IDc=6>, accessed on 15.12.2003.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

together as a lobby or bloc on this issue. Hungary, *exempli gratia* –according to news of České Noviny (Czech News)– is preparing retaliatory measures against those restrictions⁸⁴, and if the countries of the Visegrad group, all of them are confronted with the same limitations, join their power, they will have more chance to remove such curbs. In this regard, during the meeting at Kolodej Chateau, Czechia, on 8 March 2004, the heads of government of the Visegrad group states discussed the EU's restrictive labour market policy with regard to the newcomers.⁸⁵

Some, on the other hand, argue that putting emphasis on the past of the region would not be beneficial for the future of the group, because from a retrospective perspective of the V4 politicians and peoples will find nothing but prejudices and stereotypes for one another, and there is not a good previous example for co-operation among those that constitute the Visegrad group. Therefore, the group can benefit more from the future oriented compassions. The Visegrad countries are in need of commencing interaction that the general public in each country would understand the potential for common enrichment. “Though the past may have meant differences, the future offers opportunities for cooperation. If Visegrad members use opportunities to bring benefits to the group, then all its individual components will profit from its success.”⁸⁶

It is important to mention here that the expectation from the group should not be high, because capabilities of the group are not eligible to realize such prospects. “The V4 should be viewed in a realistic, not maximalist, manner. It should not be set too high expectations and must be elastic in its adjustment to various situations.”⁸⁷ The profits from the upholding of consultations or joint plans between the V4 countries following EU accession are beyond dispute. The V4 countries will grapple as new members of the Union, facing the same problems (e.g. issues associated with the absorption of EU funds). The exchange of common information and experiences

⁸⁴ http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/news/index_view.php?id=55082, accessed on 10.03.2004.

⁸⁵ <http://www.radio.cz/en/news/51473#1>, accessed on 10.03.2004.

⁸⁶ Musil and Kubicko, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁸⁷ Bukalska, *op. cit.*

can only be of help. Now, V4's Eastern border is also the EU border, so that co-operation on the elaboration of a common border control system is a key framework to co-operate. The co-operation in this sphere is positive. However, as some argue, a concrete step would, for instance, be the formation of a 'permanent advisory group', comprising of analysts and experts from the four countries, as well as representatives of Foreign Affairs Ministries, the police and border patrols. This group may be levied on a private responsibility to observe the situation on the Eastern border, exchanging information, creating joint plans and proposing solutions for current problems. Such co-ordination would not only facilitate the Visegrad countries in dealing with issues such as smuggling or policies towards asylum-seeking refugees, illegal immigration from the East, but would also constitute a strong trump card for the new EU members. The Visegrad countries can display that they mean to work efficiently in the Union and, what's more, are able to do so independently. "They would prove that they are not a burden on the remaining member states but that they are providing the EU with their own ideas and propositions."⁸⁸ Since the V4 jointly succeeded in entering the European Union, it can now try to enter the Schengen Treaty.

The experiences of the Visegrad so far have demonstrated that co-operation between government and non-government institutions is possible and advantageous to all parties involved. Indeed, such a co-operation should continue after the EU accession, with emphasis being placed on the very lowest local level. "Future regional co-operation should be based not only on great politics but also, to an equal degree at least, on the initiatives of Visegrad citizens."⁸⁹

Within this context, Mateusz Falkowski, analyst at the Institute of Public Affairs, Patrycja Bukalska, analyst at the Center for Eastern Studies, and Grzegorz Gromadzki, analyst collaborating with Stefan Bartory Foundation, propose three recommendations for the development of the Visegrad collaboration in the European Union. To them, firstly, the Visegrad co-operation is a mechanism for political

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

consultations. Therefore, making that mechanism as effective as possible should be a priority. Secondly, as it is going to be examined with details below, the Visegrad group, since it has to be more than a form of political consultations, should take a serious initiative: to seek affecting the EU's Eastern policy, in particular with respect to Ukraine. Eventually, the Visegrad quadruple initiative has to begin to direct its synergy to the level of citizens. The politicians in the V4 countries should respond to public expectations and bring the group closer to the people, "for example by propping up the Vysegrad Fund and promoting cultural exchange, scholarships, and joint projects."⁹⁰ Whilst the topic is the level of citizens, it is worthwhile to touch upon the view of the citizens of the V4 members about the group. According to the public opinion study 'Visegrad Cooperation as seen by the Citizens of Four Countries', which was conducted in 2001 and 2003 by the Institute of Public Affairs (Warsaw), Institute of Public Affairs (Bratislava), Institute of World Economy of the Hungarian Academy of Science and Gabal Analysis and Consulting in Prague, the ratio of people who say 'yes, I come across the term 'Visegrad Group' and I know what it means' has grown up: Slovaks from 52% to 56%, Poles 27 to 39, Hungarians 35 to 44, and Czechs 32 to 35 (First ratios are from 2001 and the latter from 2003). 75% of the Slovaks support the idea that the collaboration between the V4 countries would continue to be important after joining the EU and the Visegrad group would have a role to play, whilst 62% of Poles, 52% of Hungarians and 46% of Czechs do the same. For the statement of 1) My country should only defend its own national interests in the EU or 2) My country should also take into account the interests of the other Visegrad members, 39% of Slovaks agree with the former and 56% with the latter, whereas Poles' ratio is 39% to 53%, Hungarian's 45% to 40% and Czech's 43% to 36%.⁹¹ Evidently, it is Slovakia and Slovak people who attach more importance to the group. The reason for this is that Slovakia is the smallest V4 country, and she perceives the group as framework in which she can increase her power by cooperating with friendly and relatively bigger

⁹⁰ Mateusz Falkowski, Patrycja Bukalska, Grzegorz Gromadzki, 'Yes to Visegrad', *Analyses & Opinions*, The Institute of Public Affairs, No 16, November 2003, p. 7.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

neighbours. Thus, Slovakia, by her own turn, levied on the group a private function that in it Slovakia can escape from being squeezed by larger regional and external regional powers.

Urban Rusnak stated that a process had taken a start to prepare a new declaration, which would create a framework, devise goals and vision for the next decade of real integration of the V4 countries into the European Union. Apparent awareness of common interest should be replicated in improved goals to ensure that further cooperation would be less vulnerable to harmful waves of possible changes in political views of leadership in V4 capitals. Depending on the future content of the cooperation, “the question of establishment necessary international administrative capacity, commensurable to declared goals, should be answered. Any future success of the Visegrad depends on a clear vision, consensual goals and appropriate mechanism for their fulfillment.”⁹² He, according to his own experiences, delineated future steps in order to make the group functional even after EU accession. Firstly, a clear-cut identification has to be done in order to find out overlapping national interest of the V4 countries. In this respect, the group, in the first years within the EU, would focus on regional matters with practical impact for domestic electorate rather than European affairs, which are far more complicated to be addressed without first hand experience and proper consultations. Secondly, the expectations from the group should not be far away for the capabilities of the group. The Visegrad grouping, in short run, could not cope with highly politicised questions. Thirdly, tangible objectives have to be backed by appropriate mechanism. Without a working system the group carries out the risk to be a solid ground for competition, in which the influence of old EU members will be higher, instead of a cooperation basis. Fourthly, the solidarity is one of the most challenging issues for the V4 countries. Due to the prejudices and stereotypes, any misunderstanding or broken promise could direct the mutual cohesion into a *cul-de-sac*. Therefore, trust building process, just like in the Franco-German relations, rises as a key factor for

⁹² Rusnak, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

the V4 countries. And eventually, to preserve and to extend the support of public is becoming a *sine qua non* for the flourishing survival of the group.⁹³

Ironically, the issue of distribution of the EU funds, which has been mentioned above as a matter that will create competition among the V4 member, would be a solidarity sphere. Ivan Jancerek, the senior Czech diplomat, is unequivocal to express that as a common domain to co-operate within. “We think the principle of solidarity should, especially in the next EU budget, be aimed at the new member states. There we will have a very similar position to that of our Visegrad group partners.”⁹⁴ What forces them to co-operate rather than compete is of the jeopardy of EU’s so-called ‘southern wing’. A well-united Visegrad group can better compete with these old members of the EU. Bearing in mind the truth that these are states with similar economic standards and similar difficulties in the double process of integration and transition, “it is likely that they will opt for cooperation. One can already see some common interests, such as obtaining sufficient resources from structural funds and (most probably) supporting supranational integration.”⁹⁵

4.2.2.2. The Eastern Policy of the EU and the Visegrad

After 1 May 2004, the eastern borders of the three V4 countries, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, became the eastern border of the EU, as well. Similar with the attitudes of France, Spain, Portugal, Greece and Italy towards the Mediterranean region, or Germany’s to the Central Europe, as the eastern wing of the club, V4 countries’ perspectives will carry much of importance in formation of the eastern policy of the EU. However, one should not ignore that the capabilities of France or Germany in the formation of the European foreign policy in related areas seriously differ from the V4 countries position.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Lazarova and Vaughan, *op. cit.*

⁹⁵ Daňková, *op. cit.*

Before beginning to scrutinize the co-operation possibilities in that domain, it would be beneficial to give a brief précis of what the eastern policy of the EU means. The EU's eastern policy has been developing since the Amsterdam Treaty, came into force in 1999, and the main domains of the policy, as decided by the Union, are being the eastern side of the continent, i.e. Russia and Ukraine. Russia and Ukraine were the first countries towards whom the EU adopted a common strategy for external relations after adopting the Amsterdam Treaty and implemented a new instrument for developing a common foreign and security policy (CFSP). The strategy as revealed in two different documents,⁹⁶ set the basic framework, long-term goals, and tools for the EU's common foreign and security policy concerning these two key Eastern European countries and future neighbours of the enlarged European Union.⁹⁷ The eastern policy, in this respect, stipulates that the EU desires to juxtapose with stable, transparent and pluralistic democratic neighbours in its east. With the *au courant nous* of soft security challenges, the EU attaches much of importance the developments that could trigger crises in the Russia-Ukraine-Belarus triangle, because such incidents could have direct impacts on European security.

Consequently, there is a new room for the V4 countries to co-operate since all of them construct 'eastern wing' of the EU. Throughout the process formulation of the policy, the problem, from the V4 countries' perception, was that they were unable to participate in discussion about the policy. That was not akin to the process of future institutional form of the EU in which all candidate countries found ability to echo their views. But thereafter, as EU members, the V4 countries, under the coordination of the Visegrad group, can take more initiatives to be more effective in the issue. The V4 countries favour to create an 'eastern dimension', referring to Finland's 'northern dimension', for the EU's eastern policy. In this regard SFPA (Slovak Foreign Policy Association), which joined forces with OSW (the Polish

⁹⁶ Common Strategy of the European Union of 4 June 1999 on Russia, 1999/414/CFSP (Official Journal of the European Communities, 24.6.1999); European Council Common Strategy of 11 December 1999 on Ukraine, 1999/877/CFSP (Official Journal of the European Communities, 23.12.1999).

⁹⁷ Alexandr Duleba, 'The European Union's Eastern policy: Several Questions from the Visegrad Perspective', available at <http://www.visegrad.info/index.php?ID=clanek&IDc=20>, accessed on 14.11.2003.

Centre for East European Studies) to commence a project of holding of regular seminars, involving the think-tanks of the V4 countries and representatives of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, with the purpose to identify common interests of the V4 members in relation to the countries of the former USSR, as well as their capacities to influence EU policies in this area.⁹⁸

The document, on the other hand, called “The Eastern Policy of the EU: the Visegrad Countries' Perspective”, which was prepared by experts from the CES, the Slovak Foreign Policy Association (SFPA), the Institute for Strategic and Defence Studies in Budapest and the Institute of International Relations in Prague is a cornerstone reflecting the perspectives of the Visegrad countries in shaping of the eastern policy of the Union. The document suggests three reasons why the Visegrad group has to take part in formulation of the eastern policy. Firstly, the eastern border of the Hungary, Poland and Slovakia is now the eastern border of the Union and this demarcation line is one of the most important dividing line, if not *the* most important, in Europe. Therefore, “they [the three V4 countries] will be the ones to decide whether this border will become a wall, separating the two parts of the continent, or the line focusing all kinds of cooperation”.⁹⁹ The second aspect is economy and trade. The V4 countries, in comparison with the other EU members, are more linked, particularly in the field of economy, to the eastern neighbours, especially to Russia, and even dependent to Russian energy raw materials. In this regard, energy corridors pass through the V4 countries, and the region attracts the Russian investors. Meanwhile, as a result of all these circumstances, Russia perceives this region as an economic window to Europe. Thirdly, there is a serious affinity between the Central Europeans and the East Europeans, owing to cultural, linguistic (with the exception of Hungary), historical closeness and geographical neighbourhood. Apart from this close ties, another factor to strengthen the relationship is that there are Hungarian and Polish minorities in countries that are left behind the line (Hungarian minority in Ukraine –160 thousands – and Polish

⁹⁸ Gabelová, *op. cit.*

⁹⁹ ‘The Eastern Policy of the EU: the Visegrad Countries' Perspective’, available at the website of the Polish MFA, <http://www.msz.pl/start.php?page=1030500001>, accessed on 16.05.2003.

minority in the western Ukraine –estimated between 400 and 700 thousands – and in Belarus –395.7 thousands). That gives them a special sense than the others.¹⁰⁰

The successful activity in the field of forming the Eastern Policy of the EU requires a new approach to the V4 countries own presence in the international arena. This is purported as an appreciably broader perception of looking at international issues; from a national and sub-regional perspective to a perspective incorporating the whole continent at the very least. The Visegrad countries will also have to show their ability to coordinate the eastern policy among themselves. “It is also crucial that they should be ready and able to cooperate with other countries, which are particularly interested in this direction of the EU activity: Finland, the Baltic States and Germany.”¹⁰¹

According to the V4 countries, the general guidelines for the eastern policy of the EU, whose basic objective should be to promote political and economic standards and the legislation, established in the EU, in its eastern neighbouring area, to be as follows: the eastern policy should cover exclusively its eastern neighbours: Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, otherwise not to cover members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS); and the policy should be region-oriented, which could be called the Eastern Dimension, but at the same time it should be possible to keep a flexible approach, taking into account a specific situation in every country and

this purpose would be served by maintaining the currently existing bilateral character of institutional contacts between the EU and the individual eastern neighbours; and secondly, by developing a national strategy for every neighbour. Such strategies would relate to the issues concerning exclusively a given state (e.g. energy dialogue in the case of Russia). They would also indicate desirable, from a point of view of the particular country in question, specific solutions within the framework of rules laid down in the Eastern Dimension.¹⁰²

Alexandr Duleba, an analyst, suggests six reasons why the V4 countries should participate in developing the EU’s eastern policy. First reason, as noted

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

above, is the situation of the borders of the three V4 countries. Secondly, these three members will have to implement the decisions, particularly in domain of border issues, which are taken in the EU so that if they are the implementers, they should participate in shaping the policy. Thirdly, related with the second, the three V4 countries have to put into force the Schengen Convention and its restrictions to the countries in which they have their compatriots, i.e. minorities. Fourthly, the V4 countries view and perceive the internal development in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus differently than the other EU members because of the afore-stated affinities. Fifthly, the economies of the V4 members are relatively more connected to Russia. And finally, the ‘Northern Dimension’ that is led by Finland, which was the one to have common frontier with Russia in the Union, can be duplicated as the ‘Eastern Dimension’ since the V4 countries, together with the Baltic countries have common border, and what is more important that is the Kaliningrad, Russia, enclave between Poland and Lithuania as EU members.¹⁰³

The Visegrad group, within the context of the neighbouring policy of the EU, aspire to take a distributor role in the process of practicing of the EU’s policy towards Russia and Ukraine. The point, which consolidates the positions of the V4 countries in the matter of the ‘Eastern Dimension’, is that the policies of the EU are *ad hoc* policies, such as the energy issue. The EU, therefore, is in need of accounting the concerns of the Visegrad group and attaching importance to give a role to the group in the processes of decision-making and policy practising of the Eastern policy. Moreover, in the sense of the global politics, the Eastern Policy of the EU and Russia policy of the US are not overlapping. At this very crucial point, the Visegrad group is emerging as a key factor that can play a mediator role between the policies of the EU and the US.

4.2.2.3. The Visegrad in the Balkan Policy

Another field in which the Visegrad initiative can work is policy regarding the Western Balkans, i.e. Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia-Montenegro, as well

¹⁰³ Duleba, *op. cit.*

as Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania. However, one has to bear in mind that even the EU was unable to develop a common foreign policy about these thorny issues. So that to carry high expectations from the co-operation within the Visegrad group is not being realistic. That was proven already during the Kosovo crisis. The Czech Republic worked together with Greece in order to end the bombing campaign against Yugoslavia¹⁰⁴, whereas the other V4 members thought differently. In particular, Hungary was more sensible on the issues of minority, in the case of Albanian minority in Kosovo, because there are substantial amount of Hungarian minority in the Serbian province of Vojvodina, and Hungary, during the civil war in Yugoslavia, was concerned about the Serbian nationalist pressure on them, and throughout the war in Yugoslavia Serbian combat aircrafts violated Hungarian airspace, and two bombs were dropped to Hungarian soil from those fighters on 27 October 1991. Moreover, Yugoslavia accused Hungary that it supplied arms and ammunition to Croatia, and even some Hungarian armed forces were involved in the war in favour of Croatia.¹⁰⁵

Nevertheless, there is, after all these happened during 1990's, a room to create a new area to co-operate within the Visegrad group. In this respect, the V4 countries had taken part in peacekeeping operations in the region (the first Czech-Slovak joint battalion since the secession of Czech and Slovaks took its part in KFOR). Related with that, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Poland took a decision to build a Joint Rapid Reaction Brigade, which is to be ready for deployment by 31 December 2005, in order to contribute the stabilization of the Balkans.¹⁰⁶ In the Joint statement of 9 June 2002 of the PMs of the group emphasized the importance the international community attaches to the reconstruction of the Southeast-European region. It was also of their vital interest to take further measures to build confidence, mutual understanding and to intensify efforts in order to strengthen regional security

¹⁰⁴ Daňková, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁵ Pal Dunay, 'Hungary: Defending the Boundaries of Security', *Central and Eastern Europe: The Challenge of Transition*, (ed.) Regina Cowen-Karp, New York, Oxford University, 1993, p. 138.

¹⁰⁶ Joint Statement of the Heads of Governments of the Visegrad group, Estergom, 29 June 2002, available at <http://www.visegradgroup.org/events.php?kdy=29june2002>, accessed on 21.11.2003.

and stability. They would continue to play an active role into ongoing peacekeeping operations in the region as well as to the implementation of the Stability Pact initiative. They were profoundly interrupted by the escalation of the repressive actions of the regime on independent media, democratic opposition forces and civil society in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. They reiterated firm support of their countries for the rightful struggle of the peoples of the FRY for democracy and freedom.¹⁰⁷

In another aspect, the group might promote the transition and might be source of inspiration for the countries of the Balkans owing to open communication channels because there is proximity in culture, language and, to a high degree, mentality, between Central Europe and the Balkans. In this connection, historical experiences shared by Central Europe and the Balkans may be of help; moreover, the very model according to which the Visegrad Group operates “may be proposed for application to the Balkan states, irrespective of how difficult this might seem following the effect that the devastation of the wars taking place there just a few years ago left in the consciousness of those societies.”¹⁰⁸

The Visegrad experience, on the other hand, has shown that regional co-operation can work to ease the pain of transition, and this might be a pattern for the states in the Balkans. Therefore, the group can work to promote such an initiative in the Balkans and share their experiences with these countries. Using the Visegrad's potential in the sphere of Eastern policy of the EU, as well as with regard to the Balkans, would be advantageous to all parties. The Visegrad countries could offer the EU their experiences in contacts with Balkan states, as well as delegating experts and diplomats not only familiar with Balkan issues but also having good personal contacts in the region. The Visegrad itself would strengthen its position in the EU showing that “it will not only take advantage of the benefits guaranteed by membership in the Community, but that it has something to offer itself. The support of their northern neighbours would facilitate in drawing the Balkan nations closer to

¹⁰⁷ Joint Statement of the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Countries Prague, 9 June 2000, available at <http://www.visegradgroup.org/events.php?kdy=9june2000>, accessed on 21.11.2003.

¹⁰⁸ Bukalska, *op. cit.*

the European Union.”¹⁰⁹ In this regard, a senior analyst from the SFPA came up with an interesting proposal. He suggested commencing a close co-operation between the Balkan countries and the group at a ‘Visegrad to Visegrad’ meeting, referring to cities in Hungary and Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹¹⁰

4.2.2.4. Benelux-Visegrad Affinity

“We believe that in the future, as EU members, there is much sense for the four of us not just to continue, but also to address new issues and new problems together. There is an excellent example of that kind of cooperation, and here I mean the Benelux countries” said by Cimoszewicz, Polish Foreign Minister.¹¹¹

Since the original missions of the Visegrad co-operation have been achieved, this sort of a regional initiative can easily turn out to be obsolete. With this consciousness, the politicians from the V4 countries have begun to address to a successful pattern of regional co-operation, i.e. the Benelux. This grouping consists of three small Western European countries, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxemburg. Despite their differences, the Benelux countries, traditionally, put more emphasis on their similarities in order to transcend the disadvantages of being small countries, particularly in the EU. To be united with the great neighbours of these small states produces crucial jeopardy for their sovereignty so that they were cognizant of the need to be gathered. Since the peace was settled in Europe after the World War Two, the Benelux countries have displayed a successful example of regional co-operation of small countries. This example has been perceived by the V4 countries in the right meaning.

The Visegrad countries have sought to create a similar co-operation among themselves and in this path they have asked consultation from the Benelux countries in order to benefit from their experience and find out common interests for the two fora in the future of Europe as small countries. On 5 December 2001, Prime

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Quotation is from the Polish Foreign Minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Jedras, *op. cit.*

Ministers and Foreign Affairs Ministers of the Benelux and the Visegrad group held their first informal meeting in Luxemburg. Prime Ministers and Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Benelux and the Visegrad group agreed to continue an informal and regular exchange of views on subjects of common interest – particularly in the field of the future of the EU with a focus on the area of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the constitutional process in the EU, roles of national parliaments, the Charter of Fundamental Rights and improvement of public interest in EU affairs – and to deepen political dialogue on the level of Ministers and civil servants, with the aim of bringing positions closer on foreign policy and security issues and on questions related to the future of Europe. The first Summit between Benelux and the Visegrad group has convened an expert meeting in the course of 2002 in order to identify those fields in which closer collaboration between the countries of Benelux and those of the Visegrad group could be initiated. The two fora of cooperation will in particular work together on the way to associate the countries of the Visegrad group with the implementation of decisions taken in the framework of the Lisbon process. Another potential field of cooperation is fight against terrorism: the question is how the countries of the Visegrad group can participate in the implementation of certain elements of the action plan on the fight against terrorism that was adopted during the extraordinary European Council meeting of 21 September. Participants have also agreed to cooperate in implementing initiatives undertaken on other European fora with respect to the fight against terrorism.¹¹²

In this regard, the leading idea of their cooperation between the two fora on the European level is to coordinate steps and policies in areas where it contributes and enhances their interests. The Visegrad and Benelux countries cherish the same democratic values, thus identify the same problems and therefore want to join forces in finding viable remedies for them.¹¹³

In the second meeting on 24 and 25 May 2002 in Trenčín, Slovakia, the Benelux countries mentioned their support for the V4 countries' bid for the EU and

¹¹² http://europa.eu.int/futurum/documents/press/pr051201_en.htm, accessed on 14.11.2003.

¹¹³ http://www.vlada.gov.sk/v4b_en/komunike.html, accessed on 15.11.2003.

exchanged their experiences, in particular about the protection of the borders, organized crime, trafficking and illegal migration and implementation of the Schengen system.¹¹⁴ After these developments, the Visegrad group demonstrated its pleasure about the improving solidarity between the group and the Benelux. In the Joint Statement of the group in the afterward of the summit meeting of the Heads of Government of the Visegrad group in Estergom on 29 June 2002, it was revealed that “the prime ministers note with satisfaction that the development of the co-operation between the Visegrad group and the Benelux countries is promising. They are convinced that their co-operation will give further contribution to the European construction.”¹¹⁵

The very possible co-operation domain between these two fora, as noted above, is the future of the EU and developments in this path. For instance, the common policies of the Benelux countries are the principle of ‘one country, one commissioner’, strengthening majority decision-making in the Council, flexibility and the possibility for the European Court of Justice to approve its own agenda.¹¹⁶ As it will be examined below in the section of ‘the Convention and the Visegrad’, the V4 countries share the same motivations with the Benelux countries, ergo two fora are able to find out a common denominator to work on it together. Within this context, in Prague on 4 November 2002, meeting of the Directors General of the European Sections of the MFA’s of the V4 and Benelux concerning the European Convention agenda (discussion about a structure of the future Constitutional Treaty of the EU, institutional reform of the EU and timing of next intergovernmental conference) was held.¹¹⁷ At the meeting of the heads of states of the Visegrad group and the Benelux countries in Brussels on 25 March 2004 a joint statement was

¹¹⁴ http://www.vlada.gov.sk/v4b_en/, accessed on 15.11.2003.

¹¹⁵ Joint Statement, 29 June 2002, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁶ Daňková, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁷ Annual Report of the Slovak Presidency in the Visegrad Group 2002-2003, *op. cit.*

issued indicating equal rotation and equal treatment are essential prerequisites that can make the two fora abandon one country, one commissioner formula.¹¹⁸

4.2.2.5. Enlarging the Visegrad

One can argue that another field on which to co-operate and make the group still functional within the EU is to widen it. Historically, politically and economically, conditions for cooperation were ripe for these four countries to develop this type of regional cooperation in Central Europe. Periodically, the Visegrad group received requests for an enlarged membership, but turned them down. For the V4 countries, more countries joining would have meant less close cooperation, and a lower common denominator.¹¹⁹ The group, on the other hand, has already such a tendency. According to the understanding of 'V4+ format', the group had meetings with Austria, Slovenia and Ukraine to find out co-operation domains. For instance, according to the Hungarian Presidency annual report, throughout the consultations with Ukraine in the issue of border control, Ukraine stated its serious interests in the success of the Visegrad group and expressed its will to take part in the initiative.

From time to time, it has been suggested that Slovenia would join the Visegrad group. At the same document, it was revealed that V4-Sloven expert meeting was held in September 2001 to discuss the issues related to EU integration. At this meeting, in addition, parties indicated it would be useful to co-operate in the fields of home affairs, the infrastructure of transport, the energy administration, the security policy, the culture and the science. Furthermore, the Visegrad group expressed its intention to consider Slovenia's co-operation with the Visegrad Fund.¹²⁰ The cooperation with Slovenia continues in the framework of CEI and CEFTA, as well.

¹¹⁸ <http://www.visegrad.info/index.php?ID=groupevents>, accessed on 05.05.2004.

¹¹⁹ Geza Jeszenszky, *The "Visegrad Idea": A Model for Cooperation*, in Euro-Atlantic Security Workshop 27 September 2002, http://www.csis.org/iac/euroatl/ev_020927.htm, accessed on 23.11.2003.

Austria, on the other hand, is a different issue. The group might need the experiences of Austria –that is much more crucial for the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary than for Poland due to their similarities to Austria as small countries – in the field of transition within the EU. Or the group might need to join forces with both Austria and Slovenia, because 58 votes in the Council might not be enough. The suggestions indicating the tightening the group took part in the press in the V4 countries, yet the questions rose at the same time. The group was afraid of two dangers: one, Austria, as a stronger state, might dominate the group and the current members lose their effectiveness, and two, Austria might use the group in order to strength its power within the EU. The Austrians, on the other hand, “stress that their goal is solely partnership and co-operation to the benefit of the entire region”¹²¹ (In 2001, on the initiative of the Head of Austrian diplomacy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the ‘Regional Partnership’ institution was established, which is aimed at supporting co-operation between countries in the region, as well as Austria's direct neighbours - the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia - and Poland, in preparations for EU accession).

The tight co-operation with Austria, on the other hand, might create jeopardy for the group. Similarities owing to being small countries and post-Habsburg experience between the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Austria and Slovenia – these five smaller countries could work together within the EU – might create dividing line between Poland and the other V4 members.¹²²

¹²⁰ Annual Report of the Hungarian Presidency on the Activities of the Visegrad Group 2001/2002, http://www.visegradgroup.org/annual_cont.php?stranka=2002, accessed on 21.11.2003.

¹²¹ Bukalska, *op. cit.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 5

SECURITY AND THE VISEGRAD

5.1. Security Understandings of the Group and the V4 Countries

The term ‘security’ may sound pretty abstract for an ordinary American, but for a Central and East European it is not. For us it means peace, escape from foreign invasion, borders without minefields and barbed wire, guarantee against the imposition of unwanted, harmful, alien political and economic systems. Security for us is recovery from the sickness caused by World War I and the inadequate peace treaties following that, from the havoc caused by the Great Depression, Hitler and Stalin.¹²³

The Visegrad countries, as well, began to change their perspective in post-Cold war era, and their understandings come across with the changes in views of the West. Most of the Central European states modified or constituted new national security concepts, and defence and military doctrines in the post-Cold war era. They notice the ‘security’ as being internal in nature. Most perceive security problems stemming from open borders which often lead to illegal migration and smuggling; organized crime, ineffective police forces, and government corruption; and, ethnic minority disputes. These are issues that extend beyond the responsibilities and capabilities of traditional military forces and require a broader societal discussion and consensus on how to solve these issues.¹²⁴

Within this context, the Polish understanding of security is increasingly departing from the traditional image of military strength, domination, one-sided advantage and national selfishness. “It is increasingly linked with the state of the

¹²³ The lecture titled ‘The Central European Pillar of Security’, which was delivered at a conference organized by the Atlantic Council of the United States on April 9, 1999 –four weeks after the accession of three new members of NATO –by Geza Jeszenszky, Ambassador of the Republic of Hungary. It is available at this address, as well: <http://www.acus.org/Publications/Speeches/Jeszensky.htm>, 10.03.2004.

¹²⁴ Jeffrey Simon, ‘New National Concepts and Defense Doctrines’, [http://www.ndu.edu/inss/strforum/forum 151.html](http://www.ndu.edu/inss/strforum/forum%20151.html), accessed on 12.03.2003.

economy, ecological problems, the development of civil society, and parliamentary democracy.”¹²⁵ Statements of the Polish Secretary of National Defence and the head of the National Security Office are the reflections of this security understanding. One of them, for instance, is “security today depends not only on military factors, but also on public identification with socio-political system, the state of national economy, and rapport with the international environment.”¹²⁶ In a similar sense with Poland, Hungarian legislature passed two documents in the beginning of 1990s: one, covering security policy, contains the overarching concept extending to military and non-military factors, with priority given to the latter. “The concept of defence policy elaborates the military aspects in more detail and serves as the basis for the reorganization of the armed forces.”¹²⁷ For Hungary, economic security turned out to be much more important than classical understanding of security, i.e. defence.

In accordance with soft and hard security differentiation, security co-operation in the group, to some extent, has been realized in two domains: security managed by the Ministries of Interior, and by Ministries of Defence. The main goal of the former is to create rooms for co-operation in the fields of fight against organized crime; border protection, asylum and immigration policy, application of the Schengen *acquis*; civilian emergency planning and crisis management; and public administration. The main goal of the latter is to deal with such problems as filling in the defence planning questionnaire (DPQ); developing the C4I system (command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence); anti-aircraft defence; cooperation in logistics; human resources management; defence strategies and military doctrines; standardisation; armament – exploiting the capacities of the defence industry.¹²⁸ Hence, it is *de rigueur* to underline herein that only the one side

¹²⁵ Hieronim Kubiak, ‘Poland: National Security in a Changing Environment’, *Central and Eastern Europe: The Challenge of Transition*, (ed.) Regina Cowen-Karp, New York, Oxford University, 1993, p. 76, c.f. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 13 September 1991, p. 70.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

¹²⁷ Pal Dunay, ‘Hungary: Defending the Boundaries of Security’, *Central and Eastern Europe: The Challenge of Transition*, (ed.) Regina Cowen-Karp, New York, Oxford University, p. 125.

of these two facets are promising and it is the co-operation on soft security issues, i.e. security managed by the Ministries of Interior. The very motivation behind this success is the bid for the EU. In other aspect, prosperity in this domain is relatively easier than the other one, because the key factor of the hard security issues is military and by and large the armies are unable to keep up with the *au courant* challenges and understandings. There are two reasons for that. The first one is the military *per se*, and second one is the economic difficulties. The armies are not quick to change when the threat of war is away due to their slow working bureaucracy and traditional understandings. Secondly, the profound re-constructions need new and extra sources that will impact the economies of transition. Thus, the co-operation in hard security means is weaker in the Visegrad initiative.¹²⁹ Only the Czech-Polish-Slovak joint brigade, pondered to be operational by 2006, which is being prepared in accordance to new standards, e.g. consists of small and flexible units, and tasks, e.g. future EU operations and deployment for NATO's out of area operations, is a salient step to cultivate the co-operation in the field of sole defence.

5.2. The End of the Cold War and Security Options for the V4 countries

5.2.1. Neutrality Option

This 'Finlandization' option became a laudable objective for non-Soviet Warsaw pact members in the wake of the end of the Cold War.¹³⁰ This option was quite popular in the period of 1989-91, in particular within Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Czechoslovak foreign policy was idealistic right after the 1989 revolution due to 'velvet' character of the revolution. The Czechs, initially, preferred the

¹²⁸ Jiří Marek, 'Challenges and Perspectives of Security Cooperation within the Visegrad Community', available at <http://www.visegrad.info/index.php?ID=clanek&IDc=34>, accessed on 15.12.2003.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Jane M. O. Sharp, 'Security Options for Central Europe in the 1990s', *The Future of European Security*, (ed.) Beverly Crawford, Research Series (University of California, Berkeley International and Area Studies), no. 84, 1992, p. 55.

dissolutions of Warsaw pact and NATO, simultaneously.¹³¹ On the other hand, neutrality was in the agenda because of partly political tactics attempting to facilitate the disintegration of the Soviet bloc and partly the fact that the possibility of joining Western European and North-Atlantic security organizations seemed very distant indeed. But such a neutrality model was a typical product of bipolarity, and bipolarity was over by the disintegration of the USSR. After 1991, therefore, neutrality idea became marginalized for the Visegrad countries.¹³²

5.2.2. North Atlantic Option

This option demonstrates the desire of the Visegrad countries to join into NATO as full-members. With the end of the Cold War, the Visegrad countries found themselves without a protection of a ‘big brother’ who would serve as a guarantor of their external security. The Soviets lost their power and this caused a power vacuum in the region. The way how to fill the power vacuum had different dimensions such as ‘to fill it with a dominant power from outside the area represented by a state’, or ‘with a power represented by an international institution or mechanism (outside the area or including the area)’, or ‘with a power represented by a state or a group of states in the area.’ The first alternative is dangerous for the reason that of making a state too powerful in the region, therefore in entire Europe, while they had just gotten rid of one, i.e. the USSR. Third alternative is not much feasible whereas no regional power is strong enough to fill the power vacuum. (Yet, although it could not fill such a vacuum, the Visegrad group played a significant role, which will be discussed below.) Thus, second alternative emerged as the most feasible and realistic one in order to remove this power vacuum in the region. And moreover it must not be forgotten that “any power vacuum existing without a fully functioning

¹³¹ Vladimir Bilcik, ‘ESDP and the Security Policy Priorities and Perspectives of Central European EU Candidate States’, *Unraveling the European Security and Defense Policy Conundrum*, (ed.) Joachim Krause, Andreas Wenger and Lisa Watanbe, Zurich, Peter Lang, 2002, p. 123.

¹³² Ferenc Gazdag, ‘A Comparative Analysis of the Visegrad Countries and their Endeavours to Integrate into the North Atlantic Alliance’, *Final Report to the NATO Fellowship Program, 1996-1997*, available at <http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/95-97/gazdag.pdf>, accessed on 12.03.2003.

system of collective security leads directly to a security vacuum.”¹³³ The connotation of this collective security system, but in the aspect of defence or military guarantees, is the strongest Alliance of the world: NATO. This option is going to be examined by details below.

5.2.3. West European Option

This option demonstrates the integration with the European Union and Western European Union. The promising characteristics of the EU attract the Visegrad countries to seek a gradual integration process with it. The very needed economic aid and democratic values could be best imported from the Union. Also EU's success to remove the hostility between prolonged rivals, i.e. France and Germany, is a crucial pattern for the Visegrad countries. In the light of new definitions of security, the EU is overlapped with the wider understanding of security, which NATO cannot provide as much as the EU can do. With a stable political system and strong free market, which are the preconditions of the EU, the Visegrad group can establish its internal security. However, this integration process would be, or has been, difficult for these transition countries' politicians *vis-à-vis* populist and nationalist politician who criticized and linked every failure to the EU membership process. Other pillar of this option, WEU, was tricky due to its uncertain future, failure in Yugoslavian crisis and rivalry to NATO. This option, too, is going to be examined below.

5.2.4. Central European Option

First of all, this option cannot and is not an alternative to North Atlantic or West European option, rather this option can be contemplated as a tool to reach these two options. Relatively small states of the region thought that they would have been more successful, if they had cooperated in their bids to integrate with NATO and the EU. In doing so, competition would be reduced in the region. There are two

¹³³ Vasil Hudak, 'East-Central Europe and the Czech and Slovak Republics in a New Security Environment', *Central European Security Concerns: Bridge, Buffer or Barrier?*, (ed.) Jacob Kipp, London, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1993, p. 127.

processes, which are noteworthy in this option: the Visegrad group and Central European Initiative (CEI).¹³⁴ Given the main topic of the thesis is the Visegrad and it has been examined in details, hereby only the CIE is going to be handled very briefly.

CEI was founded by Austria, Yugoslavia, Hungary and Italy in November 1989, and was later extended by Czechoslovakia (1990) and Poland (1991). Due to the conflict in the Balkans Italy initiated the suspension of Yugoslavia's membership in 1991. In 1992 and 1993, with the disintegration of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia; Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and then Macedonia became members. With the admission of Albania, the Belarus, Bulgaria, Romania, the Ukraine and Moldova in 1996, then by the return of Yugoslavia the organization reached its present formation. The main strategic objective of the CEI is to work for the European unity, the dividing-line-free Europe and for commonly acceptable values. Its mission is to promote co-operation among member countries, assist members in their European integration – offering solutions for the problems of transition. In order to achieve goals it provides a forum to discuss, co-ordinate, finance and implement national projects and international programmes.¹³⁵ Due to the European Union's enlargement in 2004 the activity of the organisation will experience new dimensions, since besides the present two EU members (Austria and Italy) further five CEI countries (Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) joined the Union.

¹³⁴ Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) is the other crucial process, yet due to its pure commercial character it is not as important as the Visegrad and CEI in order to provide security option. There is also 'the Pact on Stability' as a regional security option, but this option was emphasized to prevent the conflicts by the EU, and, although it worked in order to reach a rapprochement between Slovakia and Hungary, the main concern of the Pact has been Yugoslav crisis, and thus the Balkans. Therefore, this pact will not be analysed in this study, either. In addition to Italy led CEI, Germany and Denmark promoted 'The Council of Baltic Sea States', but this, either, is not directly linked with this study's focus, and above all it is not effective as much as the Visegrad group and CEI.

¹³⁵ John Fitzmaurice, *Politics and Government in the Visegrad Countries: Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1998, pp. 180-2, and Matthew Rhodes, 'Post-Visegrad Cooperation in East Central Europe', *East European Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 1, March 1999, pp. 54-5.

5.3. The Double Guarantee Strategy

The Visegrad countries seek a kind of ‘double guarantee’¹³⁶ in the post-Cold War era. Double guarantee strategy’s one pillar is trans-Atlantic and the other one is European. In a new security environment, non-military risks have become as important as military risks, or even more. So that, as it will be discussed here, the Visegrad countries, on the one hand, attach importance to trans-Atlantic dimension, in order to provide their external security, defence guarantees and flow of the latest defence technologies to their countries, and they are, on the other hand, aware of their domestic security, survival of democracy and economic stability, can best be provided by the integration process with Europe.

For instance, the chairmen of foreign affairs and defence and security committees of the Parliaments of the V4 countries, at their meeting in Budapest on 5 October 1999, embodied that they supported the enhancement of the European Security and Defence Identity and at the same time expressed their conviction that transatlantic cooperation has an irreplaceable role in preserving peace on the continent. Issues of collective defence should in their opinion remain within the competence of NATO.¹³⁷ That was the clear-cut statement of the double guarantee strategy that the group pursues.

5.3.1. Seeking for Security/Defense Guarantees with NATO

5.3.1.1. NATO, the Savior? The Meaning of NATO to the Visegrad Group

In the new security environment, referring to soft and hard security diversification, which emerged in the wake of the end of the Cold War, NATO accomplishes three functions. It assists problem-solving between its members and prevents the possibility of open conflict between them; it is preventing the re-

¹³⁶ The concept of ‘double guarantee’ was formulated by Associate Prof. Dr. Mustafa Türkeş in the course ‘Politics in Eastern Europe’ at Middle East Technical University in Ankara.

¹³⁷ Annual Report on the Activities of the Visegrad Group, 2000, http://www.visegradgroup.org/annual_cont.php, accessed on 21.11.2003.

nationalisation of defence in Europe. Secondly, it is a tool and mechanism to promote collaboration between its members in a common cause. Eventually, it continues to provide for collective defence *in extremis*.¹³⁸ Such functions of NATO have attracted the Visegrad countries to be a member of it. On the other hand, it must be taken into consideration that the security understanding of the Visegrad countries, which has been examined above, makes a distinction between ‘security’ and ‘defence’. Within this context, what the Visegrad countries are seeking with NATO membership is simply defence, or military security, guarantees.

The outbreak of the civil war in Yugoslavia, the Gulf crisis and the dissolution of the USSR have deeply influenced the views of the Visegrad group. United States of America became the ‘single’ super power in the world affairs and NATO, under US tutelage, was the only functioning security institution. Europe was unable to intervene the conflict that occurred in its very doorstep, in Yugoslavia, so that the Visegrad group perceived the best guarantee of its defence to constitute closer relations with NATO and the US. The reason why the Visegrad countries needed defence was, initially, the fear from any conservative and neo-imperial move in Russia. In time, Russia’s weakness became clearer, but willingness of the Visegrad countries to be full member of NATO has not reduced. There are several motives for that.

First of all, the concern with the maintenance of the transatlantic link is stemming from the historical experience, to some extent, and from the threat perception of Central Europeans. These countries still are vulnerable to the dangers of instability than much of Western Europe is. Furthermore, past dependence exclusively on Western European powers do not work to the benefit of Central Europe. From the point of view of the region, constant involvement of the US in Europe’s security structures and guarantees is crucial. “Moreover, applicant states for EU membership have invested heavily both in gaining and maintaining NATO membership. For them, the endurance of the transatlantic connection is vital.”¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Richard Latter, ‘Enlarging NATO: Implications for European Security’, *Report based on Wilton Park Conference 659: 21-25 January 2002 on ‘NATO’s Enlargement and European Security’*, p. 10.

¹³⁹ Bilcik, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-4.

Secondly, in the context of the motto of ‘return to Europe’, post-communist Central European states desired to take their parts in any Western institution in order prove that they are a part of Europe. Thirdly, they wanted to be in the same security structure with USA, the champion of the Cold War, and Germany, the regional power. And fourthly, the defence technology that they needed, can be best provided from the leader of this sector, i.e. the US.¹⁴⁰

On the one hand, for the Visegrad countries, therefore, membership in NATO is more important than membership in the EU.¹⁴¹ On the other hand, it is vice versa. According to Bogdan Goralzyk, an adviser to Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, foreign minister of Poland, only America and NATO can provide external security, but what is more important is domestic security that only the EU can provide.¹⁴² But Visegrad countries’ main objective is to integrate with both NATO and the EU, no matter which one is more important, in order to follow a multi-dimensional foreign policy.¹⁴³

NATO, in addition to being a defence organization, played a significant role in the stabilization of Central Europe. The Visegrad group was conscious that without solving conflicts they could not be member of the organization.¹⁴⁴ On the contrary to some allegations that NATO would cause new ‘dividing lines’ in East Europe, countries’ NATO bid forced them to find reconciliation about their disputes. For instance, NATO made it clear that Romania and Hungary could not join the

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

¹⁴² Peter Ford, ‘The New Europe’s Iraq Squeeze’, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 11 March 2003.

¹⁴³ Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic have become full-fledged members in NATO at Washington Summit 1999, and signed accession treaties with the EU on 16 April 2003 in Athens, and became EU members on 1 May 2004. Slovakia, on the other hand, as a latecomer became a full-fledged member of NATO in April 2004, and took its place along with the other Visegrad countries in Athens to sign accession treaty with the EU, and became EU member on 1 May 2004.

¹⁴⁴ It is, also, fruitful to remind the words of the then President Bill Clinton Administration’s Secretary of State Madeleine Albright: “The new NATO can do for Europe’s east what the old NATO did for Europe’s west, vanquish old hatreds, promote integration, create a secure environment for prosperity, and deter violence in the region where two world wars, and the cold war began.” Adrian Hyde-Price, ‘Patterns of International Politics’, *Developments in Central and East European politics 2*, (ed.) Stephen White, Judy Batt, and Paul G. Lewis, Houndmills, Macmillan Press Ltd., 1998, p. 271.

Alliance, unless they signed the bilateral treaty to solve the long-standing minority problem. This pressure from NATO worked, and in September 1996 the treaty was signed between Hungary and Romania.¹⁴⁵ This stabilizing characteristic of NATO can be well understood by dwelling upon the main conditions that NATO wants to be fulfilled by candidate states. The conditions are: 1) A functioning democratic political system (including free and fair elections and respect for individual liberty and the rule of law) and a market economy; 2) Democratic-style civil-military relations; 3) Treatment of minority problem in accordance with Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) guidelines; 4) Resolution of disputes with neighboring countries and a commitment to solving international disputes peacefully; 5) A military contribution to the alliance a willingness to take steps to achieve interoperability with other alliance members.¹⁴⁶

5.3.1.2. Going Beyond Europe: Integration Process with NATO

NATO was caught unprepared to integration process, because, naturally, nobody expected that the Eastern bloc would fall such quickly. But in time, first reservations in order not to irritate the USSR, melted and at NATO foreign ministers meeting in Copenhagen in June 1991 a meaningful statement, from the perspective of post-communist countries, was delivered: “Our own security is inseparably linked to that of all other states in Europe.”¹⁴⁷ At Rome NATO summit meeting in November 1991, North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) was established at both ministerial and ambassadorial levels and proposed regular meetings of the Political, Economic, and Military Committees.

At Brussels summit in January 1994 ‘Partnership for Peace’ (PfP) project was accepted between NATO and former Warsaw Pact members and neutrals, so

¹⁴⁵ Andrew Cottey, ‘Central Europe After NATO Enlargement’, *NATO Final Report*, June 1998, p. 18. Available at <http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/96-98/cottey.pdf>, accessed on 12.03.2003, p. 20.

¹⁴⁶ Thomas S. Szayna, *NATO Enlargement, 2000-2015: Determinants and Implications for Defense Planning and Shaping*, Santa Monica, RAND, 2001, p. 16.

¹⁴⁷ ‘Partnership with the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe’, *NATO Review*, vol. 39. no. 3., June 1991, p. 28.

that the way that goes on to NATO membership has been opened up. Russia, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden, all Eastern European, Central Asian and Caucasian states, except Tajikistan, became members of PfP. (Thus, Russia's perceived potential threat to Central Europe was reduced by this project, and it became easier to integrate with the Visegrad countries without irritating Russia, or creating new 'dividing lines' in Europe.) With the acceptance of PfP, these countries were obliged to obey the necessities of democracy to be full members of NATO. PfP members acquired the rights to have communication offices in Brussels and to join military exercises with NATO. "They also agreed to ensure the accessibility of their national defense planning and budgeting processes to the Alliance and develop the capability to contribute to NATO's peacekeeping, search and rescue, and humanitarian operations."¹⁴⁸

PfP, therefore, turned to be a springboard for membership for the Visegrad countries. The performance of these countries in PfP determined their membership in the Alliance. Poland perceived PfP participation as leading to full NATO membership. Poland's PfP priorities were: political consultations; military exercises with stress on peacekeeping operations (PKOs); broad exchange in defence and security information including plans to bolster their staffs at Mons and Evere. The Polish sought to expand their NATO bilateral contacts under the PfP umbrella because they wanted to establish a broad network of defence contacts. The Czech Republic did not perceive PfP as a substitute for NATO membership, but as a step toward membership. The PfP document committed Czech forces to support UN peace-keeping operations and outlines the means to achieve operational compatibility with NATO. The short-term goal was to support PKOs; the mid-term goal was to achieve compatibility in combat operations; the long-term goal is to achieve full compatibility. The Czechs offered their training ranges to NATO armies and intended to augment their staffs at Evere and Mons. Though they needed outside assistance, the Czechs increased their defence budget, in part to help achieve their PfP goals. Hungary's PfP effort sought: to develop a training and educational

¹⁴⁸ Hugh de Santis, 'Romancing NATO: Partnership for Peace and Eastern European Security', *The Future of NATO*, (ed.) Ted Galen Carpenter, London, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1995, p. 65.

program with NATO and NATO members; to cooperate closely in peacekeeping monitoring and operations. Hungary began cooperation with Nordic countries in PKO and monitoring activities. PfP clearly influenced Slovakia's transition. Slovakia's main objective was to gradually achieve 'full-fledged' NATO membership. Slovakia's PfP document described the concrete steps they have taken to achieve military cooperation. Slovakia planned to develop a small but well-trained army to be inter-operable with NATO. Slovakia has allocated a specific portion (one per cent) of their defence budget to PfP.¹⁴⁹

In time, PfP and NACC fell short to meet new demands occurring after the mid-1990s. Consequently, a process of 'revision' took a start and, within this context, NACC was replaced by Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) in 1997, and PfP was reinforced. On the other hand, Germany strongly supported to conclude pre-accession talks with the Visegrad group, because firstly it wanted to have neighbours that are integrated with West in all means, and secondly to speed up European integration with East was Germany's foreign policy priority. With this conjuncture, more advanced Visegrad countries, i.e. Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic were invited to join the Alliance at NATO Madrid summit in 1997. In 1999, in 50th years anniversary of the Alliance, these three countries became full-fledged members of the NATO at Washington summit. Slovakia was excluded from this process, or race, due to its domestic politics and shortcomings, but it took its place in 'Membership Action Plan' (MAP). Nevertheless, owing the elimination of nationalist and pro-Russian Vladimir Meciar, and through new leadership of Mikulas Dzurinda, who became premier of Slovakia after the 1998 elections, Slovakia gave its priority to integrate with the West, and democratic amendments began to demonstrate their results step by step, being a candidate state of the EU in 1999 and a member of OECD in July 2000. At the NATO Prague summit in November 2002, Slovakia was invited to join the Alliance, and subsequently she turned to be a member of it in April 2004.

¹⁴⁹ Simon, *op. cit.*

5.3.2. Seeking Security through EU Membership

5.3.2.1. The EU, the Stabilizer? The Meaning of the EU to the Visegrad Group

In the early 1990s, the European Communities (EC) – “though not an organization of collective defense represented another institutional framework that became instrumental in the direction of Central Europe’s post-Communist transition into a new security environment.”¹⁵⁰ Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland managed to establish formal ties with the EC rather quickly. It is a wide accepted component that although it seeks to develop its own security and defence policy, the EU is a ‘giant’ in economic means, but a ‘pygmy’ in military, or defence, means. The Visegrad group, therefore, perceive the Union not different than this reality, so that whereas they are searching concrete defence guarantees with trans-Atlantic ties, they are looking for their security, in a wider context, through the EU and its enlargement process. Such non-military risks, which are all related with domestic security of citizens, that the Visegrad countries faced, or still face, as lack of democracy tradition, civil control of the army, minority problems, socio-economic tensions due to be in transition, organized crime and refugee influxes from the East can be solved by integrating with the EU. Civil and economic characteristics of the Union were promising elements for the region’s states that they have desired to integrate with it as soon as possible.

In Central Europe, the EU was seen as potentially, “a replacement for the USSR in the World balance of power; a regional pacifier; a global intervenor; a mediator of conflicts; a bridge between the rich and the poor; [and] a joint supervisor of the world economy.”¹⁵¹ On the other hand, while the elites of the Central European countries attached such importance to the integration process with the EC/EU, the Union’s elite did not ignore these voices coming from the East. As

¹⁵⁰ Bilcik, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

¹⁵¹ Christopher Hill, ‘Closing the Capabilities-Expectations Gap?’, *A Common Foreign Policy for Europe? Competing Visions of the CFSP*, (ed.) John Peterson and Helene Sjursen, London, Routledge, 1998, p. 34.

the priority areas for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) joint actions, which were declared the 1993 Brussels European Council, the Central European countries were in the first place. The EU declared its CFSP joint action priority about Central Europe as “promotion of a stable peace in Europe through reinforcement of the Democratic processes in CEE [Central Eastern Europe] countries.”¹⁵²

5.3.2.2. Returning to Europe: Enlargement of the EU, Developing ESDP and the Visegrad Group

The enlargement of the European Union is a security policy. It is a security policy by other means and a security policy in its own right. By other means, because extending the Union’s norms, rules, opportunities and constraints to the applicants makes instability and conflict in the region much less likely, although such change may entail elements of risk. “And it is a security policy in its own right, too, because the entrants bring in interests and skills that broaden the scope of the common external policies.”¹⁵³ So potential stability of the region, in the means of non-military risks, as seen by the Central Europeans, could come from only the next door in the West.

In this regard, both parties showed their willingness to initiate the process of enlargement and in December 1991 ‘Europe Agreements’ were concluded. But these agreements fell short in order to meet Visegrad group’s demands from the EC, because agreements did not give any guarantee to be a member of the Community. In June 1993, ‘Copenhagen Criteria’ were adopted by the EU as preconditions for membership. Criteria displayed three main paths for the candidates; guaranteeing democracy, develop functioning market economy, and adoption of *acquis communautaire* of the EU. Within this context, Hungary and Poland applied for the

¹⁵² Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler, *The European Union as a Global Actor*, London, Routledge, 1999, p. 183.

¹⁵³ Antonio Missiroli, *Bigger EU, Wider CFSP, Stronger ESDP? The View from Central Europe*, Occasional Paper, No. 34, Paris, EU Institute for Security Studies, 2002, p. 58.

membership to the EU in March and April 1996, and started negotiations on 31 March 1998. The Czech Republic applied to the EU in January 1996 and Slovakia in June 1995. The Czechs started negotiations together with Hungary and Poland. Slovakia was able to start the negotiations right after the Helsinki Summit in December 1999.¹⁵⁴ According to Agenda 2000 proposal of the Commission, Czechs, Poles, and Hungarians would be taken to the Union in the first wave, and Slovakia in the second if it had met the criteria. However, such discrimination among candidate states would bring instability and dissatisfaction rather than stability to the region. Because strict visa regulations of the Schengen procedure would possibly cause new ‘dividing lines’ among ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ of the EU membership countries.¹⁵⁵ By taking this jeopardy into consideration, the EU altered the policy which was proposed in Agenda 2000, and decided to take the 10 candidate states from Central Europe, Baltic and Mediterranean regions, and assured other two candidates, Romania and Bulgaria, to join the Union by 2007.¹⁵⁶ All Visegrad countries were invited to join the Union at Copenhagen Summit in December 2002, and they signed Accession Treaties on 16 April 2003 in Athens. Since 1 May 2004, they are full members of the EU.

During the development process of the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), the Visegrad countries took a sceptic attitude, because the three full-fledged NATO members had reservations about decision-making process of ESDP only among EU members, and they perceived ESDP as a process of ‘decoupling’ of the US from the Europe, so that they did not want any alternative to NATO in European security structure, while they succeeded to have close relations with the US. The best for these full-fledged NATO members is to see ESDP as ESDI within, or under the supervision of, NATO. “Over time, however, such attitudes have

¹⁵⁴ Ulrich Sedelmeier and Helen Wallace, ‘Eastern Enlargement: Strategy or Second Thoughts?’, *Policy-Making in the European Union*, (ed.) Helen Wallace and William Wallace, New York, Oxford University, 2000, p. 458.

¹⁵⁵ Andrew Cottey, ‘Central Europe After NATO Enlargement’, *NATO Final Report*, June 1998, p. 18. Available at <http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/96-98/cottey.pdf>, accessed on 12.03.2003, p. 3.

¹⁵⁶ Turkey was excluded from the most comprehensive enlargement process, even though it is one of the candidate states as it was declared at Helsinki Summit.

evolved towards a warmer acceptance of the ESDP blueprint as eventually spelt out in Nice – on condition that its implementation turns into a positive – sum (rather than zero-sum) game between the Union and the Alliance.¹⁵⁷

The candidate countries [of the EU] generally recognize European integration as a political project and therefore the building of the ESDP is both necessary and inevitable. Still, there is a definite concern about the maintenance of a strong and clearly defined EU-US connection. Viktor Orban, Hungary's [former] prime minister, emphasized that, 'A new EU-US relationship is key: the transatlantic link is at the core of a balanced Europe.' During a visit to Moscow, Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, former Polish foreign minister, diplomatically summed up the Polish position, calling it 'clear and consistent.' He went on, 'As a European country we recognize the need for development of the European defense and political identity; as a NATO state with a burden of a certain historic experience, we shall strive for preservation of the Alliance's full potential.' Similarly, in its official statement, Slovakia understands the formation of security and defense policy of the EU as 'a complementary process to the system of collective defense of the North Atlantic Alliance.'¹⁵⁸

The group, on the other hand, has been unequivocal to pronounce that ESDP is *de rigueur* for cultivating the European security context. In this connection, as candidate countries of the EU and current or aspiring members of NATO the V4 countries supported the development of the common European Security and Defence Policy and wished to participate in its building, including decision-shaping and decision-making. Yet, at the same time, the group emphasized its reservation that it hoped that a framework agreement between the EU and NATO would be signed to prevent any 'duplication' of structures and decision-making.¹⁵⁹ Through accession to the Union, the group's fear of being excluded from the decision-making process of ESDP has, naturally, been overcome owing to their full memberships both in the EU and NATO. Nevertheless, as close allies of the US and since they are members of both structures, the group has a vigilant approach to two Ds (duplication and decoupling) of the three Ds (duplication, decoupling, discrimination) of ESDP.

¹⁵⁷ Missiroli, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60.

¹⁵⁸ Bilcik, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-3.

¹⁵⁹ Joint Statement of the Chairmen of the Committees of the Foreign Affairs, of the Defence and of the European Integration of the Parliaments of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland, Warsaw, December 17-18, 2000, <http://www.visegradgroup.org/events.php?kdy=1718december2000>, accessed on 21.11.2003.

Hungarian Foreign Minister, Laszlo Kovacs, for instance, has mentioned that crucial remark in his statement at the Bertelsmann Forum in January 2004 in Berlin. He has underlined that an efficient Common Security and Defence Policy of the Union is of great importance to make the Trans-Atlantic link as the linchpin of the global security. However, he has stressed that throughout making ESDP more effective, one should definitely refrain from unnecessary duplications.¹⁶⁰

In April 2003, for instance, the leaders of so-called ‘Gang Four’, i.e. France – Chirac, Germany –Schroder, Belgium –Verhofstadt, and Luxemburg –Junker unveiled a plan for closer cooperation aimed at making Europe’s defence more coherent and more independent of that of the United States, which as the leaders stressed should not be assessed as undermining NATO, or duplicating it.¹⁶¹ However, despite their reassurance about duplicating, the timing was worse than ever while German-French bloc strictly oppose the US on the issue of Iraq so that this proposal labelled as a new ‘Defence Union’ within Europe. The reactions coming from the V4 countries, *per contra*, were quite negative as it could be easily expected. Weakening the most eminent pillar of the double guarantee strategy, naturally, could not be welcomed by them, and opposing the proposal displayed how ‘atlanticists’ the V4 countries are rather than ‘Gaullists’.¹⁶²

Visegrad group’s last wish is to be forced to choose to take part with either NATO or the EU in a case of crisis. Because, the double guarantee strategy is based on to have good relations with both security pillars of the Visegrad countries, i.e. trans-Atlantic and West European. Poland, for instance, as a full-fledged NATO member, is eager to prove its credentials, but on the other hand, it does not want to

¹⁶⁰ Statement by László Kovács at the Bertelsmann Forum, Berlin, January 9, 2004, it is available at http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/Kulugyminiszterium/EN/Archives/New_Site/News/040109_Kovacs-Bertelsmann.htm, accessed on 21.04.2004.

¹⁶¹ Elaine Sciolino, ‘4-Nation Plan for Defense of Europe’, *The New York Times*, 30 April 2003.

¹⁶² David Kral, ‘Profile of the Visegrad Countries in the Future of Europe Debate’, EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, available at <http://www.euractiv.com/cgi-bin/cgint.exe/1114572-442?204&OIDN=251095&-home=analys>, accessed on 21.04.2004.

be seen as an American Trojan horse by Europeans.¹⁶³ Poland, therefore, seeks, or sought hitherto, to build equilibrium between these two elements of double guarantee strategy. Similar tendencies were dominant in the other Visegrad countries, but with occurrence of the Iraq crisis the time has come to take a side in divided Europe.

¹⁶³ Rafal Trzaskowski, 'Poland', *Bigger EU, Wider CFSP, Stronger ESDP? The View from Central Europe*, (ed.) Antonio Missiroli, Occasional Paper, No. 34, Paris, EU Institute for Security Studies, 2002, p. 20.

CHAPTER 6

THE SELECTED CASE STUDIES FOR THE VISEGRAD GROUP

6.1. The Iraq and Transatlantic Crises, and the Visegrad

6.1.1. The Outbreak of the Crises

After the gruesome attacks to New York and Washington DC on 11 September 2001, world politics began to change very profoundly. American foreign policy, with a Hobbesian point of view, focused on the differentiation between good and evil. The first evil was the Taliban regime in Afghanistan that was accused to perpetrate the terrorist attacks to the US. The world, particularly the western hemisphere, was unequivocal to pronounce their support for the US in her fight against terrorism in the wake of the September 11 calamity. Europe perceived the attacks as they happened to them, as well. For the first time in NATO history, the alliance summoned the defence clause preserved in Article 5 of its charter, and in this regard, the allies of the US offered to contribute the fight in Afghanistan. The Visegrad countries, too, frankly supported America's intervention into Afghanistan, and even offered to take part in coalition if the US had wanted.¹⁶⁴

The next target was Iraq's Saddam Hussein regime, and that created the problem. The Iraq crisis turned to be the reason of subsequent crisis, which is much more important: the crack in transatlantic relations. The collapse of the transatlantic cooperation has two facets: division within Europe; and disagreement between the US and divided Europe. Europe was divided as pro and con Americans, and the

¹⁶⁴ See about further information for Poland's posture; Antonio Missiroli *Bigger EU, Wider CFSP, Stronger ESDP? The View from Central Europe*, Occasional Paper, No. 34, Paris, EU Institute for Security Studies, 2002, pp 24-25; for Czech Republic's posture, pp. 29-30; for Slovakia's posture, p. 35; for Hungary's posture, pp. 40-41.

transatlantic split occurred between the con-Americans in the continent, led by France and Germany, and the US.

The Bush administration displayed a few reasons to justify its intervention into Iraq. These reasons were Iraq's so-called weapons of mass destruction, dictatorship and Iraqi regime's support for international terrorism (However, many thought the real reason was to prolong USA's hegemony and make the world dependent on itself through controlling the Iraqi oil sources). These reasons were not seen as robust reasons to occupy a country by the Franco-German bloc. Germany and France opposed the US by claiming there is no reason for a war, and diplomacy must work to disarm Iraq. Behind these peace-loving and humanitarian oppositions, there are facts that must not be overlooked. The most eminent dimension of the opposition was related with the conventional facet of 'power'. Today's transatlantic problem is not a George Bush problem. It is a power problem. Military strength of the US has produced a propensity to use that strength. Europe's military weakness has produced a perfectly understandable aversion to the exercise of military power. This natural and historic disagreement between the stronger and the weaker manifests itself in today's transatlantic dispute over the question of unilateralism. "Europeans generally believe that their objection to American unilateralism is proof of their greater commitment to certain ideals concerning world order. They are less willing to acknowledge that their hostility to unilateralism is also self-interested. Europeans fear American unilateralism."¹⁶⁵ There were, of course, secondary reasons of the opposition of the con-Americans. In Germany, for instance, there was a considerable pacifist, anti-war public opinion during the elections of 2002 autumn. Germany's Chancellor Gerhard Schröder opportunistically exploited that manner of German people in order to remain in power, and after the elections he continued on his anti-war, subsequently anti-American, policies. Jacques Chirac, on the other hand, became a champion of the neo-Gaullist policies, and he, as well as Schröder, played for anti-American French public opinion.

¹⁶⁵ Robert Kagan, 'Power and Weakness', *Policy Review*, No. 113, June & July 2002, it is also available at <http://www.policyreview.org/JUN02/kagan.html>, accessed on 06.05.2004.

Thus, “somewhere between Kabul and Baghdad, then, the United States and Europe lost each other.”¹⁶⁶ They did not only lose each other, but they also became ‘anti’ of one another. The best symbolizing of this ‘anti’ caricature was hawkish US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s differentiation for Europe. He told that Germany and France as ‘old Europe’, while at the same time he hailed the pro-American the then EU candidate countries as ‘new Europe’ to which “the continent’s centre of political gravity was shifting.”¹⁶⁷

In the pre-armed conflict era, the US developed a new National Defense Strategy, which was then known as ‘pre-emption’. The strategy’s most distinguishing argument to justify the war in Iraq was that the Americans must be prepared “to stop rogue states and their terrorists clients before they are able to threaten or use weapons of mass destruction against the United States and our allies and friends.”¹⁶⁸ Through this strategy, Iraq became the target of the US.

This self claimed justification was of course not enough to make a military intervention to Iraq. The US needed also international support, and what it needed came with the famous ‘letter of eight’.¹⁶⁹ On 30 January 2003, with the letter, five EU and NATO members, Spain, Portugal, Italy, United Kingdom and Denmark and three full fledged NATO members and the then would be-EU members, Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary made it clear that they fully support the US in its policy on Iraq. A similar declaration came from Vilnius-10 group, including Slovakia, in February 2003.¹⁷⁰

The pro-American attitude of the East Central Europeans, in particular, irritated the Franco-German bloc. French President Jacques Chirac criticized them for being ‘childish and irresponsible’, and he rebuked them by saying they had

¹⁶⁶ Ronald D. Asmus, ‘Rebuilding the Atlantic Alliance’, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 5, September & October, p. 21.

¹⁶⁷ *The New York Times*, 18 February 2003.

¹⁶⁸ The National Security Strategy of the United States (Washington, D.C., 17 September 2002), p. 14, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf>, accessed on 26.04.2003.

¹⁶⁹ See, Appendix C.

¹⁷⁰ See, Appendix D.

‘missed a great opportunity to shut up’. He argued that these countries should have consulted the EU before issuing such statements that are supporting the US.¹⁷¹

The sides were taken in the Iraqi crisis. Germany, France, Russia, and their allies, on the one hand, and the US, UK, and their allies on the other hand. The Visegrad countries have stood side by side with Atlantic bloc. But, what was the motivation that they did so?

6.1.2. The Attitude of the Visegrad Countries

6.1.2.1. The Outbreak of the War and the Reactions

The afore-mentioned ‘letter of eight’ and Vilnius group’s statement were the clear-cut support of the V4 countries to the US for its fight in Iraq. In addition to these pre-war supports, the V4 countries, in the wake of the outbreak of the war, embodied their collaboration for the US. Poland, *inter alia*, was first to express its support to the US. On 17 March 2003, Polish President Kwasniewski indicated that they are “ready to use a Polish contingent in the international coalition to contribute to making Iraq comply with the UN resolutions...It’s clear that the problem of existing weapons of mass destruction in Iraq is a fact.” On 20 March 2003, the Czech government stated that the US operation is a usable mean to fulfil the UN resolutions. The government of the Czech Republic reaffirms in this situation that the Czech Army NBRC battalion, deployed as part of the Enduring Freedom operation, “is ready to take part in emergency and humanitarian activities in case WMD [weapons of mass destruction] are used or are suspected to used against civilian populations or coalition forces, as well as to deal with consequences of possible disasters in the area of its deployment”. In the same day, Hungary’s PM Medgyessy mentioned that he is confident that peace will soon be reinstated in Iraq, “the weapons of mass destruction will be destroyed and on the basis of this we shall be able to live in a more peaceful and tranquil world in future...[and] would like to add that Hungary would be pleased to participate in the reconstruction of Iraq.” Slovakia’s PM Dzurinda, too, embodied his country’s support to the US. In Iraq

¹⁷¹ *The New York Times*, 18 February 2003.

today one has to prevent further threats for mankind, “to ensure more hope for peace and to terminate the death cult at the stage when it can still be stopped...Thus our government has been standing side by side with the United States.”¹⁷²

This staunch loyalty of the Central Europeans to the US, and tough opposition of the ‘old Europe’ lifted the V4 countries statue for the US from ‘partner’ to ‘ally’. The famous hardliner William Safire, for instance, argued that the US now had new reliable allies. President Bush should reward those countries whose leaders stand with the US in stopping the spread of 21st century terror. He did not hesitate to give example the way to reward them, as well. To him, the US should move 70,000 troops and their families from garrisons in pacifist Germany “to more strategic, less expensive deployments in Bulgaria and Poland...We should urge the move of [NATO] headquarters from Brussels to new Europe’s Budapest.”¹⁷³ In turn, this obvious support of the V4 countries did irritate France and Germany. As told before, France rebuked them, and Germany’s reaction was much of frustration and irritation. German press indicated Poland as a Trojan horse, or even a Trojan donkey, of the US in Europe. Germans, indeed, were much angering with Poland than Britain or Spain.¹⁷⁴ The Polish involvement into the US led war in Iraq did not only upstage the position of Poland in eye of the Americans, but also gave a chance to take part in the decision-making process about the future of Iraq and indirectly of the Middle East. The Bush administration summoned the countries that joint the US led coalition in the war to participate in the meetings about the reconstruction of Iraq. This fact was reflected with jealous and resentment reactions in the Middle East’s regional power Turkey’s media, because Turkey, which is used to be a staunch ally of the US, rejected to join USA to occupy Iraq and did not allow US troops to use Turkish territories to open northern front against Iraq. The biggest daily of Turkey, *Hürriyet*, gave the news that Poland was invited to join the meeting

¹⁷² Quotations are taken from Polish MFA, <http://www.msz.gov.pl/start/.php>, accessed on 28.03.2003.

¹⁷³ William Safire, ‘Getting On With It’, *The New York Times*, 17 March 2003.

¹⁷⁴ Kim Inessa, ‘Loyal Partners in a United Europe’, *Transitions Online*, 16.06.2003, persistent link to the article <http://search.epnet.com/direct.asp?an=10180597&db=aph&site=ehost>, accessed on 20.10.2003.

on the future of Iraq in the headline as ‘the Poles are on the table and being a regional power with 200 troops’.¹⁷⁵

6.1.2.2. The Motivations of the V4 Countries

*No matter what we do, we will be seen as disloyal
to France and Germany, or to the US.*

Jiri Pehe¹⁷⁶

As it has been underlined that the V4 countries seek to pursue a double guarantee strategy based on the transatlantic ties and European integration. The war in Iraq and transatlantic debate drove the V4 states to take side and created the dilemma mentioned in the sentence above. The straddling attitude of the Central Europeans has been damaged, and the time has come to display that to which side they carry much of their importance. They have stood with the US, as shown above, and they have their own private reasons for that.

From a historical perspective, Central Europe has contently felt insecure. This insecurity has been stemming from the location of the region between two great powers, i.e. Germany and Russia. As Zbigniew Brzezinski argued, Central Europe has been the geography for the conflicting national interests of these powers, and thus this strategic region came under the threat, first with *Drag nach Osten*- German expansion to the East- and then Soviet pressure, of the domination of the powers.¹⁷⁷ First Hitler’s Germany then Soviet Russia took the region under their tutelage, and that *per se* turned out to be a reason of the fear of the Central Europeans. With the end of the Cold War, a new actor, which became the single super power, has gone into the region: the US. The United States, in deed, played a significant role in the emancipation of the Central Europeans from the Soviet domination, and this role has

¹⁷⁵ *Hürriyet*, 13 April 2003.

¹⁷⁶ Ian Traynor and Ian Black, Eastern Europe Dismayed at Chirac Snub, *The Guardian*, 19 February 2003.

¹⁷⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, New York, NY: Basic Books, 1997, p. 61.

well continued in the process of transition. Therefore, feeling insecure, Central Europeans has constantly needed the US guarantee in the region and that is why they wanted to integrate with NATO and thus to create close ties with the US. As noted above the V4 countries desired to integrate with the EU in which the Germans play a leading role, and even triggered the eastern enlargement of the Union. The attitude of the V4 countries, in this context, has been shaped according to this historical dimension. One can assert that, these countries support the US, because they do not want to be seen as ‘colonies’ of the EU, in particular of historical regional power Germany. One of the comments about this position of the Visegrad countries was that they have chosen a ‘big brother’, who live in far away -Washington- instead of a ‘new master’, who live in very near -Berlin- while they have just gotten rid of an ‘old master’ -Moscow.¹⁷⁸

Another motivation behind this pro-American stance of the V4 countries is well explained in the words of US Ambassador to Warsaw, Christopher Hill, that the V4 countries “are not going to be agenda takers; they’re going to be agenda setters.”¹⁷⁹ In particular, Poland, as the biggest among the others and the staunchest ally of the US in the region, thought that ‘Poland is an independent country and she is not going to do what she is told, especially by France and Germany, to do.’ Polish Foreign Minister Cimoszewicz argued that it is also an echo of the fact that “our Western European partners and friends have to realize and accept that Poland is a serious partner, and should be respected. Its arguments should be listened to...we are the biggest state among those joining the EU, and we have to play an important role.”¹⁸⁰ The Poles, in this regard, feel pride to be a part, or an object, of world politics, because throughout the history Poland was influenced by the other powers and became the subject of the world politics. Poland, on the other hand, replaced

¹⁷⁸ Murat Yetkin, ‘Avrupa’daki Çatlak Giderilebilir mi?’ [Can the Crack in Europe Be Removed?], *Radikal*, 4 April 2003.

¹⁷⁹ Richard Bernstein, ‘Bush Visit Will Lift Poland to Status of Special Friend’, *The New York Times*, 28 May 2003.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

Germany's role, which was to be a bridge between Europe and America.¹⁸¹ What is more crucial is that the Poles displayed this pride by irritating Germany, as a quasi-proof of their greatness. Poland invited Germany to contribute troops to Polish-led force in Iraq. It was an invitation that the Poles offered Germans to serve under Polish control, and that, naturally, irritated Germany.¹⁸²

Another reason that the V4 countries supported the US in its fight in Iraq – albeit their public opinions were to great extent opposed it – and risking to strain their well established relations with Germany and France is that these countries feel they owe to America. It was Americans who did most to win Central Europe's freedom from Russian yoke, then did much to bankroll the first years of the post-socialist transition.¹⁸³ Consequently, supporting the US when it needed to build an international coalition, and even sending troops albeit in less amounts, was a gesture for USA for the past aids but 'as a modest investment in reciprocity.'¹⁸⁴

For the V4 countries, supporting the US was to take part with the strongest. Since the end of the Cold War, the distribution of labour in world politics was in favour of the Americans (Americans 'making the dinner', Europeans 'doing the dishes'). The post-Cold War conflicts were solved only with the intervention of the Americans, so to be allies of them will bring a kind of a security guarantee for the Central Europeans. The bloodshed in the Balkans, in the very doorstep of Europe, was halted through American will, therefore, to the V4 countries, Central Europe can be away of the dangers under the US guarantee. As the PM of Slovakia Dzurinda argued, "it is apparent that whenever something destabilizing happens somewhere in the world, we all wait on the United States to do something –even in Europe...the United States is not just an economic and military superpower, but also

¹⁸¹ Richard Bernstein, 'Poland Upstages, and Irks, European Powerhouses', *The New York Times*, 12 May 2003.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ 'We Still Rather Like the Americans', *The Economist*, 1 February 2003, p. 43.

¹⁸⁴ 'Poland and the EU: A Nervous...', *op. cit.*, p. 18.

a democratic superpower.”¹⁸⁵ His Czech counterpart Spidla thinks the same, “the US has adopted the role of ‘master of the world’. At present, the USA is undoubtedly the strongest state and there is no longer any global power that is equal.”¹⁸⁶ The chairman of the *Sejm*, Longin Pastusiak, wrote that the US is the single power that carries much of the values, e.g. the biggest economy, the best army, the greatest technology and financial potential and the strongest political, ideological and cultural influence. And, nowadays, no other states can compete with this super power.¹⁸⁷

To some extent, the V4 countries bore in mind the economic benefits of supporting the US in Iraq case. The V4 countries believed that they could be new special allies of US. They observed that special allies, such as Turkey and Israel, get a lot of befriending the US. In this regard, the Polish government, in turn of supporting the US, expected that US military assistance would increase and Polish companies would benefit from reconstruction contracts, and even the visa requirement for the Poles to enter the US would be abolished.¹⁸⁸

With these afore-mentioned motivations, the V4 countries sent troops to Iraq. After the outbreak of the war, in the so called Interim Coalition Stability Operations Conference, which was convened in April 2003, Poland ensured that it would provide 4,000 troops to administer one of the third command zones in Iraq, furthermore Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia took their places in this Conference, as well.¹⁸⁹ Poland, in this connection, became the most active country *vis-à-vis* the other V4 countries in Iraq. 2,600-man Polish brigade is leading an

¹⁸⁵ Libuse Koubska, ‘Running Together on the Road of Europe’, *New Presence: The Prague Journal of Central European Affairs*, Vol. 6, Issue 3, p. 12.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁸⁷ Longin Pastusiak, ‘What Kind of a New World Order?’, *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, 3 January 2004.

¹⁸⁸ Radek Sikorski, ‘Poles, Spaniards, Thais’, *National Review*, Vol. 56, Issue 3, February 2004, p. 43.

¹⁸⁹ Vernon Loeb, ‘6 Nations Agree to Role in Policing Postwar Iraq’, *The Washington Post*, 3 May 2003. All participating countries to the Conference were: the US, Britain, Australia, the Philippines, South Korea, Qatar, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania and Bulgaria.

international division of 9,500 troops, including 25 nations, in the Central South sector of Iraq¹⁹⁰. Hungary's contribution was sending 300 troops, placed under Polish command, and allowing the US to use a Hungarian military base in Taszar as a camp to train the Iraqi forces.¹⁹¹ The Czech Republic and Slovakia deployed Czech-Slovak anti-nuclear, -biological, and -chemical (NBC) units in Kuwait and subsequently reinforced them by 16 elite troops on 27 March 2003.¹⁹²

6.2. The Convention on the Future of Europe and the Visegrad Group

The European Council in Leaken in December 2001 decided to convene a European Convention to prepare a draft constitution for the enlarged Union, and in this respect the thirteen applicant countries, ten of them have already become full-members, were invited to join to formation of the Euro-constitution. The Presidium of the Convention was made of by chairmanships of Valery Giscard d'Estaing, former president of France, Jean-Luc Dehaene, former premier of Belgium, Giuliano Amato, former premier of Italy. The Convention involves 105 delegates and 102 alternates representing the governments and parliaments of member and candidate states. In addition, the Convention is attended, in an observer capacity, by representatives of the Committee of the Regions, the Economic and Social Committee, social partners organisations, and the European Ombudsman.¹⁹³

According to Leaken Declaration, thirteen accession states have right to send delegates to the Convention, but the position of these countries has been limited by the Convention's rules of procedure. "On basis of these the V4 states have the right to comment on the Convention's proposals and submit their own ones but they

¹⁹⁰ Sikorski, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

¹⁹¹ Judit Szakacs, 'Hungary Mourns Its First Iraq Casualty', *Transitions Online*, 8 December 2003, persistent link to the article <http://search.epnet.com/direct.asp?an=11855717&db=aph>, accessed on 06.05.2004.

¹⁹² <http://www.hri.org/news/balkans/rferl/2003/03-03-28.rferl.html#44>, accessed on 12.04.2003.

¹⁹³ For further information on the Convention *q.v.*, <http://european-convention.eu.int/>

cannot block the consensus among the current member states.”¹⁹⁴ Yet, this position has changed after May 1 through the memberships of the all V4 countries so that now they are able to act as equal as the old member of the Union. That might also explain the delay on finalising the draft constitution, which was envisaged to be finalised at Brussels summit in December 2003. New comers, including the Visegrad group, have presented dilly-dallies in the Convention, particularly throughout the Inter Governmental Conference (IGC) in Rome in October 2003 as it is going to be touched upon later on, in order to finalise draft constitution when they became full-members of the Union.

6.2.1. The Positions of the V4 Countries and the Group over the Convention

Before giving the common demands of the Visegrad group on the Convention’s work, it would be beneficial to underline the views of its members. However, it has to be borne in mind that there are manifold views for the convention and the issues that it mentions. Diverging views exist in different institutions in the V4 countries, e.g. governments, politicians, NGO’s, academies...etc., and oddly enough there are also different views within the institutions. Within this context, herein, the official views of the V4 countries are going to be stressed in order to reflect the positions of them in the Convention and on the Constitutional Treaty.

The Czech Republic’s Stance

The Czech Republic has put its official views on the Convention’s work on institutional reforms in the government document called ‘Non-Paper on the Reform of the EU Institutions.’¹⁹⁵ The Czech government advocates the motto ‘one country, one commissioner’. The draft constitution, on the other hand, proposes a system,

¹⁹⁴ David Kral, ‘Profile of the Visegrad Countries in the Future of Europe Debate’, EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, available at <http://www.euractiv.com/cgi-bin/cgint.exe/1114572-442?204&OIDN=251095&-home=analys>, accessed on 21.04.2004.

¹⁹⁵ The document is available at <http://www.mzv.cz/missionEU/convention.htm>, accessed on 05.05.2004.

whereby each member country will have one Commissioner, but only 15 of the 25 European Commissioners will have full voting rights. This is designed to prevent deadlock in what is effectively the government of the European Union. The Czech Republic fears that the change will weaken their influence. The draft constitution does allow for a system whereby the fifteen voting Commissioners will come from varying countries every five years, but the Czech Republic argues that this is not enough. The Czech prime minister has made it clear that he is determined not to abandon the principle of one Commissioner, one vote, as also this view shared by the other Visegrad countries.¹⁹⁶

In respect to current system of rotating presidency of the European Council, Czech government sees the issue as one of the most controversial proposals in the draft constitution is to end the current system of a six-month rotating presidency, giving each member country a turn at the helm. Instead, the draft proposes a European president elected by the European Council (the body made up of the heads of state or government of the member states) and approved by the European Parliament for a term of 2.5 years. The Czech Republic, alongside most of the other smaller countries, is opposed to the change, which it fears could concentrate power in the larger states, depriving the smaller countries of their guaranteed turn at the presidency. Another of the Czech Republic's fears is that the institution of a European president could lead to the weakening and marginalization of the European Commission, which up to now has tended to favour smaller countries.¹⁹⁷

In the topic of qualified majority voting (QMV), the position of the Czech government is changing. The Nice treaty of December 2000 defined new rules for decision-making in many areas of the EU's work, in order to prevent countries using their veto to block important decisions. The draft constitution proposes adapting the system of 'double majority voting' still further in favour of larger countries. In the main EU decision-making bodies it will be possible to approve most decisions with the support of half the member countries, provided that they represent at least 60%

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

of the EU population. But the Czech Republic is one of several countries requesting a return to the original Nice proposal and expanding the QMV to new areas¹⁹⁸, whereby the support of three-fifths rather than just half of the member countries would be required for decisions to be approved. However, the Czech prime minister has indicated a willingness to show flexibility on this issue. And as it will be noted, he has begun to shift his position from QMV to Double Majority Voting, and that is a crucial disagreement within the group.¹⁹⁹

In the issue of reference to aspiration of divine, the Czech government, in particular the Foreign Minister Cyril Svoboda (a Christian Democrat), has shown itself to be mildly in favour of a mention of Europe's shared Christian values in the Preamble to the Constitution (*invocatio Dei*).²⁰⁰

Hungary's Stance

Hungarian priorities in the process of the Convention, as Hungarian Foreign Minister outlined, are preservation of the legal and institutional unity and equilibrium of the integration, equal rights and obligations of member states, extension of the community method, explicit reference to minority rights, strengthening the cohesion of the integration.²⁰¹ In addition to these priorities,

¹⁹⁸ The areas in which QMV should be applied are free movement of persons; measures in the field of social security; mutual recognition of diplomas; restrictions of the movement of capital; measures in the field of visas; measures on asylum and refugees; provisional measures; necessary measures in the field of transport; measures on transport; compatibility of State aid with the rules of the Common Market; harmonisation of indirect taxation; approximation of laws and other provisions; common trade policy; improvement of working conditions, minimum requirements, social measures; social dialogue; environmental protection; alterations of the number of members of the Commission; increases in the number of Advocates-General; and measures to attain the objectives of the Community. Petr Krotovil, 'National Report Czech Republic', *Positions of 10 Central and Eastern European Countries on EU Institutional Reforms: Analytical Survey in the Framework of the CEEC-Debate Project*, (ed.) Christian Franck and Dorota Pyszna-Nigge, Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve Brussels, June 2003, pp. 33-4. It is also available at the address of http://www.tepsa.be/html/CEECDebate_ConventionReport.pdf, accessed on 05.05.2004.

¹⁹⁹ *Infra*, p. 109.

²⁰⁰ <http://www.mzv.cz/missionEU/convention.htm>, accessed on 05.05.2004.

²⁰¹ Statement by László Kovács at the Bertelsmann Forum, Berlin, January 9, 2004, it is available at http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/Kulugyminiszterium/EN/Archives/New_Site/News/040109_Kovacs-Bertelsmann.htm, accessed on 21.04.2004.

Hungary, likewise the Czech Republic, advocates that the current system of rotating presidency of the European Council should be maintained, because this system gives more equality for small countries of the EU to laud their priorities within the Union and also to shape agenda of the Union. In the topic of the Council of Ministers, Hungarians support such basic principles as laid down in two joint contributions. These include separation of the Council's legislative and coordinative functions and transparency when legislating; simple double majority instead of weighted votes and present qualified majority system, further extension of QMV/simple double majority (with only a few, most sensitive issues remaining under unanimity) and the re-establishment of a full-time position of Secretary-General to the Council. Hungary (allying with Germany and the UK) is in favour of decreasing the number of Council formations to 7 or less.²⁰²

Hungary advocates one country, one commissioner, and, like the Czech, argues that the President of the Commission should be elected by the European Parliament with a reinforced majority and confirmed by the European Council by QMV, thus the Commission should be answerable to both the European Parliament and the European Council.²⁰³ Like the Czech Foreign Minister, one of the delegates of Hungary in the Convention, Jozsef Szajer, would like to have reference to God in the preamble of the Constitutional Treaty.²⁰⁴

Peter Medgyessy, Hungarian Prime Minister, outlined the position of his government in the issue of institutional reforms in his speech at the opening session of the Rome IGC. To him,

in case of a reform of the institutions, the establishment of new institutions, and renewal of the decision-making system, we must simultaneously ensure the equality of rights of Member States, the upholding of the institutional balance, and the conditions of efficient and co-ordinated operations. In this

²⁰² Krisztina Vida,, 'National Report Hungary', *Positions of 10 Central and Eastern European Countries on EU Institutional Reforms: Analytical Survey in the Framework of the CEEC-Debate Project*, (ed.) Christian Franck and Dorota Pyszna-Nigge, Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve/Brussels, June 2003, p. 51. It is also available at http://www.tepsa.be/html/CEECDebate_ConventionReport.pdf, accessed on 05.05.2004.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

spirit, I propose that each Member State should delegate, in long term too, a member with voting rights to the Commission. Bearing in mind these criteria, we need to define a rotational system of chairmanship that is more efficient than the present one and ensures equal access to all Member States.²⁰⁵

Slovakia's Stance

Slovakia, as the smallest of the V4 countries, advocates equal treatment for all the EU members and enhancing the institutional balance between the EU institutions. In this regard, Slovakia, as well as the aforementioned V4 states, supports the current rotating system for the presidency of the European Council. Slovakia argues that the presidency of the European Council shall be held in turn by each member state for a term of six months to ensure equality among member states and to preserve the inter-institutional balance. "A member state holding the Presidency of the European Council shall be simultaneously a member of the team Presidency of the Council."²⁰⁶ In the aspect of the Commission, Slovakia, too, supports of the motto of 'one country, one commissioner', and argues that the European Commission has to remain as the protector of the treaties. It has to keep its crucial role at the centre of policymaking in the EU by preserving its sole right of legislative initiative and by reinforcing its executive tasks... at the same time, "the Commission's role, legitimacy and independence should be strengthened through an election of the president of the Commission by the European Parliament through a qualified majority of members of European Parliament."²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Hungarian Prime Minister Peter Medgyessy's speech at the opening session of the IGC, 07.10.2003, available at http://europa.eu.int/futurum/documents/speech/sp071003_en.pdf, accessed on 05.05.2004.

²⁰⁶ Vladimir Bilcik, 'National Report Slovakia', *Positions of 10 Central and Eastern European Countries on EU Institutional Reforms: Analytical Survey in the Framework of the CEEC-Debate Project*, (ed.) Christian Franck and Dorota Pyszna-Nigge, Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve/Brussels, June 2003, p. 94. It is also available at http://www.tepsa.be/html/CEECDebate_ConventionReport.pdf, accessed on 05.05.2004.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

Poland's Stance

The stance of Poland, *inter-alia*, has been the most controversial, because her intransigent position, together with Spain, was displayed as the reason of the failure of the Rome IGC and the task of the Convention. Before handling the argument of Poland to justify herself in the context of failure, the official stance of Poland earlier than the Rome IGC would be fruitful to mention.

The position of Poland about the presidency of the European Council has been controversial and equivocal. The reaction of Poland to the Franco-German proposal about the presidency, indicating the double and permanent presidency for the European Council, and aiming to strengthen the intergovernmental method, has not been clear to a great extent. The representative of the *Sejm* –Polish parliament, Josef Oleksy, advocating that the permanent presidency would be a remedy on such matters as continuity and coherence of EU policy-making, has been rather positive on the proposal of the two states, i.e. France and Germany, of the Weimar Triangle, whereas the delegate of the government, Danuta Hübner, has been much more cautious. Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, the Polish Foreign Minister, on the other hand, refused to comment on it, yet he “chose to remind the press that Poland traditionally supported the idea of a team presidency.”²⁰⁸ However, subsequently, the position of Poland on the presidency issue had altered. Ms. Hübner began to insist on supporting the proposal, whilst the other V4 states were definitely against it, and were in favour of a team presidency with a rotating method.²⁰⁹

Poland, on the other hand, consistently, and coherently, has been of the opinion that each member should retain the right to propose a candidate for the European Commission, namely she supported ‘one country, one commissioner’ method. Poland’s official position on the issue of the election of the Commission’s

²⁰⁸ Rafal Trzaskowski, ‘National Report Poland’, *Positions of 10 Central and Eastern European Countries on EU Institutional Reforms: Analytical Survey in the Framework of the CEEC-Debate Project*, (ed.) Christian Franck and Dorota Pyszna-Nigge, Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve/Brussels, June 2003, p. 71. It is also available at http://www.tepsa.be/html/CEECDebate_ConventionReport.pdf, accessed on 05.05.2004.

²⁰⁹ Pavel Nikodem, ‘Europe’s Future and the stance of the Visegrad Countries’, <http://www.visegrad.info/index.php?ID=clanek&IDc=67>, accessed on 02.06.2004.

President, nonetheless, is unclear. The prime minister and the President, as well as Jozef Oleksy, initially, supported the idea of endowing the European Parliament with that particular prerogative. However, after conducting a thorough analysis, the government started having its reservations. Danuta Hübner presaged that the election of the President of the European Commission by the majority in the European Parliament “could politicise the whole institution to unwanted degree. Such a reform would have a negative impact on the perception of the Commission’s impartiality, hindering its ability to play a role of an honest broker.”²¹⁰

One of the most salient aspects of Poland that she gives priority in the Convention is the Christian Heritage and its place in the preamble of the Constitutional Treaty. The Polish Foreign Minister argues that the preamble should closely reflect the identity of Europeans, and should underline everything what make them European. Among these values, Greek and Roman civilizations and Renaissance culture have crucial roles. But without Christianity –Europe would not be the way it is either, with its remembrance of triumphs and defeats, its respect for human dignity, serving as the fundamental concept of rights and freedoms. “Hence, for the sake of historic truth, and for the sake of the understandable expectations of hundreds of millions of Europeans, the CT [Constitutional Treaty] and its preamble should include reference to Christianity as part of the European Union.”²¹¹

The most controversial and eminent issue in the Convention and subsequently at the Rome IGC is the voting systems and weighing of the votes in decision-making structures of the Union. Poland, first of all, summoned the EU members not to amend the Nice Treaty of 2000, particularly on the issues of voting (QMV) and weighing of votes in the Council of Minister where Poland has 27 votes. Since these two facets are the reasons for Poland’s intransigent stance, and caused the failure of the IGC, this topic is going to be handled in details below. In other related subjects, Poland, in principle, supports the extension of QWV. According to

²¹⁰ Trzaskowski, *loc. cit.*, p. 73.

²¹¹ ‘Discussion about the European Constitution: Arguments of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland’, http://europa.eu.int/futurum/documents/other/oth311003_en.pdf, accessed on 05.05.2004. This stance of Poland in the Convention, naturally, has not been welcomed by those who advocate secular basis of the Union and Turkey, as a non-Christian secular country.

the Poland's official assessment of the Nice Treaty, the fact that the extension of QMV was modest was assessed as advantageous for Poland. The document of the ministry of foreign affairs quoted the following arguments in support of its stance:

a decrease in the negative effect of the feeling of resignation in part from national sovereignty which may emerge in Polish society immediately after achieving membership; a decrease in the possible additional economic burdens for Poland which QMV, covering such areas as environment protection, taxation, welfare, structural and asylum policy may imply; gaining the opportunity of a 'fuller' influence on the shaping of EU common policies; and in the case of quick accession the opportunity of influencing the evolution of majority voting e.g. on the IGC 2004 forum.²¹²

The Common Demands of the Group

The Visegrad group revealed its support for the Convention, but also expressed their reservation on the inequality due to limited rights of the acceding countries. According to Joint Statement, 13 January 2003, adopted at the Meeting of Chairmen of the Committees on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security, and European Integration of the Parliaments the V4 countries support the efforts of the Convention on the Future of Europe to conclude its work with an aim to submit a draft of a new constitutional treaty to the European Council, which would play a key role in the simplification of the EU institutional system and the realization of the principle of transparency, and get the EU closer to the citizens. They, however, were concerned about restrictions and they, therefore, called on the Governments of the EU Member States to enable full-fledged participation and to guarantee de facto equal rights for the acceding countries in the IGC in Rome. They apparently embodied that any initiative "to reform the Union is a decision on the future of the integrated Europe, which should not take place without our voices and our contribution."²¹³

²¹² The Document of Polish MFA, 'The Treaty of Nice –The Polish Point of View', p. 26. Cf. Trzaskowski, *loc. cit.*, p. 75.

²¹³ Joint Statement adopted at the 9th Meeting of Chairmen of the Committees on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security, and European Integration of the Parliaments of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia Bratislava, Slovakia 12 - 13 January 2003, <http://www.visegradgroup.org/events.php?kdy=1213january2003>, accessed on 16.10.2003.

In order to take a tough stance at IGC in Rome against the big countries of the EU, the Visegrad group had held a meeting at Dobris chateau, Czechia, on 1 October 2003 right before the Conference, which began October 4. The group was unhappy with the draft constitution, in particular with the issue of reconstruction of the commission –that the draft, as it was presented at the Thessaloniki Summit in June 2003, envisaged 15 commissioners, whereas the group has been advocating the motto of ‘one country, one commissioner’, so that they needed to take a common position. The meeting, *au fond*, was held for agreeing on tactics and presenting a united front before they arrive at the IGC. The deputy Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic and the delegate in the Convention, Jan Kohout, stated after the meeting that the group is not ‘ganging up’ or creating any specific firm bloc against the others, it's very, very open. One of the main reasons why they gathered together was the proposal for the President of the European Council, and now you can see that this group of states has already accepted the idea of a President of the European Council, and “this tells us that this group of states is very flexible, it's ready to make compromises. And on the other hand, this group of states also expects other countries will make some compromises or will be flexible too.”²¹⁴

The group issued a joint statement, which suggests a few changes to the draft constitution in the Dobris meeting. Firstly, the proposed system of rotating Presidency of the Council of Ministers should be further specified while retaining the principle of equality and respecting the geography diversity of the Union. Secondly, ‘one country, one commissioner’ principle should be realized. Thirdly, the Visegrad Four have agreed that the calculation of QMV proposed in the draft Constitutional Treaty to come into force after 2009 should be reconsidered and changed. “They also share the opinion that no special mechanisms ensuing close cooperation in the field of common security and defence policy needed to be established, as the European Union can rely on what the Visegrad Four have called the Atlantic relation.”²¹⁵

²¹⁴ Rob Cameron, ‘Deputy foreign minister: small EU countries not “ganging up” on big ones’, 02.10.2003, <http://www.radio.cz/en/article/45864>, accessed on 21.11.2003.

6.2.2. The Convention *versus* the Nice Treaty

*If it ain't broke, don't fix it!*²¹⁶

The Treaty of Nice, December 2000, was signed in order to reshape the Union for the historical Eastern Enlargement, and it envisaged key institutional changes for the enlarged Union. One of the crucial changes of the Treaty was about weightings of the votes in the Council of Ministers. That, subsequently, created the current problem, even caused the failure of the Rome IGC of October 2003 and the Brussels Summit of December 2003 to finalise the draft constitution that the Presidium presented in June 2003. So far the consensus on 90% of the draft Constitutional Treaty has been reached. The remaining 10% is the voting system, and since it is so, the major discussions are imbedded in this issue as it is going to be handled below.

Before the Treaty of Nice, the distribution of the votes for the original 15 members in the Council of Ministers, the most important decision-making body of the Union, was as following: Germany, France, Italy, and UK, 10 votes each; Spain 8 votes; Belgium, Greece, The Netherlands, and Portugal, 5 votes each; Austria and Sweden, 4 votes each; Denmark, Ireland, and Finland, 3 votes each; and Luxemburg, 2 votes.²¹⁷ Several voting systems were discussed in Nice to take decisions in the Council of the European Union, where two models of triple majority with a new weighting of the votes were approved. These models correspond to weighted votes, number of countries and population. In Nice, the system has changed and today, according to Nice, when the issues are decided by QMV, the new weighting of the votes as following: Germany 29, United Kingdom 29, France 29, Italy 29, Spain 27, Poland 27, Romania 15, The Netherlands 13, Greece 12,

²¹⁵ Pavla Horakova, 'Visegrad Four Demand Changes in EU Draft Constitution', <http://www.radio.cz/en/article/46250>, accessed on 05.05.2004.

²¹⁶ This proverb was used by the Polish and former Spanish Foreign Ministers, Cimoszewicz and Palacio, to embody their positions about the Treaty of Nice and the Convention's proposals that are modifying the Treaty of Nice.

²¹⁷ Xenophon A. Yataganas, 'The Treaty of Nice: The Sharing of Power and the Institutional Balance in the European Union –A Continental Perspective', *European Law Journal*, Vol. 7, No.3, September 2001, p. 253.

Czech Republic 12, Belgium 12, Hungary 12, Portugal 12, Sweden 10, Austria 10, Bulgaria 10, Slovak Republic 7, Denmark 7, Finland 7, Ireland 7, Lithuania 7, Latvia 4, Slovenia 4, Estonia 4, Cyprus 4, Luxembourg 4, Malta 3.²¹⁸

The new voting rule proposed by the European Convention for the future European Constitution changes in a very remarkable way the power of the countries in the Council. “The reason is that the weighted votes, that were approved in Nice are removed and a coalition only need 13 votes, which at least sum up by 60% of the population to approve a decision with the new rule.”²¹⁹ This change of the Convention created the problem. Poland’s voting power, in this regard, was reduced²²⁰, and that is why Poland, together with Spain, took an intransigent position, ‘Nice or Death’, at the IGC and at the subsequent Brussels Summit.

6.2.2.1. Poland’s *Culpa II*?: Nice or Death

Poland, in accordance with the Nice system, has got less votes, two shy, in the Council of Ministers *vis-à-vis* other big countries, i.e. Germany, France, UK and Italy, but when their population are compared, particularly Germany’s, the weighting of the votes is too much in favour of Poland. As it is afore-mentioned, Poland has 27 votes, whereas Germany 29. But Germany’s population, 82 millions, is more than twice of Poland’s, 38 millions. Through the draft constitution presented by the Convention, this imbalance has sought to be transcended. The way to do this was easy: changing the system from QMV to Double/Simple Majority Voting and replacing this double majority system with the system of determining specific

²¹⁸ Jesús Mario Bilbao, Julio R. Fernandez, N. Jimenez, J.J.Lopez, ‘Decision Aiding: Voting Power in the European Union Enlargement’, *European Journal of Operational Research*, No. 143, 2002, p. 193.

²¹⁹ Encarnación Algaba, Jesús Mario Bilbao, Julio R. Fernandez, ‘The European Convention *Versus* Nice Treaty’, available at <http://www.esi2.us.es/~mbilboa/pdf/files/powerEU1.pdf>, p. 2, accessed on 05.05.2004.

²²⁰ See Appendix E.

number of votes, which was adopted in Nice, and thus cut the power of ‘smalls’ and to larger extent Poland and Spain by re-weighting of the power on voting.²²¹

When the draft constitution was presented in June 2003, the most salient reactions came from Poland and Spain, because their powers have reduced to greater extent. To them, Nice was a compromise of all the member and applicant countries and now changing it through the Convention will break this compromise. The system as introduced in Nice is too successful to provide the balance between small, mid-size and large countries, and that is what the founders of the Union, Jean Monnet and Konrad Adenauer, desired to build. Besides, the QMV and current weighting of votes are not complex as it is assumed by some, and through this system balance between the institutions, in particular between the European Council and European Parliament (EP), will be provided because in the EP, countries will be represented according to their populations, so that, in order to give more words to say for the smalls, there is no need to do the same in the Council.²²²

The whole failure of the IGC and Brussels Summit, therefore the draft Constitutional Treaty, was levied on Poland and Spain due to their intransigent stance on the changes over re-weighting the votes. Germany’s Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, for instance, blamed Poland and Spain without giving their name. He assessed the Brussels Summit of December 2003 as “largely a failure” and stated “we don’t have a consensus on a constitution here because one or another country put the European ideal behind national interest.”²²³ Within this context, it would be too beneficial to examine the official Polish argument in the connection of the Convention.

Poland, first of all, argues that the Convention has definitely no mandate for making any amendments on the system of voting that was stipulated in the Nice Treaty. The Leaken Declaration, defining the mandate of the Convention, listed a

²²¹ ‘Poland and the EU: A Nervous New Arrival on the European Union’s Block’, *The Economist*, 30 August 2003, p. 17.

²²² See Appendix F., Ana Palacio and Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, ‘How to Keep the Balance in Europe’s New Treaty’, *The Financial Times*, 26 September 2003.

²²³ John Tagliabue, ‘European Union Can’t Reach Deal on Constitution’, *The New York Times*, 14 December 2003.

number of issues that the Convention is eligible to make reforms on them, but the system of voting was not mentioned among them. Secondly, related with the Convention's authority on the issue, the Convention was authorized to issue recommendations in case of any consensus is reached. In other situations, it was obliged to present different options. "It is obvious that there was no full agreement on the issue of the voting system. Representatives of 18 states expressed written support for the Nice solutions." Despite that, the Convention Presidium –ignoring the majority view – included in the draft of the CT the new formula as the sole proposal. Thus, the failure was not of Poland, but the Convention. Thirdly, the Nice system was a compromise of the 15 EU members and it was aptly defined the proportions between the member states of the enlarged EU, and any attempt to change the system of voting in the Council, "while retaining the provisions concerning the European Parliament and changing the decisions on the European Commission, would undermine the logic of the Nice compromise." Fourthly, the Nice system of voting in the Council "offers a better guarantee of respecting such fundamental values and principles of European integration as solidarity, cohesion, striving for compromise, and seeking of an equilibrium in reconciling the interests of member countries and defining the common interest of Europe." Fifthly, as aforementioned, the system that has been introduced by the Convention, indicating so-called more democratic representation in the Council in accordance with demographic proportion, is a misunderstanding. The representation according to population is met in the EP, whose members are elected directly by the citizens of the EU, "but in case of the Council, which is an inter-governmental organ, the factor of equality of member states has to be ensured strong prominence." If not, the influence of the big countries, which have already great representation in the EP, will be boosted. Sixthly, the Convention introduced the new voting system with mathematical reasons and analyses, "but their worth is negligible, since they ignore the political, social and economic reality". Seventhly, changing the Nice Treaty as it remains in force is illogical. Eighthly, the final result of the Constitutional Treaty "must be acceptable to one and all". Last but not least, the Nice solution turned out to be a crucial component of the Accession Treaty, which was voted by the Poles in

referendum. Thus, modifying the Nice system will be purported as rejection of the citizens of Poland, and that would cause a great damage to the European idea.²²⁴

Poland, *ab ovo*, has been unequivocal to pronounce these arguments, and acted according to these apparent reservations. The intransigent stance of the Poles throughout the meetings and negotiations to reach a compromise made efforts failed, and furthermore relationships of Poland with the big members of the EU were strained. The Former Polish PM Leszek Miller, subsequently replaced by Marek Belka right after the EU accession due to corruption scandals and lack of his personal popularity, mentioned that it “won’t be us who will present a compromise. It’s not us who wants to change a treaty”, and he also claimed that if the draft constitution suggested deep changes to existing structure and character of the EU, “perhaps Poles should be asked about them”, read in a referendum.²²⁵ Thus, the slogan ‘Nice or Death’, pronounced from the parliamentary tribune by Civic Platform leader Jan Rotika, has become the hallmark of Poland’s European Policy. Aside from these arguments that Poland put forward, another reason to pursue this tough intransigent policy is the matter of mistrust. Aleksander Kwasniewski, president of Poland, embodied this reality with an unusual frankness. Poland seeks to maintain the Nice Treaty because it is afraid of the domination of the strongest that is being Germany and France. Germany wants to leave the Nice principles today “because it fears that in two or three years time it will not be able to agree with Italy, Great Britain, Poland, or even France. The problem of mistrust, which in Europe unfortunately remains unresolved, always lurks in the background.”²²⁶

The ‘Nice or Death’ policy, in turn, confronted blackmails from the biggest contributor to the EU’s common coffers, i.e. Germany. Poland has extra grounds to

²²⁴ These arguments of Poland are taken from ‘Discussion about the European Constitution: Arguments of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland’, *op. cit.*

²²⁵ Wojciech Kosciuszko, ‘EU: Nice or Death?’, *Transitions Online*, 13 October 2003. Persistent link to the article is <http://search.epnet.com/direct.asp?an=1119138&db=aph&site=ehost>, accessed on 06.05.2005.

²²⁶ Inessa Kim, ‘Poland: A Pyrrhic Victory in Brussels?’, *Transitions Online*, 22 December 2003. Persistent link to the article is <http://search.epnet.com/direct.asp?an=12073638&db=aph>, accessed on 06.05.2004.

be wary of Germany. “Chancellor Schroeder has warned both Poland and Spain that when negotiations begin in 2004 on the seven-year budgetary cycle that will begin in 2007, they could be ‘punished’ for their inflexibility over the constitution.”²²⁷ Poland, on the other hand, argues the negotiations in the IGC and those on the 2007-2013 Financial Perspective should be kept separate, but she is concerned that the positions in the two processes might ultimately be linked in order to move the Convention towards a conclusion. Under one possible scenario, the weight of net contributors in the budget negotiations “may be used as leverage to persuade Spain and Poland to give way on voting weights, but any leverage over Spain may be limited by the fact that it will eventually become a net creditor itself.”²²⁸

Britain, as the ally of Poland in Iraq, began to support Poland for its struggle in the path of ‘Nice or Death’. The Secretary of State of UK, Jack Straw, embodied publicly that Britain will not accept any deal that Poland is unhappy with; and he seems to have received pledges that Poland, *quid pro quo*, will support British positions on tax and defence policy, in which Britain oppose to expand the QWV system.²²⁹ Britain strictly opposes to expand the QMV for new areas, particularly in CFSP and taxation, yet on the other hand, the other members of the Union support the expansion as Belgian PM stated. Guy Verhofstadt, Belgian PM, argued that the Union must be able to act, and unanimity is an obstacle for this end. Therefore, the QMV ought to be expanded to such new areas as justice, home policy and medium-term financial planning, tax and social policies and CFSP.²³⁰

The relations between Poland and France were already strained due to the Polish support for the US over the war in Iraq, and France’s arrogant blames for Poland in the wake of her support. That was even more strained in the course of

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ Nicholas Hopkins, ‘Which Future for the Enlarged Europe?’, *Wilton Park Conference: WPS04/19*, 13/14 February 2004, available at <http://www.wiltonpark.org.uk/web/conferences/reportprintwrapper.asp?confref=WPS04-19>, accessed on 06.05.2004.

²²⁹ ‘An Inter-Governmental Tug-of-War’, *The Economist*, 20 November 2003.

²³⁰ Guy Verhofstadt, ‘Europe Emancipates Itself’, *The Wall Street Journal*, 26 November 2003.

recriminations in the process of the draft constitution. In turn of French pressure and underestimation, Poland, right before the Rome IGC, claimed that the Polish troops in Iraq found French made Roland missiles manufactured in 2003. That meant that France had violated the UN sanctions, arm embargo, on Iraq. But this volatile milieu then was directed into a thaw, as the Polish Defence Ministry announced that the date given for the manufactures date was, in deed, for expire date. The tiny crisis was overcome, yet that clearly showed that how deep mistrust is.²³¹

As one touches upon the scenarios for the Constitutional Treaty between the EU Summits of December 2003 and of June 2004, there were two facets: stances of Poland and Spain. In the Spanish front, after 14 March 2004 elections, the shift of the former government of Jose Maria Aznar with Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero created a room for more flexible negotiations, because he sent out a signal the new Spanish government would not block the draft Treaty.²³² But, for Poland's stance, there was a hope that Poland's objections stemmed more from feeling that it was being treated as a junior member, particularly by France, than from any belief that double majority voting was inherently unfair. "The test [would] be whether, after enlargement in May [2004], Poland feels secure enough in its position as a full member to contemplate compromise."²³³ Poland, above all, does not want to be isolated in the Union due to her intransigent stance.

6.2.2.2. Poland's Stance and The Visegrad Group

At the Dobris meeting on 1 October 2003, the V4 countries sought to build a common stance at the IGC and at the Brussels Summit. The group agreed to adopt a tough common position on key elements of the constitution. Slovakia, particularly,

²³¹ Kosc, *op. cit.*

²³² Nikodem, *op. cit.*

²³³ Bronwen Maddox, 'European Dinner Will Test Appetite for a Constitution', *The Times*, 18 February 2004.

expressed her will to stand side by side with Poland, explicitly saying, “there should be no adjustment to the voting rights assigned two years ago [in Nice].”²³⁴

However, as some argue that it is hard to build a common stance for the group because Poland is among ‘Big Six’, whereas the Czech Republic and Hungary among middle-size countries and Slovakia is among tiny countries. Thus, the group’s members are more likely to co-operate with ‘like minded countries’.²³⁵ However, the Nice Treaty was in favour of all the V4 countries. First of all, as it is often expressed, the Nice system, particularly of voting, constructed the ‘tyranny of the small’, because through the Nice system it was assured that the smalls cannot be outvoted, *au contraire*, they have more rights *vis-à-vis* their sizes and populations.²³⁶ In this respect, since the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia are among the smalls, they are in favour of not to change the voting system of the Nice compromise. Poland, as discussed above, located her strategy into the *status quo* of the Nice. Thus, the group have a common denominator in the re-weighting of the votes. In the other field they have little differences as mentioned above.

The group, initially, supported Poland in her ‘fight’ to maintain the Nice system. But, in time, the support began to be melted. The more the negotiations entered into the *cul-de-sac* due to the intransigent stance of Poland, the less support the group has given. The other members have been vigilant that they might also be isolated as the support to Poland is preserved. One can claim that another fear, on the other hand, is the jeopardy that Poland as the biggest of the group, with its largest market and labour, can begin to dominate the group, and use it for her own interests (just-like in the case of Austria’s inclusion to the Visegrad group).

It was the Czech who changed their position on the debate. The Czech government, a centre-left coalition led by Social Democrat Vladimir Spidla, began to support implementing the so-called ‘double/simple majority’ as the draft

²³⁴ Kosc, *op. cit.*

²³⁵ Kral, *op. cit.*

²³⁶ David Kral, Irena Brinar, Josefin Almer, ‘The Positions of Small Countries Towards Institutional Reform: from Tyranny of the Small to Directoire of the Big?’, *EPIN Working Paper*, No 6., June 2003, p. 3.

constitution envisaged. However the Czech Parliament's delegate in the Convention, and top candidate of the opposition party –centre right Civic Democrats – for the European Parliament, Jan Zahradil, criticized the government's shift, since the QMV protects the smalls rather than double majority. He added that any change on the voting as the draft envisages

is worse for the Czech Republic. We still keep on sticking with the current *status quo* and the number of weighted votes that were guaranteed to use by the Nice Treat and by our accession treaty to the European Union. I don't see why we should agree with a reduction of our power in the European Council. The government should insist on keeping the current *status quo*, which means 12 weighted votes in the Council for the Czech Republic.²³⁷

In this regard, one can claim that the government altered its attitude, because more funds will be obtained from the EU, if they are seemed as a more constructive partner.

6.2.3. The Final Act on the Constitution

The EU Summit in Brussels on 17 and 18 June 2004 turned to be a milieu of compromise over the daft Euro-constitution. Almost all of the matters, including voting system, have been overcome and the EU agreed on this historic development. According the Annex 2 of the Note that EU Council Presidency manifested, the solution that has been found in the issue of the tricky voting system, by the definition of QWV, as following:

Article 1. A qualified majority shall be defined as at least 55% of the members of the Council, comprising at least fifteen of them and representing Member States comprising at least 65% of the population of the Union.

A blocking minority must include at least four Council members, failing which the qualified majority shall be deemed attained.

Article 2. By derogation from paragraph 1, when the Council is not acting on a proposal from the Commission or from the Union Minister for Foreign

²³⁷ Brain Kenety, 'Consensus on EU Voting Scheme Remains Elusive', <http://www.radio.cz/en/article/54213>, accessed on 24.05.2004.

Affairs, the qualified majority shall be defined as 72% of the members of the Council, representing Member States comprising at least 65% of the population of the Union.²³⁸

With this solution, the system of Nice, which gave member states specific number of votes, has been renounced. Now, in order to take a decision in the Council of Ministers the afore-mentioned proportions, purported as ‘double majority’ system, will be taken into account. To take decision, the threshold for population quota of the 455-million Union has been determined as 65%, and at least fifteen members approval is needed.

This new system makes a tiny difference on Poland’s power on voting. The system that was introduced by the Convention with the formula of 13 members and 60 or 66 percentage has been replaced by the formula of 15 members and 65% of the EU population. Poland, therefore, has given up her 27 votes given by the Nice compromise and consented this cut on her power, which is still a little bit better than the Convention’s earlier proposals. The Polish PM Marek Belka commented that what the Irish presidency has introduced was in right direction, and added that an *unfair voting formula* [the Nice system] would be ‘a recipe for disaster’, and called for a safety net whereby no decision is adopted if four countries, representing 25 percent of the EU’s 455-million population, are opposed. “What is very important is a mechanism that will provide not only voting efficiency but also a solidarity, and interests of broader groups of countries. A simple majority voting may be very efficient but it leaves sizable groups of countries unsatisfied.”²³⁹

The ‘one country one commissioner’ motto, on the other hand, has been kept until 2009. Paragraph 5 of the Annex 1 indicates,

the first Commission appointed under the provisions of the Constitution shall consist of one national of each Member State, including its President and the Union Minister for Foreign Affairs who shall be one of its Vice-Presidents.

²³⁸ Final Declaration of the 17/18 June 2004 EU Brussels Summit, CIG 85/04, p. 7. It is available at http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/misc/81109.pdf, accessed on 22.06.2004.

²³⁹ ‘EU Leaders Deadlock on Candidate for Top Job’, *The International Herald Tribune*, 18 June 2004.

Paragraph 6:

As from the end of the term of office of the Commission referred to in paragraph 5, the Commission shall consist of a number of Members, including its President and the Union Minister for Foreign Affairs, corresponding to two thirds of the number of Member States, unless the European Council, acting unanimously, decides to alter this figure.²⁴⁰

Thus, after the first term of the Commission, starting in November 2004 and lasting five years long, the number of members of the commission will be slimed down to 18, and therefore not every single country will have their own commissioner after 2009.

In addition to these, the reference to Christianity, as Poland insisted together with lobby of the Pope Jan Pavol, or Jean Paul II, who is a Polish, has not been put in the Constitution.

²⁴⁰ Final Declaration of the 17/18 June 2004 EU Brussels Summit, p. 4.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The making of the Visegrad quadruple initiative has been a process embedded within the process of change in European political context in the post-Cold War era. What motivated the Central Europeans to convene under the Visegrad roof was their consciousness about the importance of shifts, and their directions, in changing world affairs. The change has brought re-negotiations in European context, in the first hand, and corollary in transatlantic, or world, dimension. The phenomena of change and process of re-negotiations, thus, have profound impacts in shaping of the strategy of the Central Europeans who aspired to participate in this process and not be alienated from the change.

When the V4 countries apparently embodied their bids to return to Europe, Europe was involved in a process of change. The neo-functionalist premises were materialized and the economic cooperation turned out to be a political Union based on capitalist superstructure. The conditionality, in this respect, was introduced as an apparatus for the incoming members of the new Union. The conditions, known as Copenhagen criteria, were political and economic demands of the EU. A working democracy based on human rights and a capitalist market economy were introduced as prerequisites for the former Eastern bloc countries. The V4 countries, in this regard, were first to respond the demands of the EU. Its members were relatively in an advanced attitude *vis-à-vis* the other countries in transition, and they demonstrated that they were realizing the reforms in accordance with EU's conditionality. The Visegrad initiative played a functional role in this path. The EU did not negotiate with the group's member on a group base. The negotiations were made on individual base. The role of the Visegrad initiative was to distinguish its members from the others. Within this respect, the group was unequivocal to pronounce its ambition to accept European values as introduced by the EU, and the declarations and statements of the group became the proof of this will.

The group was established in order to realize the smooth transition and quick integration with the West. It became clearer as the steps taken within the double process of transition and integration that it was in favour of the Central Europeans to cooperate in a regional structure which included only the most developed countries of the former East bloc. As it has been seen, there are two major discourses imbedded in this development process. Firstly, the Visegrad countries produced an affirmative discourse that the cooperation among each other brings them closer to success in the means of the double process. Though this is a controversial assumption, whether the cooperation within Visegrad structure became the major device of integrating process with the EU, the group contributed to distinguish its members from the other countries in transition, so that the initiative turned out to be a triumph of self-marketing. The second discourse, therefore, is that the states establishing the Visegrad group were *ab ovo* in a more advanced position *vis-à-vis* the other countries in transitions, and they created a secure and stable area in the very doorstep of the EU, so that they had to be the first to integrate with the West.

The consultation mechanism within the group provided a *recherché* platform for the Visegrad countries in the path of EU integration and smooth transition. The basic motivations of the V4 countries were too akin. In this respect, without shaping a common attitude, like forming a common foreign policy or creating a common stance before the great powers of the Union, the group played a salient role of being a crucial platform for its members. The group, within this context, has turned out to be a pragmatic device in which its members tested and synchronized their therapies for overcoming the transition and accession strategies for the EU. However, this consultation, aside from its importance, has been a mobile and complicated process in which priorities of agenda-making and policy-shaping are differing for the V4 countries. This sort of consultation process *per se* is becoming a testimony of the incremental and mobile characteristic of the group and its members.

On the other hand, this mobile and incremental characteristic has hitherto become a functional element for the survival of the group. As noted, the ongoing debate upon the survival of the group is developing on the issue of forming common policies, and therefore finding a common denominator for the group. The accessions to NATO and the EU alike exhausted the original task of the group as determined in

the early 1990s. The integrations thus turned out to be an eminent symbol of the prosperity for the V4 countries in their bid to participate in the re-negotiation process.

What the achievements of the group hitherto have been harmonization of the regional politics in the path of the double process, *réclame* of the region that it is the most secure region among the other former Eastern bloc regions, and constituting a lobby for Slovakia's full-membership in NATO. The transition and integration, otherwise, were accomplished through the efforts of individual states of the group. In the second part of the story, after the accessions, the obsolete goal and fulfilled tasks had to be replaced with new common policies. As this study has underlined, the survival of the group, to large extent, is dependent this fact. The mobility of the Central Europeans, in specific facet of the Visegrad group, paved the way for this affirmative conclusion for the group. The V4 countries began to seek new areas in which they can cooperate under the group structure, and they paid attention that these areas could cover the common interests of each other. Hitherto, the areas in which the cooperation can continue to exist have been being a group, akin to Benelux, within the EU that advocates the interests of the members of the group, for instance standing united against the restrictions on free move for the new comers, working for the increase of the funds for the new comers, and constructing common border controlling mechanism in the eastern borders of the Union; shaping the neighbouring policy of the Union, particularly the Eastern and the Balkans policy, and thus being important actors in the relationship between the EU and Russia; creating a Central European idea and incrementing the security and stability in the region through closer cooperation in the civil level; preparing projects, or paving the way for them, that are dealing with the economic and social development of the region; making the joint plans and proposing solutions for the current problems of home and justice affairs, like drug traffic, organized crime and corruption; and developing new policies for the matter of illegal immigration from the east. These are the prospects of the V4 countries to prolong the consumption life of the initiative, which became successful at the end of the day.

The process of finding, or creating, new areas to cooperate, however, has not finished yet. Furthermore, one has to bear in mind that the new areas in search are

most likely being *ad hoc* to large extent, thus the process of continuity of the cooperation, namely creating new domains to be synchronized, will constantly continue provided with the overlapping interests of the V4 countries.

At this crucial point, it remains to be seen that the Visegrad group will establish and successfully pursue a foreign policy based on bilateral, i.e. Visegrad group –third country, or individual priorities may hinder effectiveness of the Visegrad group. It seems that patterns of shifting alliances on group base or on individual base may well be seen. The former patterns of shifting alliances, in this regard, were seen well in the cases of Iraqi crisis and the European Convention. In the Iraqi crisis the group clearly supported the US standing against the Franco-German bloc. This support was on group base. However, in the case of the Convention, the group initially developed a common stance but later the alliances shifted within the group. On the other hand, widening the group, as a common foreign policy meaning, is becoming a key factor to test the common will of the group. Yet, the issue is still keeping its ambiguity.

The primary fear of the V4 countries was being isolated in the middle of the great powers of Germany and Russia. This fear motivated them to create a strategy herein called as double guarantee strategy. Yet, the strategy of double guarantee has so far had another function for its pursuers. First of all, this strategy paved the way of participating within re-negotiations processes in the European context and in transatlantic dimension. The two pillars of the strategy, separately and together, contributed to establish close ties with the Euro-Atlantic structures, and therefore shifts in these formations well perceived by the group. Thus, the group had the ability of modification of its politics according to the demands of the West, and responses were given in order not to be alienated within the ongoing process of change. Secondly, the strategy, in the sense of security, removed the concerns of the Central Europeans, because soft security measures have been taken under the framework of EU accession whilst the hard security guarantees have been gained through NATO memberships.

The examining the Visegrad group clearly displayed the dilemmas and prospects of the Central Europeans. Analysing the initiative indicated the will of the

Central Europeans to take their part in the processes of change and re-negotiations, and demonstrated the shifting alliances on group and on individual base alike.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

The Map of Central and Eastern Europe

Source: Paul Robert Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of East Central Europe*, Washington, University of Washington Press, 2002, Map No. 61.

APPENDIX B

The Visegrad Declaration

DECLARATION ON COOPERATION BETWEEN THE CZECH AND SLOVAK FEDERAL REPUBLIC, THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND AND THE REPUBLIC OF HUNGARY IN STRIVING FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION (unofficial translation).

The meeting, in Bratislava, of presidents, prime ministers, ministers of foreign affairs and members of parliaments of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Hungary began a process of creating foundations and new forms of political, economic and cultural cooperation of these countries in the altered situation in the Central Europe.

The similarity of the situation that has evolved over the past decades has determined for these three countries convergent basic objectives:

- full restitution of state independence, democracy and freedom,
- elimination of all existing social, economic and spiritual aspects of the totalitarian system,
- construction of a parliamentary democracy, a modern State of Law, respect for human rights and freedoms,
- creation of a modern free market economy,
- full involvement in the European political and economic system, as well as the system of security and legislation.

The identity of objectives, as well as similarity of ways of achieving them in many fields poses identical tasks before the three neighboring countries. Coordination of the efforts - with respect for national peculiarities - increases the chances of attaining the desired goals and brings closer the realization of their objectives.

A favorable basis for intensive development of cooperation is ensured by the similar character of the significant changes occurring in these countries, their traditional, historically shaped system of mutual contacts, cultural and spiritual heritage and common roots of religious traditions. The diverse and rich cultures of these nations also embody the fundamental values of the achievements of European thought. The mutual spiritual, cultural and economic influences exerted over a long period of time, resulting from the fact of proximity, could support cooperation based on natural historical development.

The cooperation of nations and civil communities of the three countries is essential for joint creation of conditions that will contribute in each of the countries to the development of a democratic social system based on respect for the fundamental human rights and freedoms, liberty of economic undertakings, rule of law, tolerance, spiritual and cultural traditions and respect for moral values.

Simultaneously, the signatories of the Declaration respect the right of all other nations to express their own identity. They emphasize that national, ethnic, religious and language minorities, in accordance with traditional European values and in harmony with internationally recognized documents on human rights, must be able to enjoy all rights in political, social, economic and cultural life, not excluding education.

In unified Europe, to which the three countries wish to actively contribute, it is possible to maintain culture and national character while fully realizing the universal system of human values. A systematic fulfillment of the idea of civil society is the key question to the spiritual and material development of Central European region and an indispensable condition for establishing of a mutually beneficial cooperation with developed countries and European institutions. Drawing on universal human values as the most important element of the European heritage and own national identities should serve as the basis for developing a society of people cooperating with each other in a harmonious way, tolerant to each other, to individual families, local, regional and national communities, free of hatred, nationalism, xenophobia, and local strife.

It is the conviction of the states-signatories that in the light of the political, economic and social challenges ahead of them, and their efforts for renewal based

on principles of democracy, their cooperation is a significant step on the way to general European integration.

The signatories of the Declaration shall jointly undertake the following practical steps:

- in accordance with the interests of the particular countries they shall harmonize their activities to shape cooperation and close contacts with European institutions and shall hold regular consultations on the matters of their security,
- they shall endeavor to create free contacts between citizens, institutions, churches and social organizations,
- in order to support free flow of labor force and capital, they shall develop economic cooperation, based on the principles of the free market, and mutually beneficial trade in goods and services, moreover they shall strive to create favorable conditions for direct cooperation of enterprises and foreign capital investments, aimed at improving economic effectiveness,
- they shall focus on the development of the infrastructure in communications, with regard both to links between the three countries and those with other parts of Europe, mainly in the north-south direction, and shall coordinate the development of their power systems and telecommunication networks,
- they shall increase cooperation in the field of ecology,
- they shall create favorable conditions for free flow of information, press and cultural values,
- they shall jointly develop multilateral cooperation to ensure optimum conditions for full realization of the rights of national minorities living on the territories of their countries,
- they shall support mutually beneficial cooperation of interested local self-governments of their countries and establishment of sub-regional contacts.

The signatories of the Declaration state that their cooperation in no way will interfere with or restrict their relations with other countries, and that it will not be directed against the interests of any other party.

The cooperation of the signatories will be realized through meetings and consultations held at various levels and in various forms.

Done in Visegrad on February 15th, 1991 in three identical originals in the Polish, Czech and Hungarian languages, equally valid.

Source: <http://www.visegradgroup.org/declaration.php>

APPENDIX C

The Letter of Eight

Europe and America Must Stand United

The Times, January 30, 2003

The real bond between the United States and Europe is the values we share: democracy, individual freedom, human rights and the Rule of Law. These values crossed the Atlantic with those who sailed from Europe to help create the USA. Today they are under greater threat than ever.

The attacks of 11 September showed just how far terrorists –the enemies of our common values – are prepared to go to destroy them. Those outrages were an attack on all of us. In standing firm in defence of these principles, the governments and people of the United States and Europe have amply demonstrated the strength their conviction. Today more than ever, the transatlantic bond is a guarantee of our freedom.

We in Europe have a relationship with the United States which had stood the test of time. Thanks in large part to American bravery, generosity and far-sightedness, Europe was set free from the two forms of tyranny that devastated our continent in the 20th century: Nazism and Communism. Thanks, too, to the continued cooperation between Europe and the United States we have managed to guarantee peace and freedom on our continent. The transatlantic relationship must not become a casualty of the current Iraqi regime's persistent attempts to threaten world security.

In today's world, more than ever before, it is vital that we preserve that unity and cohesion. We know that success in the day-to-day battle against terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction demands unwavering determination and firm international cohesion on the part of all countries for whom freedoms in precious.

The Iraqi regime and its weapons of mass destruction represent a clear threat to world security. This danger has been explicitly recognised by the United Nations. All of us are bound by Security Council Resolution 1441, which was adopted unanimously. We Europeans have since reiterated our backing of Resolution 1441, our wish to pursue the UN route and our support for the Security Council, at the Prague NATO Summit and the Copenhagen European Council.

In doing so, we sent a clear, firm and unequivocal message that we would rid the world of the danger posed by Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction. We must remain united in insisting that his regime is disarmed. The solidarity, cohesion and determination of the international community are our best hope of achieving this peacefully. Our strength lies in unity.

The combination of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism is a threat of incalculable consequences. It is one at which all of us should feel concerned. Resolution 1441 is Saddam Hussein's last chance to disarm using peaceful means. The opportunity to avoid greater confrontation rests with him. Sadly this week the UN weapons inspectors have confirmed that his long-established pattern of deception, denial and no-compliance with UN Security Council resolutions is continuing.

Europe has no quarrel with the Iraqi people. Indeed, they are the first victims of Iraq's current brutal regime. Our goal is to safeguard world peace and security by ensuring that this regime gives up its weapons of mass destructions. Our governments have a common responsibility to face this threat. Failure to do so would be nothing less than negligent to our own citizens and to the wider world.

The United Nations Charter charges the Security Council with the task of preserving international peace and security. To do so, the Security Council must maintain its credibility by ensuring full compliance with its resolutions. We cannot allow a dictator to systematically violate those Resolutions. If they are not complied with, the Security Council will lose its credibility and world peace will suffer as a result.

We are confident that the Security Council will face up to its responsibilities.

José Maria Aznar, **Spain**

José Manuel Durao Barroso, **Portugal**

Silvio Berlusconi, **Italy**

Tony Blair, **United Kingdom**

Václav Havel, **Czech Republic**

Peter Medgyessy, **Hungary**

Leszek Miller, **Poland**

Anders Fogh Rasmussen, **Denmark**

APPENDIX D

The Statement of the Vilnius 10

In response to the presentation by the United States Secretary of State to the United Nations Security Council concerning Iraq.

Statement by the Foreign Ministers of Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia:

Earlier today, the United States presented compelling evidence to the United Nations Security Council detailing Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programs, its active efforts to deceive UN inspectors, and its links to international terrorism.

Our countries understand the dangers posed by tyranny and the special responsibility of democracies to defend our shared values. The trans-Atlantic community, of which we are a part, must stand together to face the threat posed by the nexus of terrorism and dictators with weapons of mass destruction.

We have actively supported the international efforts to achieve a peaceful disarmament of Iraq. However, it has now become clear that Iraq is in material breach of U.N. Security Council Resolutions, including U.N. Resolution 1441, passed unanimously on 8 November 2002. As our governments said on the occasion of the NATO Summit in Prague: "We support the goal of the international community for full disarmament of Iraq as stipulated in the UN Security Council Resolution 1441. In the event of non-compliance with the terms of this resolution, we are prepared to contribute to an international coalition to enforce its provisions and the disarmament of Iraq."

The clear and present danger posed by the Saddam Hussein's regime requires a united response from the community of democracies. We call upon the U.N. Security Council to take the necessary and appropriate action in response to Iraq's continuing threat to international peace and security.

February 5, 2003

Source: <http://www.bulgaria-embassy.org!/02052003-01.htm>

APPENDIX E

The Convention

This table compares the weighting of the votes in the Council according to the Nice system and the Convention. The table was prepared through the normalized Banzhaf indices. In the column called 'population' is included the index of population over the total. The columns called 'Nice rule', '13&60%' and '13&66%', both envisaged by the Convention, displays the votes over the total. 13&60% means 13 countries and 60% population quota for the threshold of QWV. The third column is the same for the 66% population quota. Through the Convention's formulation, Germany increases in power by 50%, the United Kingdom, France and Italy increase by 12% whereas Spain and Poland and the rest of European countries, except for the six with smaller population, decrease in power. When the population's quota is increased from 60% to 66%, the results of the table indicate that this imbalance of power stays. The consequence of increasing the population's quota from 60% to 66% to take decisions in the Council is an additional increment in Germany's power

by 8% and the United Kingdom, France and Italy by 13%. The power of Spain and Poland respectively increase by 6% and 3%. However this increase does not compensate the losses of the Nice rule for Spain and Poland.

The 3D graphic was prepared with the data of the afore-shown table. The figure displays the mentioned losses and winnings of the voting powers of the EU countries with respect to the Nice rule.

Source: Encarnación Algaba, Jesús Mario Bilbao, Julio R. Fernandez, ‘The European Convention *Versus* Nice Treaty’, available at <http://www.esi2.us.es/~mbilboa/pdf/files/powerEU1.pdf>, accessed on 05.05.2004.

APPENDIX F

The Letter of Spanish and Polish Foreign Ministers

How to keep the balance in Europe's new treaty

The Financial Times, September 26, 2003.

By Ana Palacio and Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz

The draft Constitutional Treaty which is about to be debated by the Intergovernmental Conference is a document well worth its name. More was achieved in the sixteen months of the European Convention than we could have possibly expected at the time of the Laeken Declaration. Above all, the Convention demonstrated that the widening and the deepening of European integration can go together. It is all the more important to be constructive at the Intergovernmental Conference.

In particular, the Conference has to retain provisions which enhance the community method. Poland and Spain have been vocal advocates of the need to strengthen the community institutions, which are the best guardians of the common European interest. This is largely what the European Convention has proposed. The European Parliament will be engaged in a new legislative procedure, enacting laws together with the Council of Ministers. The hand of the European Commission will be stronger in multi-annual planning and in the excessive deficit procedure, to give only two examples. The Commission will gain more legitimacy by having its President elected by the European Parliament.

In order for the Intergovernmental Conference to be well-focused and conclusive, changes to the draft should be limited. One of the areas where the IGC should not touch the current Treaty provisions is the voting system agreed at Nice two and a half years ago. The Nice arrangement came through as a result of difficult negotiations. Their aim was to construct a fair and effective decision-making

system. As a result, we have provisions in place which will ensure efficiency while reflecting demography and equality of the member states.

What is important, the Nice voting arrangement will only enter into force on 1 November 2004. A number of our countries, including Poland, have held referenda in the recent months. They were either about the ratification of the Treaty of Nice or about accession to the European Union on the basis of the Nice provisions. We should not ask of our citizens that they accept another change to the voting arrangement in such a short time, before it was even tested.

Nothing has happened since the Treaty of Nice to warrant a fundamental remodeling of the system. Nice itself was about preparing the European Union for enlargement. It did exactly that. As the Declaration of Nice states, "the Treaty of Nice completed the institutional changes necessary for the accession of new member States" and thus provided the basis for the Convention. Neither there nor in the Laeken declaration was the Convention given a mandate to revoke Nice.

The Nice voting arrangements express well the balance between small, medium-sized and large countries in the enlarged European Union. That was from the times of Jean Monnet and Konrad Adenauer an issue of great sensitivity. Everybody needs to have a stake in the Union. We all have to be its shareholders. The double majority system proposed in the course of the Convention, which defines the qualified majority as amounting to 50% of the states and 60% of the population, shifts the balance between member states and significantly increases the weight of the most populous countries. Three of them by themselves might block any decisions in the Council.

One advantage of the proposed double majority system is said to be its assumed simplicity. Double majority is supposed to be easier to understand and more transparent. That might be true when we look at the surface of it. However, a closer analysis unveils a system which will require similar basic mathematical skills, if not better, than the Nice system. Under double majority we would have to add up the number of states as well as the size of their population. Nice requires us to do simpler calculations - adding the number of states and votes. Only when requested, the check for the 62% of the population is to be made. We should therefore demystify the complexity of Nice.

The proposed system is supposed to eliminate the need for bargaining about votes in future accessions. Even if that were true, it would not make politics disappear from the accessions, if only because seats in Parliament would still need to be shared out. Not to mention the need to provide for a mechanism to take into account changes in the population of member States.

Finally, we keep on hearing that the pure proportionality of the population incorporated in the new system is more democratic and that it will ensure more legitimacy in the future European Union. We do not share this argument and we find it puzzling that in a Union of States and Citizens it is applied to the Council and not to the European Parliament, where Citizens are directly represented. In the Council, it is the member states that make the decisions. Their weighted power is different because of differences in size. However, it is not necessary to put voting power and the size of population on two sides of the same equation. Not even at the level of the member states, where we have an actual demos and fully-fledged democratic life, do we refer to the size of constituencies in the decision-making process. When making decisions in our national parliaments, we rely on representation. We should not introduce such mechanisms at the European level either.

The current Treaty was designed for the enlarged European Union. It may not be perfect but it will be efficient. As the proverb says, “if it ain't broke don't fix it”.

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