

Ferenc GAZDAG:
Institute for Strategic and Defence Studies, Budapest, Hungary

**A Comparative Analysis of the Visegrád Countries
and their Endeavours to integrate into the North
Atlantic Alliance**

Final Report to the NATO Fellowship Program 1996-1997
Budapest, 1997

Introduction

The aim of the paper is to provide a comparative analysis of the NATO integration of four Central European countries: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia¹. While examining the subject, a series of a questions obviously arise regarding content as well as methodology.

Amongst these, the fundamental problem of how it is at all possible to approach the area: from the point of view of the Alliance (What factors provided the basis for initiating expansion? The pros and cons?) How do member states amongst them chiefly NATO's leading power, the USA as well as France vindicating the role of Europe's representative, relate to the idea? How to respond to Russia's opposing stance, etc. and then just as vitally from the side of those states effected by the initiative (their integration efforts and methods hitherto as well as the lack of such; the criteria; integration goals and motivations). How do the Visegrád states see fruitful NATO approaches: jointly or individually? Is it still valid to talk about the grouping or has time past by the Visegrád regional cooperation? What were the external and internal reasons due to which expectations in the context of the Visegrád Four have virtually totally faded? Are those states wishing to integrate into NATO able to satisfy the necessary political, legal and financial conditions? What will be the inabilities of both, the Alliance and those wishing to join?

This paper assumes both stances but examines the subject primarily from the point of view of the countries aiming at integration.

The question naturally also arises: why analyse the case of the aforementioned four states, why not include others? Most directly the reason is that it is, according to all signs, these countries — with the exception of Slovakia where

¹ We can generally say that the Visegrád Group has developed as a group until 1994. After that, it was partially Czech refusals and various external foreign policy factors which minimised the cooperation. This is reflected by the specialist literature: Kim, J. - Miko, F.: Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Recent Developments. CRS Issue Brief. April 22. 1992. Spero, J.B.: The re-emergence of Central-Europe and the evolution of the Visegrád group. A new model for regional security cooperation. 1993. Manuscript. , Spero, J.B.:The Budapest-Prague-Warsaw Triangle: Central European Security policy after the Visegrád Summit. European Security. 1992. Nr. 1. 58-84.p., Vayyyrynen, RR.: Security and prosperity of small European States in the coming decade. 1993. Conference Paper.

the 25th May 1997 referendum, aimed by the Meciar government at sounding out public response to the question, misfired to a scandalous degree — that will at the beginning of July 1997 have the invitation extended to them to start integration negotiations with the North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Other states may also receive such invitation but the three members of the Visegrád group are certainly forecast as being among those to be invited.

One of the points the paper is to postulate is precisely that it is not merely by chance that the Visegrád states are willing and able to take up the vanguard in the process of integration into Euro-Atlantic organisations. The explicable exception of Slovakia only serves to reinforce the case. It is also born out by the paper that the Visegrád Four strive not purely for membership in individual organisations but look upon the process as that of the larger context of total integration into the Euro-Atlantic structure towards. Which state gaining membership into the EU, the WEU or NATO are one step at a time rather than alternatives. The paper seeks further to prove that although close ties have loosened between the members of the group during 1994-95, parallels in their foreign policy as well as Western attitudes shown towards them as far as the slow process of adaptation is concerned, remained. It is therefore true to say that not only do the Visegrád countries continue to move along the identical orbit but that their opportunities for regional cooperation prevail and remain desirable.

The paper's questions and answers constitute somewhat of a sequel to an earlier analysis, also submitted for NATO fellowship, that examined Central European interpretations of the concepts of "nation" and "state"².

² Gazdag, F.: Nationalism, regionalism and integration in Central and Eastern Europe. in. Problems of transition from Communism to Democracy. Lyman L. Lemnitzer Center for NATO and European Community Studies. Kent. 1992. 1-25.p.

Gazdag F.: Does the West understand Central and Eastern Europe? NATO Review. December 1992. 14-19.p.

Contents

1. Region of unsettled borders and settling problems
 - The problems of modernisation
 - Ethnic minority problems

2. Common and diverse elements in the foreign and security policy of the Visegrád states
 - Common foreign and security policy hallmarks
 - Poland
 - the Czech Republic
 - Slovakia
 - Hungary
 - the Visegrád group's defence sector

3. Civilian-military relations in the light of NATO membership. who are the drum-beaters?

4. The expansion debate. Eastern hopes versus Western deeds
 - the EU-WEU option
 - the NATO viewpoint

5. Summary and prospects

1. Region of unsettled borders and settling problems

Political writing of the 90s while making allowances for peripheral regions and their uncertainties, largely defines the Concept of Central Europe as the area located between that of the European Union and Russia. At first glance therefore Poland and Albania, Lithuania and Macedonia, Ukraine and Slovenia, Moldova and the Czech Republic seem equally to belong to the region. Uncertainties only arise when instead of the lines of demarcation one begins to question other constituents. From this point on the seemingly stable boundaries become blurred, transposed and the area that first appears generally homogenous, divides into sub-regions. It is mostly the inhabitants of these who draw attention to the characteristic differences within, that may best be uncovered by comparing geo-political, historic-cultural, ethnic, religious and economic-developmental differences. For those expecting a formula easy to grasp, the exercise results in despair although this is in effect relative: a lines of demarcation in a given context refuse to coincide whilst showing remarkably direct correlation with regional conflict points. Where therefore can boundaries defined by these discrepancies be found?

André Glucksman French philosopher write as early as 1989 exiting communism equals re-entry into history³. The 1989-90 flare-up of national renaissance in Central and Eastern Europe turned the monochrome red of the flag of proletar internationalism multicoloured while the peoples newly freed from the grip of dictatorships began seeking opportunities to exert national self government and national will⁴. They did this not so much within the context of Fukuyama's concept of "the end of history" but rather in search of specific models of history. The reappearance of historic geography was one of the most clearly identifiable trends that surfaced in this chaotic search for a model. The geographic equivalents of East, West, North and South replaced the political concepts of East and West thus readjusting out notions regarding Europe's internal development, According to this Eastern Europe consists of the nations occupying the European region of the former Soviet Union as well as Rumania, Bulgaria and the eastern part of former Yugoslavia whilst Central Europe

³ Le Monde 3. octobre 1989.

⁴ Diószegi I.: Nemzetek Európája. Valóság. 1989. Nr. 11.

comprises — following roughly the borders of Western Christianity the three Baltic republics, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia and Slovenia⁵. Although in the geographic sense Germany and Austria belong to Central Europe, in view of the fact that they are members of the European Union, this study will consider these two countries to be part of the West. In so far as the Balkan is to be treated as a separate region, Rumania (in the historical sense more accurately only the trans-Carpathian parts of the country) Bulgaria, Macedonia rump Yugoslavia and Albania all form part of the area.

A further important strand in area seeking a model was constituted by the search for newly found historic identities. The slogan "Return to Europe!" has been widely bandied about since the stormy days of 1989. It signifies, on the one hand, the primary desire for the living standards of Western welfare societies and on the other hand refers to the feverish search for the point of sea-change when Central European countries sipped from the path of normal development. This act of unreeling the thread of history naturally varies in length from country to country but the beginnings may be assumed to stretch back to at least the pre-World War II period.

In the case of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and the Soviet successor states however one reaches beyond the Versailles peace treaty, to 1917. Should we in addition wish to examine the process of nation creation, we best start at least as early as the 19th century. Due to several historic processes that are beyond the scope of this paper to detail, it became impossible in Central and Eastern Europe for either a people or a nation to create a state. Mixed ethnicity and the fact that boundaries did not coincide with population settlement patterns, caused cultures or in worse cases merely languages to form bases for state creation. Split — level East-West historic development retarded — according to István Bibó distorted — the process of nation formation in Central and Eastern Europe. The chief factors in this were not so much the two World Wars but more importantly the socialist experiment. The homogenous ideological framework that surrounded the Soviet Led World-scale modernisation undertaking, encompassed the peripheries, and did not allow for even the vestiges of national thinking that was looked upon as the ideological remnant of the bygone bourgeois social order, now under cover of socialist-communist proletarian internationalism, in reality serving Soviet interests. The Stalinist deep-

⁵ This is the same line as used by Huntington to divide civilisations. See Huntington, S.: Clashes of civilizations. Foreign Affairs. May. 1995.

freeze however only served to arrest and conserve Central and East European national differences — more accurately suspended national development — that lost not a jot in energies so that from the 1989 opening of the flood-gates they entered the arena in full armour⁶.

The emergence of national feeling constituted several challenges: It first of all uncovered the unresolved state of national and ethnic problems. In the words of a Western writer: "When judging nationalism the West was wrong. It is not — as has been assumed — an uncomfortable vestige of the past but the future itself"⁷. It was not the traditional issue of ethnic minorities many wished to forget — that astonished the world but that the force with which it surfaced rent asunder first the Soviet Union then Czechoslovakia and eventually as the final act of the European nightmare of a civil war even Yugoslavia. In addition, although hardly noticeably at first, the light of the Eastern flare-up gently but very definitely re-awakened nationalism in the Western half of Europe. In order to gain an impression of this a glance at the French and British press is sufficient. Articles published around the time of German unification as well as the surge of the far-right (Le Pen, Jörg Haider, the Northern League of Italy) and the internal debate that continues to accompany the process of federative integration within the European Union serve as proof.

The flare-up of Nationalistic tendencies also meant a serious challenge in the security — strategy sense. Although few would bemoan the demise of the communist parties, the collapse of the Soviet Union necessitated the alteration of the entire post-war international system "resulting in an immeasurable strategic vacuum"⁸. Such rapid end without military defeat to Such formidable empire is without precedent in history. In the wake of the collapse new lines of demarcation emerged. Orbits of development have parted and now differ between countries on the former empire's Western rim — the development model of which is somewhat akin to Northern Europe — those that belong to the world of East European orthodoxy (Ukraine, Belorus, Moldova) and the Central Asian republics, the national development of which is radically different from that of European states.

⁶ La grande Europe et ses nations. Esprit. 190. fevrier. 81.p.

⁷ Ascherson, N.: Why the future waves a flag? The Independent. September 8.1991.

⁸ Csaba L.- Krausz T.-Lengyel L.: A Szovjetunió vége? Magyar Russzisztikai Intézet. Bp. 1991. 3.p.

In 1990 Western policy-makers and strategic planners had two basic assumptions with regard to Central-Eastern-Europe: it was believed that these countries will not pose security threats to the West any more, and it was supposed that the change for western type democracies based on market economy is irreversible and there is no other way to go for the region. By the end of 1992 both assumptions proved to be wrong. From the point of view of Central-Europeans, the revolutions and the subsequent political changes opened up three perspectives:

- assimilation to the ruling Western paradigm. In this case the focus is on liberal values and human rights, as well as democratic principles. Any deviation from them or retardation in their implementation - though they might be inevitable - must represent only unwanted compromises due to the backward character and the lost opportunities.

- creating an independent national paradigm. In this case the focus is on the re-emergence of the nation-state, the primacy of national values and historical heritage. It emphasises the uniqueness of a nation and considers the acceptance of certain liberal values as an inevitable and even harmful compromise due to cosmopolitan influences.

- mixed paradigm. In this case the focus is on how to pair the two previous paradigms. Democratic values and human rights approach is supported but liberal and market principles are considered as threats to national heritage and ethnic existence.

Each political course, based on one of the paradigms, will have different impact on European politics and integration as well as security. That is why the needed attention

I.2. Problems of modernisation

The task to create a democratic political structure and a functioning market economy can be considered as an overall issue of modernisation. But what is the significance of the time-gap in the modernisation process between Eastern and Western Europe? The retarded character of Central European development is well-known from both the historical and economic literature and they

partially derive from the specific issue of the history, partly from the period of the communist rule. This latter one either stopped or prevented modernisation in the typical European sense. In the sphere of the State and the politics, communism preserved old, autocratic forms or replaced the fledgling, democratic institutions by them. The predominance of a secretive, dictatorial and exclusive power structure gave no chance to political modernisation. With regard to the social structures, communism forced an alien collective model to supersede traditional forms. It became not only a detour but a dead end street compared to the development of civil societies elsewhere. The development pattern communism offered came closest to modernisation in the economic structures. The emphasis on material values, on science and technology helped large scale constructions and heavy industry, and offered originally a path similar to Western industrialisation. Of course, the sole driving force behind this pattern soon became the military industry, while further modernisation and keeping the pace with Western technological revolution was blocked by the inapt system of central planning and lack of private incentives. Finally there is the most controversial aspect of the modernisation, the creation of the nationhood. This issue represents a historical pattern in East-Central Europe as a case of belated modernisation. The fully independent nation-state had been created at least with half a century delay compared to the lately emerging nation-states in Europe /Germany, Italy/ This process was started after the first World War mostly by the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and did not have time to evolve fully during the two decades before the next war and Soviet dominance. It is important to note that the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe are not so fervent about their national identity because of some strange desire for self-destruction, but rather because their national evolution differs from that of the West. Due to their special historical circumstances, neither the notion of a homogenous nation, nor that of the nation-state could be applied in the East.

As a consequence, the concept of the so-called "cultural nation" turned out to be the model which was applied but even the realisation of this was hampered by the ethnic situation. The borders, drawn with dubious results after the two World Wars, proved ultimately incapable of settling geopolitical problems arising from clashes of interest between the superpowers. What the Yalta system changed in the deformed national evolution of Eastern Europe was that

it temporarily silenced national opposition under the cover of proletarian internationalism. Many did in fact believe that this could cure the problem. But having removed the cover we have to face the fact that this is not so. In the Stalinist deepfreeze, national prejudices were conserved almost unchanged, and as can be seen today, the liberated spirit has reopened unhealed wounds. While the peoples of Western Europe continue to live under the spell of 1992, those of Central and Eastern Europe are desperately wrestling with the enigmas of the late and deformed birth of nations. This can turn the expectations of democracy and modernisation against each other.

The end of communism has brought these unfinished national development processes to the fore once again in Central and Eastern Europe. The West does not seem to be very understanding, though⁹. The reason is probably because Westerners, having settled such questions of national development long ago, identify them with impatient and, consequently, reprehensible nationalism. Or it could be that the vocabulary of West European social sciences, inspired by Anglo-Saxon traditions, cannot lend itself to the description of this process. The West encourages the adoption of the ideals of democracy and international stability by the nations which have just disentangled themselves from the ruins of the bipolar world order. These two ideals, however, have turned out to be overtly contradictory, but the West has still not sensed that this contradiction ultimately leads to the perpetuation of conflicts. The international impotence we witnessed as the civil war rages on in Yugoslavia, serves as an excellent illustration that behind the appeals for stability, there is complete lack of understanding of the forces driving the "separatist" movements. The fact that the former Yugoslavia is divided not only by ethnic but also by religio-cultural frontiers - the separation is exactly along the borderline of Catholic and orthodox Christianity as S. Huntington pointed out - is not an excuse, only an explanation. Paradoxically, it was not so long ago when Western Europe itself was pushed to transcend its nation-state hostilities due to two external forces: the carrot of the Marshall Plan and the stick of the Soviet-communist threat.

There are traps of modernisation too. In the economic transformation statism and protectionism seem to be the most significant impediments. If the key

⁹ Gazdag F.: Does the West understand Central and Eastern Europe. NATO Review. 1992. Nr.6.

instrument in modernisation is the market system based on private ownership and international competition, which is a precondition of becoming a functioning part of the world market, then the government policies which try to limit the influence and impact of the market while increasing state intervention, block modernisation Yet governments feel compelled to do this partly because of social tension and declining living standards, partly because of power consideration. There exist strong political motivations as well to diverge from the modernisation pattern. Governments, or better to say: the ruling parties have a vested interest to create a clientele system and a centralised power structure. The concept is naturally supporting isolationism and paternal state structures and even state dominance in such areas as culture, ideology, religion¹⁰

I.3. Problems of minorities

We must mention ethnic conflicts in relation to national security in the CEE region¹¹. A historic feature of Central and Eastern Europe is the presence of numerous ethnic minorities in the region, a problem closely linked to the relationship between nation and state. The region lying to the East of Germany and to the West and South of Russia has a profound mixture of different peoples. This muddled situation is both a cause and a result of the weakness of these states because the prerequisite of national evolution is ultimately a stable and permanent state structure, according to the lessons of the Western European model of development. In the course of history, however, the borders in Central and Eastern Europe have changed frequently, so ethnic minorities are to be found in almost every country. Moreover, the mother nations of these minorities are often in neighbouring countries. A significant Hungarian minority can be found in Rumania, Hungarian and Ukrainian minorities in Slovakia, Hungarian, Rumanian and Slovak minorities in Serbia, Serbian

¹⁰ Europe in Global Change. Strategies and optionsd for Europe. ed.Weidenfeld and J.Bertelsmann. 1993. 185-192.p.

¹¹ Joó, R.: Nemzetiségi konfliktusok és nemzetközi biztonság Közép-Kelet-Európában. Külpolitika. 1996. 2.sz. 11-29.p.

minority in Croatia, a Turkish minority in Bulgaria, and a large Russian minority in the Baltic states.

Secondly it is necessary to refer to the lack of territorial status quo throughout the region. Frequent post-World War I. redrawing of borders resulted in forced population movement, deportation and ethnic cleansing. Without exception and hitherto without success all states have been striving to establish ethnically homogenous societies. By now it has however become amply clear that in Central Europe — unlike in Western Europe or the United States which regard the ethnic minority question as a matter of human rights or cultural autonomy — it is, in addition to the foregoing a geopolitical problem to an equal degree. It is, thirdly, specific to the issue that retarded national development may bring serious consequences to democratisation itself or as the subject's well-known expert D. Horowitz put it: "restricted minority policies hinder democratic development"¹². He maintains that countries with fewer ethnic divisions such as Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland made greater strides towards democracy than those with deeper minority divides such as Slovakia, Bulgaria, Rumania or particularly Yugoslavia where democratic development has been slow.

New elements are of at least equal significance:

The wave of national self-government endeavours that swept through Central and Eastern Europe at the end of the 20th Century proved to be extremely forceful. Having undone several multinational formations, it created a series of new states such as Slovakia, Georgia, Croatia and Ukraine. With the end of East-West confrontation the great powers found new opportunities for cooperation when managing ethnic minority conflicts. Decisions brought about within international organisations (the Council of Europe, CSCE, etc.) as well as the Dayton agreement for the execution of which the IFOR/SFOR mission was initiated, all bear out the fact. Last but not least it is necessary also to mention the changing content of sovereignty. Political challenges such as security risks (environmental pollution, organised crime, terrorism, migration, etc.) have become international in proportions, no state is able individually to manage. Regarding the future therefore as far as this phenomenon is concerned

¹² Horowitz, D.L.: Democracy in Divided Societies. in.: Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict and Democracy. ed. L. Diamond and. M. Plattner. London. 1994. 54.p.

we are probably not facing the atrophy of the stage but radical alterations in what constitutes sovereignty. It may be regarded as history's irony that some of Central-Eastern Europe's nations gained their sovereignty at precisely the time when its political content began dwindling on both the large (supranational institutes of integration) as well as the small (local communities, local autonomies, minorities) scale. It is obvious that the dichotomy may only be solved by a modern, internationally cooperative interpretation of sovereignty. In the entire region it is Slovenia that seems most-successful in establishing on the one hand the small separate state and on the other simultaneously projecting openness towards integration. The opposite pole is represented by Slovakia where the uneasy balance of national self-realisation and the assertion of national will has hitherto not been found. The political elite of the country that due to belated national development only recently achieved the status of independent state, lives under the spell of the possibility of creating a nation-state on 19th century lines. Since, due to the circumstances previously referred to this is not in the practical sense possible to execute, the process of democratisation, the legal state and the conditions of Europeanisation find themselves facing ever increasing opposition. The fiasco of the 25th May 1997 referendum provides ample illustration for both, the nationalist and totalitarian ambitions of the Meciar government and the Slovak electorate's refusal¹³.

And finally a generally valid characteristic: none of these countries regard NATO Integration as an isolated move. On the contrary, according to the view more or less held by all, entry into various organisations is interdependent within the process of re-integration into Europe, i.e. membership in one furthers the cause of gaining entry into another. It is not therefore merely fortuitous that EU and NATO aspirations are open to comparison. The analogies have humorous aspects and the organisations concerned support the

¹³ It is worth looking in close-up at events for an explanation. In Slovakia the President is elected by the Parliament, the candidate requiring 90 of the 150 votes. Meciar's block has at the moment 61 votes. As soon as President Kovac's mandate ends in March 1998, the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia will thus be able to block his reelection. Meciar will then obtain a defunctive position of power within the political system, he will be able "forced" to run the country through decrees. The realisation of this legal situation has made the Slovak opposition collect support for a change to the way in which the President is chosen. After a success in collecting the related question appeared on a referendum slip with questions on NATO membership. Gustav Krajci, the Minister for the Interior however, removed this question, damaging the Constitution, ignoring the constitutional court and two bills. The population's reaction was that 10% of eligible voters turned up at the polls, thus annulling the referendum.

impression themselves. A glance at the European Union's "White Book" or NATO's 1995 expansion document provide adequate proof. The first points they make, i.e. the general conditions of entry are identical virtually verbatim so that eligible countries rightfully assumed integration to be part of one and the same process with the organisations differing in specific functions only. The attitude has also reflected in the outcome of several surveys published for instance in issue 7. of Eurobarometer 1997 which deals with simultaneous soundings regarding support for EU and NATO membership. Results are fairly varied: It is Poland's and Rumania's population that would vote for membership in greatest numbers, 70 % and 80 % respectively for the EU and 65 % and 76 % respectively for NATO. Other Visegrád member states occupy mid-field: Hungary EU 47 %, NATO 32 %. The Czech Republic EU 43 %, NATO 28 % and Slovakia EU 46 %, NATO 27 %¹⁴. The oft-debated public opinion survey results hide deeper correlations, namely the direct and indirect interdependence between democratisation, economic development and security. No democracy has yet been known to function in the long run without economic development. The coupling of EU's and NATO's eastern expansion programme is therefore particularly unfortunate in this respect. Logic would dictate EU, the key to economic development, to expand first but world politics and the great powers decreed otherwise...

II. Common and diverse elements in the foreign and security policy of the Visegrád states

Since February 1990 international and Hungarian political public opinion and publicity often mention the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia under the collective term of the "Visegrád four" in relation to the region of Central-Eastern Europe. The members of the group are regarded as countries that, compared to others in the region, achieved distinct results in the areas of political and economic change of regime as well as progress towards acceptance by Europe. Countries that have established the system of instruments and institutions necessitated by market economy and the legal state and whose future — in spite of current economic and political differences —

¹⁴ Európai Dialógus. 1997. May June. 26-27.p. Ua. Cunningham, G.: EU and NATO enlargement: How public opinion is shaping up in some candidate countries. NATO Review. 1997. Nr. 3. 16-17.p.

shows great similarities in perspective by both, medium and long-term forecasts¹⁵. Indeed, when examining the area covered by this chapter, i.e. the foreign and security policy of the Visegrád group and within this the member states' relationship with the North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation, it is at first sight difficult to pinpoint significant differences in the declared goals of the various countries and the concrete results so far achieved¹⁶.

II.1. Common foreign and security policy hallmarks

The post 1989-90 change of direction in the foreign and security policy of the former Soviet satellites — including that of the Visegrád countries — is most often characterised by politically orientated public opinion under the concepts of Europeanisation and a re-assumption of national specificity. This portrayal is quite correct since on the one hand all these countries officially declare their intention to integrate into European and Euro-Atlantic structures — first and foremost to the European Union (EU) and NATO — as a primary aim of their foreign and security policy while on the other hand subsequent to the collapse of the bi-polar world order and the Warsaw Pact all of them defined the principles of their independent, national foreign and security policy¹⁷.

Leading politicians of the Visegrád Four delight in referring to the fact that it is their countries which made the greatest progress toward European integration. There is a tendency to seem to compete in the area of developing a market economy, attracting foreign capital, completing the privatisation process and the reorganisation of the banking sector, etc.

¹⁵ Erlich É. - Révész G. - Tamás P. (szerk.): Kelet-Közép-Európa: Honnan - hová? Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1994. 15-23. pg.

¹⁶ Dunai, P.: Adversariess All Around? /Re/nationalization of Security and Defence Policies in Central and Eastern Europe. Clingendael Paper. January. 1994.

¹⁷ See: Security policy and defensive strategy of the Republic of Poland. In Polish Armed Forces. Guide '95. Bellona Editions, Warsaw, 1995. 5-30. Seydak, P.: Polityka bezpieczeństwa Polski. Warszawa, DBM MON, 1996. 5-18. old.; Vojenskopolitické aspekty bezpečnosti Slovenskej republiky. In Armada Slovenskej Republiky 1994. Ministerstvo obrany Slovenskej republiky, 1995. 10-33. old.; Vojenskopolitické východiská obrany Slovenskej republiky. In: Armada Slovenskej Republiky 1995. Ministerstvo obrany Slovenskej republiky, 1996. 14-32. pgs.; The security policy of the Czech Republic. Prague, Institute of International Relations, Study papers 3. 1994.; Kubesa, M.: K některým pojmům strategie bezpečnosti státu. Vojenské Rozhledy, 1995. 5. szám 41-47. pgs.; Hartmann, P.: Aspekty koncepcie protivyvzdušné obrany. uo. 48-52. pgs.; Mezinárodní souvislosti bezpečnostní politiky České Republiky Praha, Ústav Mezinárodních Vztahů, Praha, 1995.

Whilst these are undoubtedly important factors towards integration it is often forgotten that from formal and legal points of view — as illustrated by Table No 1. — they have not hitherto resulted in definite achievements as regards to the Visegrád Four's integration into European or Euro-Atlantic organisations. During the past six years all of them have been granted associated status in the NAA, full membership of the Council of Europe, associated membership with the EU, membership of NACC and the Partnership for Peace programme as well as associated status in the WEU. One has to, however, hasten to add that to the Visegrád countries. It is the exclusive club of the OECD alone, that had hitherto only admitted from our region the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary.

Registering the results of the Visegrád Four's foreign policy it is nothing less than add to experience their tendency to vie with each other in the area of integration. This is valid all the more since viewing in retrospect the period that has elapsed from January 1997 — not disregarding the time shift that was brought about by Czechoslovakia dividing on 1st January 1993 — one registers no significant differences in the dates at which various Visegrád countries joined Western European and North Atlantic Organisations so that in no way does the process seem to be a real race for membership. This is particularly valid in the field of foreign and security policy. In this area the November 1990 initial active phase of approaches beginning at the point of gaining NAA membership — came to its close by the acceptance of the individual states' PfP programmes during the Autumn of 1994. It is clear at least in the international legal sense that the NATO band-wagon of the Visegrád Four has not since then advanced a step further.

Table No.1. Dates of joining

	<i>Czech and Slovak Rep.</i>	<i>Czech Republic</i>	<i>Slovakia</i>	<i>Poland</i>	<i>Hungary</i>
<i>NAA Associated Delegate status</i>	1990.11.26.	1993.01.01.	1993.01.01.	1990.11.26.	1990.11.26.
<i>Council of Europe member</i>	1991.02.21.	1993.06.30.	1993.06.30.	1990.1.26.	1990.1.26.
<i>EC/EU association agreement</i>	1991.12.16.	1993. 06.23.	1993. 06.23.	1991. 12.16.	1991. 12.16.
<i>NACC</i>	1991.12.20.	1993. 01.01.	1993. 01.01.	1991. 12.20.	1991. 12.20.

<i>PfP Framework Signatory</i>		1994. 03.10.	1994. 02.21.	1994. 02.02.	1994. 02.08.
<i>PfP Presentation Document</i>		1994. 05.17.	1994. 05.25.	1994. 04.25.	1994. 06.06.
<i>PfP IPP</i>		1994. 11.25.	1994. 11.24.	1994. 07.05.	1994. 11.15.
<i>WEU Associate Partner</i>		1994. 05.09.	1994. 05.09.	1994. 05.09.	1994. 05.09.
<i>OECD</i>		1995. 01.2.		1996. 01.6.	1996. 01.3.

Official foreign and security documents issued by the Visegrád states reflect a similarity in both, the security policy environment and the tasks their defence sectors are changed with¹⁸.

Official foreign and security documents issued by the Visegrád states reflect a similarity in both, the security policy environment and the tasks their defence sectors are changed with.

Although since the collapse of the bi-polar world order, the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, these countries are no longer threatened by armed attack due to confrontational blocs facing each other and their security policy challenges stem from risks originating in the change of regime (in form of social tension, minority-majority ethnic conflicts resulting in political or social crises, the consequent instability and mass proliferation of mass destruction weapons, international crime and environmental challenges, etc.) the effect of these is significantly influenced by the fact that Central Eastern Europe has not been in possession of security guarantees since the revocation of the Warsaw Pact on 1st July 1991. This has of course been the case throughout the 20th century as the small states of the region had no reliable and direct security potential even when representing a bloc. It is however more serious that this state of affairs is to be suffered by them at a time when their defence sectors require alterations and restructuring on a hitherto unknown scale in quality and quantity, when new states are formed in historically rootless contexts, inspired by strong national fervour and when ethnic minority-majority conflicts reach civil war proportions as they did on the territory of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. These factors amounted to an intensification of the sense of uncertainty felt by the societies and political elite of the region, hardly to be alleviated in the case of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia by the fact that on the one hand these countries belonged to the most stable part of Eastern Central

¹⁸ See Footnote Nr.15.

Europe or that in the wake of the CFE agreement signed on 19th November 1990 not only was the region's conventional weaponry reduced to a considerable degree, its technical state of readiness has deteriorated and manpower dwindled to a level which excludes the execution of adequate response to sudden large-scale attack¹⁹. It is therefore scarcely surprising that from the summer of 1991 individually, then from their Krakow summit held in October that year as a group, the Visegrád Four has ever more firmly defined the wish to approach and join NATO²⁰.

Similarity in security policy may also be demonstrated when examining the tasks with which the Czech, Hungarian, Polish and Slovak defence sectors are charged. After the disintegration of the bi-polar world order and the Warsaw Pact it became necessary for each of these countries to formulate new military doctrines; national in character, to establish the civilian control of the armed forces as well as that of the entire defence sector; to determine the defence forces restructuring concept to execute armament and manpower reduction according to the CFE agreement; and finally to plan — regardless of NATO integration — the modernisation of armed forces. The tasks were to be tackled in the midst of economic crisis resulting from the change of regime, related to endemically oversized defence spheres and dwindling budgets, having to rely on staff that, for obvious reasons lacked both, skill and experience in the execution of such a new type of exercise²¹.

¹⁹ Ujj András: A hagyományos fegyverek Európában a CFE után. Védelmi Tanulmányok, Budapest ISDS, 12. 1996. 56. pg.

²⁰ The question of the sovereignty and border security of the Visegrád states became a lead topic after the Moscoe putsch of August 1991 and the explosion of Yugoslavia, During the Krakow summit of October 5-6th 1991, one of the top subjects for the Foreign Ministers was relations with, and eventual membership in NATO.

²¹ For details on tasks and reforms see: Spero, J. B.: Central European Security. Problems Of Communism, 1991. november-december; Kim, J. - Miko, F.: Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary: Recent Developments. CRS Issue Brief, 1992.; Michta, A. A.: East Central Europe after the Warsaw Pact: Security Dilemma in the 1990s. Greenwood Press, 1992. Karp, R. C. (Ed.): Central and Eastern Europe: The Challenge of Transition. SIPRI, Oxford University Press, 1993.; Tálas P.: A rendszerváltás és a lengyel hadsereg. ZMKA szemelvények, 1994. 4. 117-138.pgs.; Clarke, D. L.: Eastern Europe's Troubled Arms Industries I-II. RFE/RL Research Report (hereinafter: RFE/RL), Vol. 3. 14. 1994. 35-43. pgs., and RFE/RL, Vol. 3. 21. 1994. 28-39. pgs.; Simon, J.: Demokratyczna transformacja systemu obronnego Polski a rozszerzenie NATO. Warszawa, DBM MON, 1995.; Slayton, W. M.: Security in the Central and East European States. CEEDS at SHAPE, 1994 december.; Polish Armed Forces. Guide '95. 43-96. pgs.; Seydak, P.: Polityka bezpieczeństwa Polski. Warszawa, DBM MON, 1996. 5-33. pgs.; Armada Slovenskej Republiky 1994. 34-43. pgs.; Armada Slovenskej Republiky 1995. 21-33. pgs.

It is finally necessary to mention the four fundamental security-political thought and opinion systems constructed by the political public opinion of the Visegrád countries: the "neutral" the "North-Atlantic" the "West-European" and the "Central European" security-political options which have been perceivable throughout the past six years at different times and prevail at present although to a different degree of intensity and in various ways in the four countries.

The ideal of neutrality — with some traditional following in primarily Czechoslovakia and Hungary — was particularly popular in the Visegrád countries between 1989-91 i.e. during the period immediately prior to the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the collapse of the Soviet Union. The emphasis placed on it was substantiated partly by political tactics attempting to facilitate the disintegration of the Soviet bloc and partly by the fact that the possibility of joining Western European and North-Atlantic security organisations seemed very distant indeed. The collapse of the Soviet Union and with it the bi-polar world order did however undermine the ideal of Eastern Central Europe's neutrality from several points of view. As it is, great powers and political-military blocs no longer confront each other so that no interest is vested in providing the guarantees so vitally necessary for the support of the neutrality of small countries, and the debates and conflicts resulting from the region's new tendencies for the re-establishment of national character placed neutrality in an illusory light²². It is necessary to remember that the models of post-war European neutrality (Finland, Austria) were the very products of the bi-polar international order that ended in 1989-1990. Finally one has to consider the financial burden of neutrality, a liability which the Czech, Hungarian, Polish and Slovak economies are at present and will in the foreseeable future be unable to carry. After 1991 therefore the question of neutrality was no longer an item on the official Visegrád political agenda and its groups of supporters became marginalised although did not entirely disappear from the scene²³.

²² For example the war in Former Yugoslavia, the debates over the Hungarian minorities in Rumania and Slovakia and the Magyarmaros dam disagreement.

²³ On the Visegrád states and neutrality see: Duleba, A.: The blind pragmatism of Slovak eastern policy. Research Centre of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, Bratislava, 1996. 18-34. pgs.; Blank, S.J.: Prague, NATO, and European Security. U.S. Army War College, 1996. 11-12. pgs; Gryz, J.: Szwedzka polityka neutralności. Warszawa, 1996. 26-31. pgs.; Molnár I. - Szternák Gy.: A semlegesség feltételei és lehetősége. Honvédelem 1990. 1. Almási F.: Még egyszer (?) a semlegességről. Honvédelem 1990. 3; Thürmer Gy.: A Munkáspárt a NATO-tagság ellen, a semlegesség mellett. Szabadság, 1995. June 29. - August 25. (cikksorozat); Csapody, T.: Érvek Magyarország NATO csatlakozása ellen. Mozgó Világ, 1996. 12. 90-104. pgs.

Table No. 2. NATO membership support²⁴

	<i>For(%)</i>			<i>Against (%)</i>			
	<i>strongly</i>	<i>weak-ly</i>	<i>total</i>	<i>weakly</i>	<i>strong-ly</i>	<i>total</i>	
Czech	<i>1995</i>	25	34	59	18	9	27
	<i>1996</i>	17	34	51	21	12	33
	<i>1997</i>						
Poland	<i>1995</i>	45	36	81	6	2	8
	<i>1996</i>	28	44	72	9	3	12
Hungary	<i>1995</i>	25	33	58	15	12	27
	<i>1996</i>	19	38	57	15	12	27
Slovakia	<i>1995</i>	23	38	61	16	8	24
	<i>1996</i>	18	28	46	19	13	32

Of all four security political systems postulated, the most intensely validated and best known is the "North-Atlantic option". Its goal is for the Visegrád countries to achieve full NATO membership and the accompanying security guarantees which has been an integral part of the four countries declared policy since 1991-92. (The option's Support is illustrated in Table No.2.) A significant proportion of the Czech, Hungarian, Polish and Slovak political elite does not in reality think in terms of security-political alternatives other than full NATO membership.

This concept is not however free of problems. Not even if it seems the most realistic and likely solution at present. It is not free from problems as it poses numerous questions related to the security of the region's entirety. First and foremost of these is the issue of the security demands of the region's countries that will in the immediate future remain outside NATO. Who will provide their security guarantees? Will NATO's acceptance of two or three Eastern Central European new members not result in a newly divided region? Newly divided along such lines that might threaten the Visegrád four in spite of NATO membership? These questions must be answered by Budapest, Prague and Warsaw even if according to security policy experts and Western public opinion there is a strong likelihood of new NATO members being chosen from

²⁴ Source: The New European Security Architecture: Volume II. Public Attitudes Toward European Security. USIA Office of Researcher and Media Reaction, 1996 szeptember. 10. pg. 25 Source: The New European Security Architecture: Volume II. Public Attitudes Toward European Security. USIA Office of Researcher and Media Reaction, 1996 szeptember. 21 és 23. old.

among the Visegrád group. (For British, French and German public opinion support for Czech, Hungarian, Polish and Slovak NATO membership see Table No. 3.).

Table No.3 British, French and German Public Opinion on NATO Membership for the Visegrád States, 1995-6 (support and lack of in %) ²⁵

		<i>U.K.</i>		<i>France</i>		<i>Germany</i>	
		<i>1995</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>1996</i>
<i>Czech</i>	<i>for</i>	64	65	58	62	60	54
	<i>against</i>	28	16	30	28	36	43
<i>Poland</i>	<i>for</i>	79	74	68	70	61	55
	<i>against</i>	16	12	24	22	36	41
<i>Hungary</i>	<i>for</i>	70	63	63	60	72	61
	<i>against</i>	21	17	26	27	25	33
<i>Slovakia</i>	<i>for</i>	54	59	55	56	52	52
	<i>against</i>	33	18	33	33	44	44

The political influence and activity of the representatives of the "North-Atlantic option" was particularly powerful between 1992-94. It was probably owing to this that on the January 1994 publication of the Partnership for Peace programme it was precisely the Visegrád group's politicians and security experts or more accurately those of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland. Who — in a more or less open manner — who voiced their dissatisfaction and disappointment stating that PfP will only serve to delay the Organisation's expansion while blurring the Visegrád four into a single picture also containing the region's other countries. Although this opinion continues to be voiced, it is recognised even by the most fervent supporters of the "North-Atlantic option" that PfP has since 1989-90 been the most effective factor facilitating preparation for NATO membership, not only in the way it provides an opportunity for NATO and partner-country cooperation but also by assuring intense cooperation between. NATO and non-NATO states in the long-term thereby alleviating possible future political misgivings regarding expansion ²⁶.

²⁵ Source: The New European Security Architecture: Volume II. Public Attitudes Toward European Security. USIA Office of Researcher and Media Reaction, 1996 szeptember. 21 és 23. old.

²⁶ On PfP reception and views see: Riesch, A. A.: Central Europ's Disappointment and Hopes. RFE/RL, Vol. 3. 12.1994. március 25. 18-37. pgs.; WlError! Reference source not found. odarski, P.: Polska wobec partnerstwa dla pokoju. Warszawa, DBM MON, 1995. 4-11. pgs.; Swietlicki, B.: Podwójna rola Partnerstwa dla Pokoju in Bezpieczenstwo Polski w zmieniajacej sie Europie, 6.

The "West European option" advocating primarily rapid Visegrád integration into the EU and the WEU also forms part of official policies²⁷. (Support for this concept is illustrated by Table No.4.). Its representatives bank on the gradual dwindling in the long-term of NATO's and the United States role in Europe and the future intensification of European security identity. The great advantage of this concept is partly that it is more acceptable by the Visegrád Four's public opinion than is NATO membership and partly that it is on a larger and more complex scale that the concept interprets and wishes to manage the region's security challenges, and that in addition to political-military instruments and solutions it intends to allow the direct stabilising effect of economic integration to play a decisive role. The concept's weakness is that in the case of the WEU it encourages the Visegrád Four to approach an organisation that in itself lacks the ability for providing security guarantees and in view of the fact that in the event of the four countries joining the EU rather than NATO, a greater number of problems will remain awaiting solution, security guarantees will not be made available by the Union throughout the period of transition.

Table No. 4 Support in Visegrád States for EU Membership 1995-6.²⁸

	<i>For (%)</i>	<i>Against (%)</i>				
	<i>strongly</i>	<i>weakly</i>	<i>total</i>	<i>weakly</i>	<i>strong-ly</i>	<i>total</i>

Rozszerzenie NATO. Warszawa-Torun, 1995. 49-66. pgs.; Simon, J.: NATO Expansion: The PfP Path and Civil-Military Relations. In The Partnership for Peace: The First Year. Védelmi Tanulmányok, Budapest, 8. 1995. 17-36. pgs.; Beza, See: The Czech Position on Partnership for Peace. In. uo. 65-71. pgs.; Kmec, V.: Partnership for Peace, Issues and Perspectives from the Slovak Republic in. uo. 94-99. pgs.; Tálas P.: The Hungarian Reception of the Partnership for Peace. in. uo. 77-82. pgs.; Brousil, Z.: Partnerství pro Mír - včera, dnes a zítra. Vojenské Rozhledy, 1995/5. 3-14. pgs; Karaffa, V.: Partnership for Peace from the View of the Czech Republic, a Vision for the Near Future in. A Close-Up View of European Security. Védelmi Tanulmányok (különszám), Budapest, 1996. 83-88. pgs.; Sherr, J.: Armed Forces in Central Europe: Reform without Direction. Conflict Studies Research Centre, 1996 June.

²⁷ See: Włodarski, P.: Rozwój zachonioeuropejskich struktur bezpieczeństwa a powiększenie NATO in Bezpieczeństwo Polski w zmieniającej się Europie, 6. Rozszerzenie NATO. Warszawa-Torun, 1995. 27-48. pgs.; Seydak, P. - Gryz, J.: Unia Zachodnioeuropejska. Warszawa, DBM MON, 1996.; Poska wizja ogólnoeuropejskiego modelu bezpieczeństwa. Warszawa, DBM MON, 1996.; Mezinárodní souvislosti bezpečnostní politiky České Republiky. Ustav Mezinárodních Vztahu, Praha, 1995. 23-29. pgs.; Skvrnda, F.: Zahranicopolitické aspekty bezpečnostnej orientacie Slovenskej republiky vo svetle verejnej mienky obyvateľ'stva. Medzinarodné Otázky, 1994. 4, 42-56. pgs.; The security policy of the Czech Republic. 14., 18. pgs.

²⁸ Source: The New European Security Architecture: Volume II. Public Attitudes Toward European Security. USIA Office of Researcher and Media Reaction, 1996 szeptember. 13. pg.

Czech	<i>1995</i>	29	43	72	11	2	13
	<i>1996</i>	23	43	66	11	4	15
Poland	<i>1995</i>	38	43	81	5	1	6
	<i>1996</i>	30	44	74	7	2	9
Hungary	<i>1995</i>	34	43	77	7	3	10
	<i>1996</i>	30	42	72	8	4	12
Slovakia	<i>1995</i>	32	47	79	7	2	9
	<i>1996</i>	33	38	71	7	2	9

It is in closing necessary to mention the so called Central European option even if this concept poses numerous fundamental theoretical and practical problems particularly in the field of security policy. The foremost reason for this being the fact that the small states of Eastern Central Europe have not — as it has already been referred to — during the course of the 20th century been in possession of even combined potential to be able to guarantee the region's security. This is of course all the more the case at present when the region's economic, political, religious and cultural demarcation as well as historic wrongs essentially implying confrontation and conflict between the nations, ethnic minorities and states of Eastern Central Europe. Rekindled national spirit is often coupled with provincialism and narrow-mindedness which not only prevents a sense of European perspectives from surfacing in the thinking of Eastern Central Europe political elite but reduces its horizons so as not to encompass even the region itself²⁹. It is therefore no wonder that in spite of numerous positive results, neither Central European Initiative nor the Visegrád grouping evolved into real engines of regional cooperation.

All these factors however do not wholly amount to a questioning of the Eastern Central European option as its most important role lies not in practical results achieved but rather in its critical stance it defines vis-à-vis the other three security-policy alternatives mentioned previously and in addition in its sensitive attitude towards the region. The concept relies on a point of departure according to which NATO, EU or WEU integration of some East Central European states will not and cannot provide solutions for the region's security political problems, and furthermore as far as some questions are concerned — such as for instance that of ethnic minorities outside Russia's borders now

²⁹ Vö: Erlich É. - Révész G. - Tamás P. (Ed.): Kelet-Közép-Európa: Honnan - hová? Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1994. 399-409. pgs.; Duleba, A.: The blind pragmatism of Slovak eastern policy. 18-34. pgs.; Blank, S.J.: Prague, NATO, and European Security. 10-20. pgs.;

living in newly independent sovereign states — existing security of the region as a whole might be negatively effected by a handful of its countries "absconding" to the West thus mechanically realigning NATO borders, implying new divisions. It is in the interest of preventing such dividedness that representatives of the concept advocate the intensification of regional security-political cooperation of the concept did however never question the viability of either the North-Atlantic or the West European security-political option nor did they intend establishing an independent regional security-political grouping³⁰.

II.2. Specificities of NATO policies

It is perhaps odd on first hearing (and politicians of the Visegrád countries respond with vehements denial and explanation on every occasion to accept the statement according to which inspite of the above detailed similarities it was only very rarely that in recent years the Visegrád Four's joint action could be witnessed in the area of security policy. Odd, particularly in the light of how, inspite of contraversies active and effective the cooperation of the then three countries was at the time of the rovocation of the Warsaw Pact and the with drawal of Soviet troops³¹.

Some Visegrád politicians place the onus ot responsibility on the West for failure in the group's cooperation, saying it is in NATO's very nature to maintain contact with governments rather than groups of states and since it is the Alliance that dictates the timing and conditions of approaches and eventual

³⁰ See: Wisniewski, R.: Po Wyszegradze - srodkowoeuropejskie prespektywy. Polska w Europie, 1991. június, 66-78. pgs.; Wiejacz, J.: Grupa Pentagonale i miejsce Polski. Polska w Europie, 1991 június, 79-88. pgs; Uo.: Problemy rozwoju Hexagoinala. Polska w Europie, 1992. január, 15-22. pgs.; Nowakowski, J. M.: Polska i Europa Srodkowa wobec nowych wyzwan na Wschodzie. Polska w Europie, 1992 April, 20-26. pgs.; Grajewski, A.: Kwadratura Trójkata Wyszegradckiego. Polska w Europie, 1992. szeptember, 16-22. pgs.; Ostrowski, W. - Onyszkiewicz, J. - Grajewski, A.: Problemy bezpieczenstwa Europy Srodkowej. Polska w Europie, 1992. szeptember, 40-- . o.; Fialkova, M. - Engelmayer Á. - Grajewski, A.: Grupa Wyszegradzka... - Co dalej? Polska w Europie, 1993. január, 115-148. pgs.; Wiejacz, J.: Ugrupowanie regionalne w nowej Europie. Polska w Europie, 1993. April, 109-118. pgs.; Wóycicki, K.: Przedmurze, pomost, peryferium. Polska w Europie, 1993. június-szeptember, 26-33. pgs.; Póti L.: A Cseh Köztársaság és Magyarország külpolitikai irányváltása. Külpolitika (Új folyam), 1996. 1. 75-82. pgs.; Blank, S.J.: Prague, NATO, and European Security. 16-18. pg.

³¹ See.: Clarke, D. J.: Central Europe: Military Cooperatoin in the Triangle. RFE/RL Reserch Report 1992. January 1. 2; Michta, A. A.: East Central Europe after the Warsaw Pact: Security Dilemma in the 1990s. 22-34. pgs.

integration, Cooperation within the group is only successful if accompanied by Brussel's approval. Again others try to avert responsibility by stating that closer regional security-political cooperation would only serve to support the Western argument which opposes the NATO integration of East Central European countries, and would thus weaken its chances. According to get other in the absence of bloc confrontational threats, there is no real sense in intensifying security-political cooperation, which is undesirable in any case as it would only lead to more firmly newly dividing the West, East Central Europe and Russia. Finally, arguments also exist that postulate that the Visegrád Countries are not themselves interested in the intensification of cooperation, vieing as they do for NATO membership.

Part truths are probably carried by each of the above views. It is undoubtedly for instance valid to say that — as pviously referred to — although the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland are most often bandied about as possible new members, they are at just as great a distance from the Alliance at present as are Rumania, Slovakia, Slovenia and the Baltic states, to mention only countries that in past years also seemed in the running. Then there is the PfP programme that — despite its numerous positive effects — in some respects sets up a competition that also acts against closer cooperration within the Visegrád group³². It is also a fact that Western political circles often voice an opinion according to which — based on one or other consideration — fundamentally question the necessity of expanding NATO by new East Central European member states. Moreover, it is true to say that any particular close regional security-political cooperation might bring about mistrust in those left out of it.

Here and now however we are primarily to examine whether the Visegrád states aiming at joining NATO, are themselves interested in the formulation of joint NATO policies and if yes, to what degree? Let us do so country by country.

II. 2. 1. Poland

³² Sherr, J.: Armed Forced in Central Europe: Reform without Direction. 4. pg.

Initiation of contact between the North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation and Poland took place in May 1989 — prior to the June elections resulting in a change of regime — when, after Budapest, the NAA delegation visited Warsaw³³. The first official Polish response came in March of the following year with Krzysztof Skubiszewski's visit in Brussels. Formal diplomatic relations were entered into on the occasion of Manfred Wörner's visit in September 1990.

Taking into account the fact, now regarded as unambiguous, that Poland is for NATO of key significance in the region and that NATO membership for Poland is of vital importance unquestioned by anyone except Russia, finds it surprising that the issue integration surfaced relatively late amongst the priorities of the Polish foreign policy agenda. The fact that it was only after 1990 that Solidarność began directing Polish Foreign and security policy was only part of the reason for this. Although in March 1992 Secretary General Martin Wörner — on his second visit in Warsaw — stated that NATO awaits the Poles with open gates, in April Lech Wałęsa mooted the idea of a Central and East European defence alliance ("NATO-bis" /NATO-again/)³⁴ and in October, on her return from Brussels, prime minister Hanna Suchocka stated her conviction: it is scarcely likely that Poland will join NATO earlier than gain acceptance into the EU. NATO membership as firm programme appears for the first time only in the defence doctrine endorsed by the Sejm in November 1991.

In order to understand Polish uncertainties, it is necessary to examine all fair theoretical security-political guarantee options open to Warsaw after 1990³⁵:

- the resuscitation of alliance with Russia on a basis of equality;

³³ See: Borkowicz, J.: Czy Polska potrzebna jest NATO? Polska w Europie, Warszawa, 1994 január, 18-29. o.; Karkoszka, A.: Rozszerzenie NATO - szanse i wyzwania. Bezpieczeństwo Polski w zmieniającej się Europie 6. Warszawa-Torun, 1995. 67-83. pgs.; Simon, J.: Demokratyczna transformacja systemu obronnego Polski a rozszerzenie NATO. Warszawa, DBM MON, 1995.; Poland - NATO. Report. Warsaw, Center for International Relations - Euro-Atlantic Association, 1995.

³⁴ Accordingly, The V4 and the Ukraine were seen by the Alliance as the main axis.

³⁵ Karkoszka, A.: Droga Polski do NATO. Bezpieczeństwo Polski w zmieniającej się Europie. Warszawa-Torun, 1994. 31. pg. Polish security policy see also: Czarnecki, W.: New Polish Military Policy Conception and Strategy Posture in the Post-Warsaw Pact Era. (Kézirat) Budapest, 1991. június, 25. old.; Grzudziński, P.: The Polish Conception of National Security after Cold War. Budapest, 1991. June. 20. pgs; Włodarski, P.: A Lengyel Köztársaság biztonságpolitikája. Budapest, 1994.; Bartoszewski, W.: Lengyelország biztonsági politikája. Parliamentary speech 1995. november 17.

- the formulation of conditions for Europe integrated independent security policy based on rapid economic development;
- the construction of a regional security system with or without Russia;
- integration into North-Atlantic or West European security structures.

From the beginning it was the option of an independent security policy that seemed the most unrealistic of all four concepts. For a Poland struggling through a decades economic crisis, wedged as it was between reunited Germany and Russia, still potentially a great power even after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the unriable option was not worth attempting.

Nor had a regional security-policy structure more reality. According to the Walessa version it was to include the Visegrád countries and Ukraine in other plans the Baltic states too with Poland as a power of medium scale potential playing in both cases the leading role but the discrepancies in economic and social standards between the countries as well as their differing relationship with Russia and on the other side the West made the idea a non-starter. Its reception was unfavourable by both the West and the Visegrád partners, containing as it did, criticism of Warsaw for the January 1993 Polish-Ukrainian military agreement as well as Visegrád opposition to the Polish proposal for expanding the grouping with Ukraine³⁶.

Even if Warsaw did not manage to engineer the establishment of an East Central European regional security alliance, its endeavours were fruitful in forcefully drawing attention to the key problem of the new states of the Russian "near abroad" (Ukraine, Belarus and the Baltic states) as well as other states that are to be left out of NATO expansion in the region, namely that the mechanical extension of NATO's borders will sooner or later drive these countries dependant on Russia to some in any case into the arms of Moscow³⁷. Poland's desire for NATO integration was the last to be officially voiced within the Visegrád group so that it was only after October 1991 that the Alliance seriously placed expansion on its agenda³⁸. From then, i.e. mid -1992 on the Visegrád countries — particularly Poland — were fired by the thought of rapidly gaining NATO membership, and seriously banked on being treated as a group. It was at this point that Polish diplomacy began an active campaign for

³⁶ Prague, Bratislava and Budapest saw the Ukraine's inclusion in the group as weakening their chances for NATO membership. See: Nahaylo, B.: Ukraine and the Visegrád Triangle. RFE/RL, 1. 23., 1992. 28-29. pgs.; Blank, S.J.: Prague, NATO, and European Security. 11-12. pgs.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ See.: Richard Lugar 1993. augusztus 23-i Warsaw statement. Gazeta Wyborcza, 1993. August 24.

the intensification of the Visegrád Four's relationship with NATO, hoping it will extend beyond the NACC framework³⁹. Representatives of the foreign and defence ministr repeatedly attempted to draw Brussels attention to the unsuitability of the Council for forming a more intense relationship treating — as it did — countries of the former Soviet bloc in an undifferentiated manner, regardless either of their reform achievements or the intensity of their relationship with the West. In addition they warned the western partners of the danger of a "security vacuum" evolving between the integrated West and the unstable East.

It seemed at the time that the Polish — and generally Visegrád — aspirations will gain Western support as particularly German but also some US political and expert circles greeted them with understanding. Membership of the Visegrád countries was more and more frequently advocated and according to some opinions voiced at the time without NATO's rapid expansion the Alliance stood to lose its credibility.

On the other side it was Poland's membership aspirations that first triggered off real Russian opposition, not withstanding Boris Yeltsin's famous 25th August 1993 Warsaw remark in which the Russian president first stated: it is the sovereign right of each East Central European state to decide whether or not it joins NATO. One must of course remember the circumstances the statement was made in, namely that it followed the signing of the deal of the century — the Russian-Polish contract for the construction of the Russia Western Europe gas pipe-line, to lead through Poland rather than Ukraine — at the time of president Yeltsin preparing for his major clash with the Duma's opposition, a battle for which he was reuniting allies in Central Europe (Warsaw, Prague, Bratislava). The remark that surprised everyone was perhaps, in the psychological sense, useful to Moscow. Yeltsin's September 30th hard-line letter of retraction was written in response to allround indignation. It contained the president's proposal for a NATO-Moscow joint security guarantee to be extended to East European countries. The Visegrád Four's euphoria, caused by the August statement, was extinguished by the letter's cold shower which surprised and warned NATO itself.

The West uncertainty was perceivable at the September 1993 Brussels Conference of the International Institute of Strategic Studies the possible

³⁹ Wlodarski, P.: Polska wobec partnerswa dla pokoju. 4-5. pgs.

NATO membership. Manfred Wörner, present at the conference, only found it necessary, for instance, that a "concrete perspective" should be defined for the Visegrád group, adding that although no expansion is planned for the immediate future, it would be useful to cllate an "integration calendar" during the next NATO summit. Les Aspin US secretary for Defence was even more cutious, and merely announced the postponement of the summit form the original December date to January 1994. America's caution was due partly to Washington's concern over the deepening of the conflict between Yeltsin and the Duma, partly because the new security political programme eventually resulting in PfP was by that time well under construction. As early as the end of August Stephen A. oxman had already referred to the latter stating that East-West contact will continue to be confined in its development to the NACC framework. The deputy Secretary of State responsible for European affairs did not alleriate matters by saying that the plan would treat the Visegrád group separately from others, instead he enumerated the most important obstacles in the way of the four countries integration: 1. Russian reservations; 2. divisions within the Alliance; 3. the state of the Visegrád armies.

It was for a good reason that Warsaw became annoyed at the West having been taken aback by the letter, as Polish NATO policy — somewhat differently from that of Hungary's — did not primarily aim at attaining security guarantees but at full integration into NATO structures, by way of underlining the fact that Polish NATO integration was not directed against Moscow. Moreover, Polish politicians stated at every turn: Warsaw needs no guarantees as Poland is in no way threatened in addition to this conviction bitter experiences of September 1939 played an important role in not applying for guarantees⁴⁰.

Poland's relations with NATO were at this time effected not only by the West's delaying stance but by the fact that the post-communist coalition, several of whose leaders previously severely criticised the NATO policy of the Snchocka cabinet, had won the September 1993 elections. Although immediately after the victory the new government promised continued NATO approaches but added: that it will pay greater attention to the alliance's internal reforms and considers it desirable that all members of the CSCE should be

⁴⁰ Specifically since earlier Freanch and British guarantees against German attack came to nothing.

involved in the expansion. An attitude of maintaining distance was amply expressed by Defence Minister Piotr Kolodziejczyk who stated: in its present form NATO is "a relic of the past". With the election of the post-communist government Polish NATO policy gained a specific duality. While Walessa's presidential office continued to play a leading role in the direction of foreign and security policy, castigating the West for its delaying tactics, warning of the possible evolution of a second Yalta, the government attempted to relate pragmatically to solutions proposed by the Alliance.

This was born out by the eloquent example of the Polish reception of PFP, first notification of which reached the politicians and security policy experts in October 1993. The USA's proposal — regarded by Warsaw as further delay in the membership question — did not meet with enthusiasm and the neutral response was skilfully heightened to disappointment by the massmedia. At this point the government initiated a powerful campaign in order to make the Western partners understand: Warsaw will only accept the programme if the military-political cooperation necessitated by it is meant unambiguously to serve preparation for NATO membership. It is to this day not entirely clear what role did Poland and in particular the presidential office play in the formulation of the final version of the PFP programme, it is certain that having in the first days of January 1994 visited Warsaw, Prague and Budapest in order to elicit approval for the Scheme before president Clinton's visit John Shalikashvili and Madelein Albright departed from Warsaw disappointed, anxious and nervous. Grumbling and vicing disapproval however till the last minute, even after the Brussels resolution, was purely tacticing on Warsaw's part⁴¹ as oth, the government and the presidential office were prepared to accept the PFP programme when it became obvious that Brussels will do so⁴². It is therefore no accident that having signed as second on 2nd February the programmes framework, Poland was first to prepare the proposal document (25th April) as well as the individual partnership document (5th July).

II.2.2. The Czech Republic

⁴¹ "We will see what it really is" - said Lech Walesa on PFP's release to reporters, before leaving for Prague. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 1994. January 11.

⁴² Włodarski, P.: *Polska wobec partnerswa dla pokoju*. 6. pgs.

On the Czech Republic becoming independent on 1st January 1993, Prague could look back on almost three years of NATO relationship⁴³ being able to boast several firsts in the field: it was Jiri Dienstbier Czechoslovak foreign minister who was the first politician of former Warsaw Pact countries to visit the Brussels NATO headquarters on 3rd March 1990 and it was Prague that secretary General Manfred Wörner visited first on 8-9th September 1990, while Vaclav Havel was the first to be granted the right of addressing the NATO Permanent Council in 3rd March 1991. The new Czechoslovak government that took up office on 7th December 1989 was awarded accolades in other areas too as it attached great importance to the military from the beginning.

Some of its first measures were aimed at thorough going changes in the high command, (27th December) manpower was decreased by thirty thousand persons due to reducing National Service to eighteen Months (January 1990). and armament production was radically cut by president Havel's decree issued on entering office. In January 1990 foreign minister Dienstbier announced that Czech Republic — hitherto in 7th place on the world's top armament exporters — will cease armament trade. It was also revealed that compared to 1989 figures, army budget was cut by ten percent (from 35 to 31,5 milliard Koruna). August saw Antonin Rasek defence minister's report according to which 75 out of 138 members of army high command had been retired. He also confirmed that regardless of the result of CFE negotiations the army will be cut by sixty thousand persons to 140 thousand, while National Service will be further shortened to one year⁴⁴.

This radicalism did of course create tensions that intensified Slovak separatism and hastened the disintegration of the federated state to a significant degree. Most important of all factors at play was the social tension caused by the closing down of some of Slovakia's 111 armaments production plants and the radical decrease in arms-manufacture and export trade⁴⁵.

⁴³ Czech-NATO relations, see: Pezl, K.: Od prvních kontaktu k integrovanosti ACR s NATO. *Mezinárodní Politika*, 1995. 12. 4-6. pgs.; Blank, S.J.: Prague, NATO, and European Security. 1-37 pgs.; Michta, A. A.: East Central Europe after the Warsaw Pact: Security Dilemma in the 1990s. 105-135. pgs.; Karp, R. C. (szerk.): Central and Eastern Europe: The Challenge of Transition. 101-121. pgs.; *Mezinárodní souvislosti bezpečnostní politiky České Republiky*. 17-22. pgs. Láng, P.: Rendszerváltás és hadsereg Csehszlovákiában (1989-1990). In *ZMKA Szemlények*, 1994. 4. 107-115. pgs.

⁴⁴ On the defence sector and reform see: Simon, J.: NATO Enlargement and Central Europe. A Study in Civil-Military Relations. Institute For National Strategic Studies, NDU Press, 1996. 191-210. pgs.

⁴⁵ Between 1988 and 1990 Czech weapons exports dropped from 8 to 1 billion dollars: Michta, A. A.: East Central Europe after the Warsaw Pact: Security Dilemma in the 1990s. 107. pgs.

Prague's decisions were answered by Bratislava's forging closer ties with Moscow that promised its support for the Slovakian armament industry to prime minister Vladimir Meciar as early as March 1991⁴⁶. When in May Foreign minister Dienstbier announced that the 70-80 thousand jobs to cease in the arms industry by decree of the federal government, effected primarily Slovakia, Bratislava reply unambiguously indicated that Meciar's Political camp was seriously preoccupied with thoughts of independence⁴⁷.

The fact that the Czech and Slovak Republics were on several counts the first to establish NATO contact, by no means signified Prague's early commitment to NATO or integration. On the contrary, during 1989-90 it was the Czechoslovak leadership that was most wary of the idea of the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and several times severely criticised Hungary's endeavours in this direction. Initially Prague leadership was of the opinion that the dialogue begun between the West and East Central Europe should best be continued via the good offices of the Warsaw Pact, primarily because this way Russia would not feel isolated and barred from the process. Prague leadership therefore advocated the organisation's restructuring rather than disbandment. It continued to hold to the idea forcefully right until January 1991⁴⁸.

The Czechoslovak leadership only modified its security policy concept during early 1991. It set up the proposal for a Pan-European Security System, primarily structured on CSCE lines with the USA and Russia playing active roles within. whilst it assumed a future of federated and regionalised Europe⁴⁹, after Vaclav Havel's March visit it became clear that NATO would also remain a decisive factor in European Security. At this point the attention of Czechoslovak leadership did in fact turn towards NATO although membership continued to be envisaged as a long-term goal, to be achieved only after NATO's internal reform. Security guarantee instruments were accordingly defined for the time being as: 1. Bilateral agreements; 2. Cooperation with NATO, the WEU, the Council of Europe and the EEC as it then was; as well as 3. Cooperation within the framework of the CSCE⁵⁰.

⁴⁶ Duleba, A.: The blind pragmatism of Slovak eastern policy. 9. pg.

⁴⁷ Michta, A. A.: East Central Europe after the Warsaw Pact: Security Dilemma in the 1990s. 109. pg.

⁴⁸ 1990 June saw the Hungarian parliament, and September 1990 the Polish parliament, and 1991 January, the Czechoslovakia parliament bring decisions to bring talks on exiting the WP.

⁴⁹ Divis, J.: Czechoslovak Approach to all-European Security System and Defence of New Democratic Czech and Slovak Republic. Praha, 1991. 18 pg.

⁵⁰ Michta, A. A.: East Central Europe after the Warsaw Pact: Security Dilemma in the 1990s. 111. pg.

It was at this time that the process finally leading to the establishment of the Visegrád Four had also accelerated. In January 1991 Vaclav Havel proposed closer cooperation between Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary⁵¹ which resulted in the Bratislava meeting of the three countries heads of state. The agenda included in addition to regional cooperation, relations with European integrations. The participants decided to agree on "return to Europe"⁵². Subsequently however the process of cooperation halted. This was partly due to differing opinions held by the three regarding the future of the Warsaw Pact, partly due to the Hungarian - Slovak debate (re the Hungarian minority in Slovakia and the Nagymaros-Gabcikovo scheme) triggered off by the Antall government coming to power in May, partly due to the differing pace of development in the change of regime process and finally due to the public view held at the time that sought rapid remedies for region's ailments with the West only.

At the same time cooperation was also facilitated by the identical factors: it became clear that the days of the Warsaw Pact were numbered, the Hungarian-Slovak debate became the order of the day and within a matter of months the new political elite realised that the road to Europe will meander on instead of taking a straight path as fondly imagined in the euphoria of initial phase of the change of regime. In addition to all this the first phase of the cooperation was accompanied by Western support, so that when in his New Year message Vaclav Havel repeated his call to regional cooperation, it received — even if not without any debate — the green light⁵³.

Although much not unfounded, doubt had been voiced from the beginning regarding cooperation, the relationship of the three countries could

⁵¹ Joint appearance happened first at the WP meeting of Foreign Ministers in March 1990. The Hungarian, Polish and Czechoslovakian delegations voted for the future Germany's NATO membership, in opposition to all the other states, which would have preferred it to be a neutral country.

⁵² Clark, D. L.: Central Europe: Military Cooperation in the Triangle. RFE/RL, 1992. January 10. 43.pg.

⁵³ See: Wisniewski, R.: Po Wyszegradzie - srodkowoeuropejskie perspektywy. 66-78. pgs.; Grajewski, A.: Kwadratura Trójkąta Wyszegradckiego. 16-22. pgs.; Fialkova, M. - Engelmayer A. - Grajewski, A.: Grupa Wyszegradzka... - Co dalej? 115-148. pgs.; Wiejacz, J.: Ugrupowanie regionalne w nowej Europie. 109-118. pgs.; Clark, D. L.: Central Europe: Military Cooperation in the Triangle. 42-45. pgs.; Weydenthal J. B.: Poland Supports the Triangle as a Means to Reach Other Goals. RFE/RL, Year 1. 23. 1992. June 5. 15-18. pgs.; Obrman, J.: Czechoslovakia Overcomes Its Initial Reluctance. u.o. 19-24. pgs.; Reisch A. A.: Hungary Sees Common Goals and Bilateral Issues. u.o. 25-32. pgs.; Vachudova, M. A.: Visegrád Four: No Alternative to Cooperation? RFE/RL, Year 2. 34. 1993. Augustus 27 38-47. pgs.

be said to have been intensive compared to previous contact. this was the case from January 1991 to the middle of 1992.

Bilateral military agreements were signed⁵⁴, and at the Visegrád meeting security consultations were decided upon (for instance on the occasion of the Moscow coup d'etat in August 1991). At the August 2nd Krakow meeting of defence ministers an agreement was entered into regarding defence cooperation whilst the Krakow summit's joint statement expressed the common desire for formal integration into the European economic, political and security structure. At the Budapest meeting of defence ministers an arms industrial cooperation agreement was signed, and in May 1992 in Merzin talks were held with WEU representatives regarding cooperation opportunities. September was the Visegrád application for associate membership at which juncture the three countries' political orientation to the European Community, and in the long run integration into NATO, were reiterated.

Cooperation — the most lasting result of which was the formation of the Central European Free Trade Area (CEFTA) on 10th December 1991 — was however weakened by several factors as early as 1991-92. One of these was the fact that both, Budapest — at the time thoroughly convinced of being number one in the field of integration endeavours — as well as Prague — under the same impression and involved in divorce preparations as early as 1992 — criticised the intensification of cooperation in earnest which applied particularly to Poland's move for the establishment of a loose organisation for the coordination of cooperation within the group⁵⁵. This cooperation was also significantly affected by the August 1991 Moscow coup and the deepening of the Yugoslav crisis, both of which factors focussed the limelight on the sovereignty of the three countries as well as on the issue of the safety of their borders so as to amplify their NATO integration intent. Cooperation was finally affected by the dissolution of Czechoslovakia which act modified Czech and Slovak foreign and security-policy considerations.

The divorce affected the Czech Republic unfavourably from several points of view: the country began to carry less weight in the International sense, and in the framework of the new state Prague had to reinterpret the concept of

⁵⁴ 1991. January 21st saw the signing of the Czechoslovakian-Hungarian, on February 27th the Czechoslovakian-Polish, and March 20th the Hungarian-Polish military agreements.

⁵⁵ L.: Reisch, A. A.: Central and Eastern Europe's Quest for NATO Membership. RFE/RL. Year 2. 28. szám 1993 July 9. 38. pg.; Vachudova, M. A.: Visegrád Four: No Alternative to Cooperation? 41. pg.

its foreign policy. While having to renew the country's membership of international organisations, since until 1992 the ministry of foreign affairs functioned at federal level, it became necessary to organise the apparatus virtually from basics. All of them promising to be far from easy tasks for a state which — in the light of lacking international experience even during the previous regime — could not be characterised by having broad international horizons.

All these disadvantages were however dwarfed in the eyes of the Czech leadership that considered the divorce to constitute riddance from the Slovak ballast, geopolitical entry from "unstable Eastern Europe into stable Western Europe", a relative move towards West and a distancing from the region's crisis-zone⁵⁶. As far as the Czech political elite was concerned therefore, increased national tendencies resulted in — in a specific way — achieving European geopolitical proximity⁵⁷. This new national self — definition — although far from homogenous in its interpretations, ranging as it did from president travel's soft-line version to prime minister Klaus' and foreign minister Zieleniec's harder, more individualistic and at times provincial approach — inevitably led to the devaluation of regional cooperation.

II.2.3. Slovakia

Although the divorce of January 1st 1993 also meant a renationalisation for Slovakia, the ability to create an independent state, meant that from the viewpoint of European integration and NATO membership, the Czechs put Bratislava into a disadvantageous position⁵⁸. Not primarily because territorially and demographically, in our limited region, Slovakia became one of the

⁵⁶ On changes see: Póti L.: A Cseh Köztársaság és Magyarország külpolitikai irányváltása. 76-81. pgs.; Blank, S.J.: Prague, NATO, and European Security. 10-20. pgs.

⁵⁷ The Europeanisation and new political ideology, in every field - economy, political traditions, culture, history and religion - emphasised the separate stance of the Czechs within the CEE region.

⁵⁸ On Slovak foreign and security policy after the split, see: Fischer, S.: Slovakia's Foreign Policy since Independence. RFE/RL, Year 2. 49.1993. December 10. 28-34. pgs.; Duleba, A.: The blind pragmatism of Slovak eastern policy. 5-46. pgs.; Vojenskopolitické aspekty bezpečnosti Slovenskej republiky. In Armada Slovenskej Republiky 1994. 10-33. pgs.; Skvrnda, F.: Zahranicnopolitické aspekty bezpečnostnej orientácie Slovenskej republiky vo svetle verejnej mienky obyvateľstva. 42-56. pgs.; Vojenskopolitické východiská obrany Slovenskej republiky. In Armada Slovenskej Republiky 1995. 14-32. pgs.; Slovak Republic - Defence Planning 1996. Annual Exchange of Information Provided to all Participating States of the OSCE. 1996. March. 4-7. old.; Szlovákia katonapolitikája és hadereje. Budapest, 1995. 2-11. pgs.

smallest states, but fundamentally because of the former Czechoslovakia it was the more economically backward, inheriting in its political culture and traditions more nationalistic and revanchist traits. On top of this, on the separation, the ethnic proportions altered as well.

Despite the difficulties, Bratislava managed to quite rapidly resolve the international isolation it had come under. With the exception of the problems related to its membership of the Council of Europe⁵⁹, it managed to smoothly obtain member in the other international organs.

In the formulation of a new security political concept it overtook the Czech Republic. While "The Military Doctrine of the Czech Republic" was only completed in mid — December 1994, the documents entitled "The Basics of the Slovak Republic's National Security" and "The Defence Doctrine of the Slovak Republic" were published in Bratislava on 1st March and ratified by Parliament in June⁶⁰. It is true however that possibly due to this degree of expediency the Defence political and Armed forces Development Section of the Ministry of Defence saw it necessary to extend and bring up to date the contents of the documents⁶¹.

According to the documents the security of Slovakia is externally threatened by the significant appearance of the interest of the great powers in the Central European region, the economic and political instability of the Soviet Successor states, the escalation of the Yugoslav conflict, uncontrolled arms trafficking, the proliferation of military technology in Central Europe, the intensification of nationalism and attempts at the formation of ethnically pure states, the attempts at the revision of European borders and legal procedures, the growth of religious — predominantly Muslim — fundamentalism, international terrorism and organised crime as well as the penetration of foreign intelligence into state organs. Internal insecurity is viewed as caused by the intensification of nationalism and revisionism the anticonstitutional activities of extremist organisations, mass movement of foreign refugees, the appearance in Slovakia of international terrorism and drugtrade, economic crime due to the

⁵⁹ L.: Gyenge A. - József, J.: Az Európa Tanács keleti kibővítése. Külpolitika (új folyam), 1996. 1. 53. pg.

⁶⁰ See: Szlovákia katonapolitikája és hadereje. 2-4. pgs; Simon, J.: NATO Enlargement and Central Europe. A Study in Civil-Military Relations. 222 and 256. pgs.

⁶¹ See: Vojenskopolitické východiská obrany Slovenskej republiky. In. Armada Slovenskej Republiky 1995. 16. pg.

transition to market economy and government corruption. The problems of the intensification of nationalism, the attempts at the revision of the legal framework of European revision, the internal instability of Soviet successor states and the danger of the spread of the Yugoslav conflict are viewed as particularly pressing by Bratislava.

Although the divorce did not officially after Slovakia's desire to integrate into Western institutions since this was declared in all further government programmes, in practice Bratislava's relationship with Moscow intensified. The process in born out by a series of agreements. The Slovak-Russian basic treaty independent Slovakia's first such contgract, was signed as early as the beginning of Spring 1993.

On 26th August, in the presence of Boris Yeltsin and Michal Kovac — Pavel Grachov and Imrich Andrejcek signed the Slovak-Russian military framework agreement⁶² regarding Russian participation in the consturction of the Mohovce nuclear plant was born, to mention only the most important of such contracts, of which 112 are at present valid between the two partners⁶³. Although Bratislava's explanations regarding approaches to Russia tend to rely on "economic pragmatism" and the energy supply's dependence on Russian sources, there is obviously more to them than simply these reasons⁶⁴.

Since 1993 leading Slovak politicians and security experts have very of ten referred to a specific Slovak "positive neutrality" guaranteed by Russia, to the countrs's role as a "bridge" between East and West as well as the importance of Slavic interdependence. Statement have also been made by government politicians or those close to government circles, that questioned the necessity of Slovakia's NATO membership⁶⁵. The important question remains unanswered: could Slovakia's East-directed orienttion be regarded merely tacticing or is it in reality a definite about turn in Bratislava's foreign and security policy. Whilst according to some observers Bratislava had realistically ganged Slovakia's NATO and EU integrational chances and is thus clearly aware of no membership possibility being available in either organisation within the foreseeable future, according to others the orientation of the Slovak political elite towards the East was a decisive factor even in the 1993 divorce.

⁶² Within this cooperation, Slovakia acquired 5 MiG-29s and other equipment to a value of 180 million dollars, from Russia, in lieu of debt, whilst Slovak factories received large orders.

⁶³ This one part was inherited by Bratislava by from the Czechoslovak and Czech and Slovak eras.

⁶⁴ Duleba, A.: The blind pragmatism of Slovak eastern policy. 9-34. pgs.

⁶⁵ J. Luptak, J. Slota, J. Tesar and Meciar's statements quoted by Duleba. Uo. 7, 29-31. pgs.

II. 2. 4. Hungary

Hungary's relationship with NATO began by foreign minister Géza Jeszenszky's Brussels visit during the Summer of 1990. A month later also in Brussels prime minister József Antall expounded on the fact that on its part Hungary — although then still a member of the Warsaw Pact — regards North-Atlantic Cooperation as one of the most important factors of European security. In his reply Secretary General Wörner explained that NATO wished to play a stabilising role in Central and Eastern Europe. In November of the same year Secretary General Wörner visited Hungary. On this occasion his lecture emphasised that active participation in European economic, political and security structures will increase the security of Central European countries. High-level political meetings were followed by meetings of experts, including politicians as well as military leaders. In 1991 members of the foreign policy and defence committees of the Hungarian Assembly joined in the work of the NAC. On 28th October of the same year at a meeting of the NAC prime minister Antall urged NATO to pay greater attention to the three Visegrád countries by placing relations with them on an institutional footing. He also expressed his agreement with the idea of establishing the North-Atlantic Cooperation Council. In July 1992 Secretary General Wörner again visited Budapest party to inform the Hungarian leaders of NATO's internal reform, partly to reassure them that due to the insecurity caused by the Yugoslav war, NATO was paying particular attention to the Security of the Central European region.

Common interest in settling the Yugoslav crisis was also the main theme of talks held with General John M. Shalikashvili in February 1993 which mainly dealt with the technical details of the use of Hungarian airspace by AWACS aircraft. Up-to-date issues of the Yugoslav crisis continued to feature on the agenda of talks between the Alliance and Hungarian experts.

On 8th February 1994 Foreign Minister Jeszensky signed Hungary's PfP presentation document and on 15th November Hungary submitted its Individual Partnership Programme to Brussels

During the first years following the change of regime NATO and EU integration were treated in synchrony. Rather blithely the Antall government assumed that EU integration was imminent and the realisation that this was not indeed the case had only been gradual. The Horn cabinet however — having

come to power in 1994 — soon appraised the fact. That NATO integration, depending as it does mostly on political criteria, democratic political structure, civilian control and good neighbourly conduct has a chance greater than that related to the EU which requires fulfilling conditions such as the reduction of inflation and budgetary deficit. Attention therefore understandably turned towards gaining NATO membership as events speeded up from 1994 onwards.

Both the Antal and the Horn cabinet regarded it in Hungary's direct interest that as many as possible of the neighboring countries should express their desire to participate in the North-Atlantic integration process. The interpretation relied partly on NATO membership being based first and foremost on common democratic values and partly referred to the fact that bilateral relations will be facilitated thereby. Both criteria seemed of vital importance due to the great number of ethnic Hungarians living in the neighbouring countries. This was joined by the argument attaching importance to geographic contiguity. It is therefore understandable that Hungarian diplomacy — in concert with Italy — openly supported the case of Slovenia's invitation in 1996-97.

Hungary's preparation process accelerated subsequent to the 1996 submission of the discussion paper on preparations for membership in the Euro-Atlantic institutions, including NATO, has entered a new and more intensive phase. This fact has also been reflected by the establishment of various institutional frameworks the purpose of which is to more fully and effectively coordinate related activities carried out and pursued by the different governmental institutions both within and between such institutions. Such frameworks include the Integration Cabinet at Ministerial level headed by the Prime Minister which covers both NATO and EU integration issues. To ensure an integrated approach of the government's Euro-Atlantic policy, a State Secretariat for Integration was set up in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The head of the State Secretariat /Mr. Somogyi/ also chairs the "Inter-agency Committee on NATO integration" which assures coordination between related activities of all ministerial and other governmental agencies concerned. Coordinating and managing bodies have also been established within the different governmental institutions such as the Secretariat for NATO Integration in the MoD, and the Euro-Atlantic Working Group in the Hungarian Home Defence Forces.

During 1995-96 there has been an improvement of macroeconomic conditions in Hungary. The implementation of the stabilization program has resulted in several ways: the external current account deficit dropped, net external debt has declined and progress has been made in reducing public expenditure and the number of unemployments. Consequently there has been a decline of fiscal deficit and inflation. The credibility of Hungary has enhanced.

Hungary made significant efforts to improve and strengthen the country's ties with the neighbouring countries. Particularly significant was the conclusion of the Basic Treaties with Slovakia /1995/ and Rumania /1996/. These documents are important tools in fostering good-neighbourly relations in all its aspects which will serve among others as a framework for an effective, up-to-the-European standards treatment of the minority issue. In the Rumanian case the treaty has contributed to the development of the bilateral relations which have undergone particularly intensification. With respect to Slovakia two questions are standing in the forefront: the ongoing process on the Bős-Gabcsikovo dam before the International Court of Justice in Hague and the nationalist line of the Meciar government. Hungary is continuing its effort to promote full implementation of the provisions of the Basic Treaty.

With respect to regional and subregional forms of cooperation, Hungary has actively taken part in all of them /Hexagonale, Central European Initiative, Central European Free Trade Association, /. Recently the already existing frameworks have been supplemented with a trilateral one that extends to Hungary, Italy and Slovenia. Projects foreseen in this framework will help the cooperation among the three countries on promoting NATO and EU integration of Hungary and Slovenia. Hungary also joined - with some reservations - the South-European Cooperation Initiative /SECI/ launched by the United States.

Concerning the Hungarian Home Defence Forces the government decided in November 1996 to reschedule the first phase of the defence reform program to be implemented by December 1997. The changes envisaged for 1997 stem from the aspiration that Hungarian Army should meet a three-fold of requirements. This system is based on the unity of the mission, the structure and the underlining financial guarantees of the armed forces. The reform is based on the presumption that players of the European security arena - countries as well

as international organisations - have to prepare for significantly different missions in harmony with their size and character. Besides the traditional tasks of the Hungarian armed forces /defence of the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity/, new types of missions have gained prominence, like contribution to common defence, prevention of armed conflicts, crisis management in the broader sense of the world, participation in the peacekeeping, peace support and peace implementation operations.

II. 3. The defence sector of the Visegrád Countries

During the course of the past few years — particularly following NATO membership having risen to foreign policy priority rank in all countries — Visegrád politicians referred of ten and fondly to the restructuring of their defence forces taking place in the light of NATO integration. Although it is not the intention here to gainsay the reality of such political will and endeavour, it is necessary to indicate that numerous factors independent of the promotion of NATO membership have powerfully influenced defence sector reform in the past.

Such factor was for instance the economic crisis affecting all Visegrád countries and the radically decreasing financial scope of the previously inflated defence sphere. The degree of economic decline has been looking at the period of almost a decade that elapsed since the change of regime — practically of the same order in all these countries. Comparing the 1994-95 situation with 1988-89, we register a 20-25 % GDP decrease in all of them. The figure is the lowest (about 15 %) — for the given period — in Poland but as it is well known, as early as the beginning of the 80s this Country had suffered a crisis causing an almost 20 % decrease so that it has more to make up for than the others. A similar problem may be defined in the case of the Slovak Republic. Subsequent to the dissolution of the federated state retardation here became more perceivable relative to other Visegrád members.

It is also important to realise that the radical decrease in state ownership due to privatisation depleted the exchequer that hitherto financed the budget and within it the defence sphere that become greatly disadvantaged in turn. Partly — as it is wellknown — the new (particularly foreign) owners were given significant tax concessions, partly in the course of privatisation assets

became considerably devalued in all countries and this in itself diverted enormous sums from the armies and the defence sphere generally. Financial scope was further limited by the introduction of civilian control in the defence sectors of the Visegrád countries and also by the fact that state as well as military budget is allocated by democratically elected parliaments. All this poses serious economic limitations in army finances even if parliaments are not in practice able effectively to control expenditure.

Table No.5. Defence Expenditure in the Visegrád Countries in 1990 and in 1996 in US Dollars⁶⁶

State	Defence expenditure per head		Defence expenditure per soldier		Defence expenditure as % of GDP	
	1990	1996	1990	1996	1990	1996
Czechoslovakia	189	-	14 833	-	2,39	-
Czechs	-	106	-	15 714	-	2,82
Slovakia	-	83	-	10 563	-	2,92
Poland	32	80	3 897	12 475	4,11	3,1
Hungary	73	51	8 167	8 087	3,15	1,2

The reform of the Visegrád countries defence sector is decisively influenced also by the international arms reduction treaties the fulfilment of which had been undertaken by the group's countries in recent years. Most important of these is the CFE treaty — regarding conventional weapons — signed on 19th November 1990 in Vienna, the reduction prescriptions of which were fulfilled by all countries of the group on time.

Tables 6. and 7. The Amount and Development of Conventional Arms Held by the Visegrád Countries under the CFE Process⁶⁷

⁶⁶ The Military Balance 1990-91. London International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1990.; The Military Balance 1996-97. London International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1996. Although the figures are debatable, the international proportions, given IISS uniform methods, should be correct.

⁶⁷ Nagy L. - Siklósi P.: A CFE-szerződés hatása Magyarország katonai-biztonsági környezetére. Védelmi Tanulmányok SVKI, Budapest, 1994. 5. Also: Ujj A.: ibid.

State	MBT			APCS			Artillery		
	start	no w	limi t	start	no w	limi t	start	no w	limi t
Czech	152 5	95 3	957	225 4	13 63	136 7	162 0	76 7	767
Poland	251 5	17 21	173 0	223 2	14 55	215 0	215 1	15 81	161 0
Hungary	134 5	83 5	835	173 1	15 40	170 0	104 7	84 0	840
Slovakia	901	47 8	478	113 3	68 3	683	799	38 3	383
Total	628 6	39 87	400 0	735 0	50 41	590 0	561 7	35 71	360 0

State	Fighters			Attack Helios			Men		
	start	no w	lim .	start	no w	lim .	start	now	lim.
Czech	265	18 7	23 0	36	36	50	928 93	627 73	933 33
Poland	446	40 0	46 0	70	92	13 0	269 670	233 870	234 000
Hungary	143	14 4	18 0	39	59	10 8	827 28	660 51	100 000
Slovakia	117	11 4	11 5	19	19	25	583 46	458 32	466 67
Total	971	84 5	98 5	164	20 6	31 3	503 637	408 526	474 000

The foregoing perhaps already indicate that the reform scope of the Visegrád countries defence sectors were seriously limited from the start. This does not of course mean that the individual countries were not able or willing, within the limits, to follow disparate reform strategies or philosophies.

As shown in Tables No 6 and 7, regarding figures in the absolute sense, it was the Czech Republic and Poland, and proportionately the Czech Republic and Slovakia that reduced traditional armaments to the greatest degree. Taking manpower reduction figures, in the absolute sense it was Poland and the Czech Republic, in proportion however again the Czech Republic and Slovakia that implemented reductions in greatest numbers.

When examining permissible quotas it is clear that Poland and Hungary effected the greatest reductions. Limits defined in the CFE are not filled by Poland in any armament type while Hungary fills the quota in the tank and artillery equipment category only. The Czech Republic however reaches or nears the CFE ceiling in three areas (tanks, armoured personnel carriers and artillery equipment) which applies to Slovakia in four categories (tanks, armoured personnel carriers, artillery equipment and combat aircraft). In the field of manpower reduction the picture is somewhat different as Poland and Slovakia practically fulfil the quota while Hungary and the Czech Republic tag behind to a significant degree.

Tables No 6 and 7 as well as No 5 - dealing with defence expenditure — give at least an outline of the defence sector reform philosophy of each individual country:

It seems that of all Visegrád countries it is in Hungary that the direction of the defence sector is willing or forced to subject it self to budgetary fiscal policy. This is best proven by the fact that it is the only country within the group in which defense expenditure radically decreased even in the nominal sense in concept with armament and personnel cuts.

- It may be said that in the field of military reform Hungarian leadership follows the "reduction before modernisation" principle although this is possibly due as much to necessity as it is to choice. The country's armaments only increased in the past three years by 28 MiG 29 aircraft and BTR-80 type armoured personnel carriers received from Russia in lieu of Soviet debt payments, and Mi 24 combat helicopters received from German Bundeswehr

stocks, previously used by the German Democratic Republic while steps have also been taken to modernise the country's air defence. It however poses a great problem in the attempted Hungarian modernisation process that in view of the rapid depletion and profile reduction of the defence industry it has become necessary for the Hungarian armed forces to rely almost entirely on import purchases. This factor increases modernisation expenses by a considerable amount.

- Tight expenditure limitations also defined the reform of (Polish armed forces. Although per capita/per the soldier expenditure shows a nominal increase, (particularly in years 1995 and 96) this was only adequate for maintaining existing levels. Warsaw is unable to undertake further reductions not only because of the country's geostrategic position but also because — although after Russia's and Ukraine's its armed forces are in absolute sense in possession of the greatest arsenal in the region — due to CFE treaty prescriptions the Polish armed forces are the Smallest in Central Europe, relative to land area and population. Since Warsaw is at present unable to afford Western technology 90 % of Polish armaments originates from ex-Soviet industrial sources or from Polish manufacturers whose production is based on licences inherited from the Warsaw Pact. Most of the armaments of the defence forces are therefore simply old and out-of-date which obviously requires a greater number of service personnel. Warsaw's attempt to preserve 31 of the at one time approximately 90 armament production plants also requires serious expenditure. Although numerous army modernisation plans have been formulated, for the time being they remain merely paper proposals⁶⁸.
- The Czech Republic — that "inherited" two-thirds of the weaponry of the Czechoslovak Army — followed army restructuring philosophies somewhat differing from those of the other two countries mentioned: on the one hand — with the exception of combat aircraft and combat helicopters — it attempted to maintain the armament of its defence forces at the maximum quota allowed by the CFE treaty, on the other hand it made every endeavour to free itself from technologies inherited from the Warsaw Pact, particularly in the area of combat aircraft (It was due to this reason for instance that ten MiG 29 aircraft were exchanged with Poland for twelve PZL W-3 type

⁶⁸ See: Tálas P.: A rendszerváltás és a lengyel hadsereg. 127-130. pgs.; Urbanowicz, J.: Ubezpieczenie obowiazkowe. Wprost, 1996. 24. 26-28. pgs.; Cielemecki, M.: Zywia i bronnia. Wprost, 1996. 23. 22-24. pgs.

helicopters). Since after 1993 the Czech leadership — similarly to that of Slovakia's — had to consider it a priority to finance new infrastructure construction required by army relocation, armament modernisation expenditure remained relatively low, although it is true to say that in most types of arms Prague was less in need of major investment in order to modernise than were other countries. Due to the 2:1 proportion of army division the Czech military system was left with excess armaments which made it possible to implement reductions at the expense of these while the Czech Army also benefited from the fact that Czechoslovakia had previously been a "front-line" state of the Warsaw Pact so that the Czech Republic inherited relatively up-to-date equipment.

- The conditions and opportunities that applied to the Czech Republic were valid of Slovakia to a similar degree. Bratislava saw to the retention of armaments to a maximal permissible CFE allowance in almost all categories while putting to powerful use its defence industry that had been much revived since 1993. Although Slovakia also found it necessary to spend large sums on infrastructure development to facilitate army relocation, ridding itself of former Warsaw Pact technology was not considered a priority and did for instance accept fire MiG 29 aircraft and other Russian military equipment in payment of Soviet debts⁶⁹, by way of modernisation.

In addition to limited financial resources political infighting has seriously affected defence sector restructuring and army reform in the Visegrád countries. It is perhaps most illustrative to refer to the fact that although between the years 1989 and 1996 six Polish and four Czech as well as four Slovak development plans have been compiled aimed at bringing about the civilian control of the armed forces, these have not — at least according to Western experts — until date resulted in achieving this to the required degree⁷⁰. It is however also true that since from 1994/95 it became amply clear that civilian control is the first and most important condition of acceptance into NATO, all Visegrád countries — particularly Poland — accelerated the reform process aimed at this. The appraisal of the current state of affairs is influenced by numerous factors but it is clear that external criticism is widely levelled at the "vestige management"

⁶⁹ L.: Szlovákia katonapolitikája és hadereje. 7-8. pgs;

⁷⁰ See: Simon, J.: NATO Enlargement and Central Europe. A Study in Civil-Military Relations. 49-135., 191-210., 213-251., 253-287. pgs.

principle being employed. According to NATO experts' warnings no country can expect a membership invitation if its wrecked defence sector is lying fallow. Defence forces are necessary to maintain national sovereignty with or without NATO membership and NATO member states generally devote 2-5 % of their GDP to financial defence expenditure⁷¹.

III. Civilian-military relations in the light of NATO membership. Who are the drumbeaters, who sets the pace? External inspiration for democratisation

During the past years of NATO approaches civilian-military relations have become the most controversial issue. The debate is treated with lack of understanding by Central European candidate states while Western experts show increasing impatience. The former feel that having developed the framework of constitutional and legal regulation, the most important tasks have been completed, and the remaining ones can be solved during the last phase of the process. Western experts at the same time point at the unresolved details⁷².

The question of the civilian control of armed forces has, of all membership criteria, become the most important test and measure of the preparation process. The reason is obvious: the Central European countries thought to have fulfilled the requirement by having formulated purely constitutional and legal preconditions while connections between general democratisation and civilian control have become threadbare. From the constitutional, legal point of view all Visegrád countries do indeed seem to progress apace although closer examination reveals differences and substantial distances yet to be covered before the "finish". Before however dealing with these in the concrete sense let us see the general context.

⁷¹ Donnelly, C.: Defence transformation in the new democracies. NATO Review. 1996. Nr.6. 20-21.p.

⁷² Since 1994 there have been more and more pieces on the subject See: Simon J.: NATO enlargement... im. , Behind Declarations. Civil-Military relations in Central Europe. Defence Studies. 1996. Special Edition., Caparini, M.: A review of civil-military relations in Central and Eastern Europe: Avenues for Assistance in Strengthening Democratic Control over the Armed Forces. University of Calgary. August, 1996. Joó, R.: The democratic control of armed forces. Chaillot Papers. 1996. Nr.23. Kohn,R.H.:Out of control. The crisis in civil-military relations.The National Interest. Spring, 1994. 3-17.p., Szemerényi R.:Central European civil-military reforms at risk. IISS. Adelphi Paper. 1996. Nr. 306.

According to S. Huntington — one of the best-known experts in the field — the past two decades saw significant steps having been taken towards democratic development in some forty countries. Although final results are yet to be accurately summarised the improvement of civilian-military relations has formed part of the process everywhere⁷³. Direction for development has been provided by the leading democracies whose models — in spite of every country employing different methods — may basically be characterised by four features:

- the high level of military professionalism,
- the military sphere operating under civilian political control in an adequate sense,
- the adequate civilian recognition of military roles and functions and
- the minimalisation of the political role of the military sphere.

In a worldwide comparison Huntington lists Central European countries amongst the vanguard, stating that having gained their independence from Moscow these states have made magnificent strides along the way of historic development.

He supports this by the following:

- a) During the course of development both the civilian and military spheres seemed amenable to accepting the idea of civilian control of the armed forces. There was practically no country in Central Europe in the danger of its armed forces becoming ungovernable by political forces.
- b) It was apparent that settling civilian-military relations — unlike achievements in the areas of economy social values, etc. — required relatively low political and social "investment" while resulting in comparatively high socio-political advantages. Consequently this proved one of the rare areas for which political leadership — although to varying degrees in different countries — found it somewhat easier to gain public support.
- c) In the radically changing international conditions both, civilian and military leadership was faced with the task of having to define new functions of the armed forces. Since: if the era of bi-polar confrontation is over and theory democracies do not war with each other "why have an army at all?" becomes a valid question. Huntington's explanation relies on the historic paradigm-

⁷³ Huntington, S.: Keynote address to the joint conference of International Forum for Democratic Studies and George G. Marshall Center for Security Studies on Civil-Military Relations and the consolidation of Democracy. March 14th 1995.

switch. In his view democratisation generally reduces the danger of interstate conflict and that the end of regime confrontation substantially reduced the danger of conventional wars. Debate is widespread regarding the future role of armed forces and processes hitherto point unambiguously at the development of professional armies as a valid notion. Professionalisation however does at the same time question the meaning of the great invention of European societies originating in the French Revolution, i.e. the conscript army and through this in general the relationship of society with its armed forces.

When examining the situation — including the case of the Visegrád countries — one is hindered by the fact that the term "civilian control" is rather difficult to translate. In the languages of countries affected by Latin tradition — and all those involved are such — the English word "control" has no connotation of the "direction" flavour as it for instance has in information/computer technology although this would be correct. In explanation it is necessary further to mention the confusing fusion of the meanings of adjectives such as "civilian" and "bourgeois" in non-English languages. Direct translation therefore results in misleading, falsifying the notion to mean "supervision" which does not contain the idea of leadership or the provision of direction as it should. It therefore seems more practical to talk of the "civilian direction of armed forces"⁷⁴, as the debate is far from purely semantics based. Civilian direction of the armed forces in interest and value orientated a so that the choice of expression itself carries direct political content. It is in the end the task of civilian leadership to decide where the line of responsibility is drawn between the civilian and the military. One of the delicate tasks of political leadership is the direction and control of the armed forces, and indeed — as A. Bernstein says — it is only military dictatorships that have no need to attend to such duties.

What then is the state of civil control like in the Visegrád countries? Generally speaking satisfactory although significant differences are appreciable between the individual states. Starting point was defined for the post — 1989 elite by regaining national independence, the withdrawal of Soviet troops and the formulation of new national security strategies as well as the desire for

⁷⁴ The ISDS published a book with this title on the Anglo-Saxon models. See: A haderő polgári vezérlése. Bp. SVKI-Gondolat. 1996.

fulfilling Euro-Atlantic norms to an ever greater degree. The ordering of the civilian-military relationship therefore appeared on the one hand as a simultaneous and obvious constitutional legal element of internal democratisation, on the other hand as a new axis of foreign-political strategy. This was valid of each country according to the given society's characteristic set of values, since the specific value-order of an army is backed up by the broader value-system of the relevant society which — with the exception of war-time — defines the the armed forces relationship with society to a far greater degree than than would any external threat. Several further momentous events have also contributed to this practical transplantation of democratic principles. The first one of these was the signing of the November 1990 CFE treaty and the ensuing large-scale reduction 1990 CFE treaty and the ensuing large-scale reduction of national contingents. An additional factor was constituted by the consequences of the economic recession experienced in each of the Visegrád countries. First and foremost of these was the plummeting of the defence budget — worst in the case of Hungary — the erosion of the armies' prestige — most drastic in the Czech Republic and Hungary — as well as the loss of society's sense of danger — most pronounced in Poland — and finally the historic lack of the military's sense of responsibility in undertaking a political role. Judging from the factors listed above, developing civil control of the regions's armed forces is clearly not an easy task.

It was in 1989-90 necessary to solve two specific tasks simultaneously: firstly to avoid the military's interference in the process of reform, secondly completing redevelopment in such a way as to obviate the response of Soviet army troops, at that time still stationed in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary. In the first case the task was no less than neutralising the Communist Party's⁷⁵ — and in future all political parties — direct influence on the armed forces. Taking into account the presence of political instructors, the commissioned personnels's 100 % Communist Party membership and the intertwined

⁷⁵ The communist parties sent their political cadres to the Army and the highest military figures were integrated into the top Party leadership or were promoted to high government positions within or outside the MoD. The party defined military doctrine, strategy and the main objectives of the army's development. It controlled the army by monitoring the armed forces through party organs, by overseeing the General Staff through the Main Political Department and by checking up on the armed forces by secret police methods. Party membership was a major requirement for career servicemen especially at the higher ranks.

Joó, R.: Democratic control ... op.cit.

relationship of the military with the institutions of the state apparatus the task can be seen as gigantic indeed. The latter necessitated delicate negotiations with the Soviet leadership regarding the early withdrawal of troops from strategic locations. Cooperation between the Visegrád states was most fruitful during these months, Budapest, Prague and Warsaw closely agreed all points.

According to new and revised constitutions the presidents of the republics were to be appointed as chiefs of the armed forces — that are in peace-time to be directed by the government and the minister for defence — while the ministries of defence and the high commands had been separated. Different countries solved the task differently. Hungary the separation took place in December 1989. It resulted in a legal paradox: the ministry became part of the government while the high command was to be answerable to the president of the republic so that in a classified situation the role of the president, the prime minister (József Antall) and the minister for defence (Lajos Für) became arguable as far as the direction of the armed forces was concerned. The widespread debate caused by this was finally settled by the constitutional court and the struggle for control over the armed forces between the president on the one hand, and the prime minister and the minister of defence on the other, has been resolved in favour of the government.

The unnatural separation of the two organisations however still exists. It is currently envisaged that high command will be integrated with the defence portfolio within a few years. Problems persist concerning the ratio of civilian to military personnel in the defence ministry, lines of authority over the armed forces and relations between the army command and ministry of defence. Hungary also faces the challenge of drafting a constitution or constitutional revisions around which a national consensus can develop. The new constitution will need to clarify several issues which directly or indirectly impact upon civil-military relations, such as the role of the president during the war, the powers of the Constitutional Court and the role of the public prosecutor. Unfortunately the preparation of the new constitution has been the subject of a very tight debate between the ruling coalition and the parties in opposition and it is still uncertain whether a new constitution will be prepared before the next parliamentary elections in May 1998. In Poland the ministry and high command had not become organisationally separated but the latter began to function

under the aegis of Walesa the powerful president which resulted in a relationship between the ministry and high command at least as complex as in the case of Hungary. As a result of the political debate the high command gained substantial autonomy in opposition to the ministry of defence. President Walesa appointed the first civilian minister to the portfolio in the person of dr. Jan Parys in late 1991. The reform of the Polish armed forces and the development of civil-military relations were accompanied by fierce internal debate and personnel changes, and it is apparent that the majority of Polish military leadership found a new and legitimate role in the reform within the formula of NATO integration. It was therefore natural that the question of the democratic and civil control of the armed forces became part of the presidential election's campaign issues. Kwasniewski running against Walesa repeatedly argued for the necessity for increased ministry influence and reduced personal presidential control over the armed forces.

The radical solution contained in the December 1995 Defence Act integrated the high command into the Ministry of Defence.

At the time of the disintegration of party — states it was in Czechoslovakia that — in view of the vehemence of the 1989 mass demonstrations and intransigence of the communist leadership — probability was highest for as it happened, the soldiers remained confined to barracks. The newly empowered political elite executed more radical reforms than those carried out by the two neighbouring countries⁷⁶, 1989-90 saw fierce debate regarding the constitutional status, direction and political role of the armed forces. By way of first measures in October 1990 military intelligence and military counter-intelligence were brought under the aegis of the president of the republic, then in Spring 1991 the ministry of defence was reorganised under the leadership of minister Dobrovsky, three deputies (A. Rasek, I. Andrejcek, I Balaz, and chief-of-staff K. Pezl).

Following the parting of the Czech Republic and Slovakia the army was divided in a 2:1 proportion. From constitutional and internal political points of view it was in a correct manner that the Czech leadership saw to the issue of civil direction and control of the armed forces. The problems lie elsewhere. First and foremost in the low prestige of the army which greatly hinders the

⁷⁶ See: Rasek, A.: The transformation of the army in the Czech Republic. Perspectives. 1994. Nr.3. 41-50.p.

modernisation process⁷⁷. Apart from aiming at the earliest achievement of NATO membership Czech leadership has little to offer that is of value at the level of strategic dimensions.

Newly independent Slovakia had separated the ministry (Bratislava) and high command (Trencin) even in the locality sense. By far the greater majority of observers however view the relationship of society and the armed forces in a broader context. The concurrence of persistent power struggles between the prime minister, the president and the parliament, and successive attempts by the Meciar government to restrict certain rights and freedoms, have led to increasingly pessimistic prognoses for democracy in Slovakia. Meciar's first term as prime minister ended in March 1994 with a vote of no-confidence, after frustrated members of his party and government defected to form another party. After the interlude provided by the Josef Moravcik government, Meciar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia was returned to power in December 1994. The democratic institutions of the three year old state are fragile and cannot effectively manage the sustained political turmoil produced by Meciar's confrontational style of politics. Existence of the democratic institutions is threatened by the protracted conflict between the political elite because neither the three essential democratic institutions - the legislature, the executive and the judiciary - nor the Slovak Constitution are grounded solidly enough to withstand pressure from the victors in the election if they decide to initiate radical changes in order to gain more political power and control. Slovak political elite is unable to free itself from the nationalistic concepts that play such a fundamental part in the achievement of independence and form the last century vision of the nation state. The basic exclusivity of the nation state is in open opposition to the officially declared integration attempts, and lead to fiascoes such as the 25th May 1997 NATO membership referendum scandal organised in such a way that Bratislava had not even been invited.

The structural problems of Slovak politics are influencing its management of foreign relations and defence affairs, contributing to its progressive alienation from Western institutions. This extremely confrontational elite environment and institutional struggle for power forms the broader context of civil-military

⁷⁷ Pick, O. -Sarvas, S.-Stach, L.: Democratic control over Security policy and armed forces. Institut of International Relations. October 1995.

relations and the redefinition of the army's role in Slovak society. Political intervention in the functioning of institutions has included attempts to politicise the armed forces. However, the most compelling and publicised cases of inadequate democratic and civilian control and political intervention concern the intelligence and internal security services which have been drawn into the ongoing political confrontation between president Kovacs and prime minister Meciar.

It could be regarded as characteristic of all states that it is easier for the legislative and executive powers direction in principle rather than in practice. Civilians appointed to ministerial or parliamentary defence control posts had no military knowledge, and by the time the could Parliamentary defence committees had not been provided with expert back-up to offer them alternatives to reform proposals worked out by the ministry or high command. In consequence the so called "follow-up" policy resulted: the civil sphere tended rather to react to military self-defence initiatives while the latter made every attempt at removing incompetent civilian politicians from vital posts. The solution is therefore still at some distance from Western modes of civil control. The key-factor probably lies in personnel issues, the solution to which is an exceptionally time-consuming exercise to bring about. It is, in addition, a well-known fact that civilian society finds it difficult to provide the military sphere with the number of experts required, and the military in turn is anything but interested in their entry into its domain. The monopoly of teaching military and security-political studies is proving to be one of the greatest obstacles. Those concerned therefore have every right to explain and reiterate that nearly a decade after the change of regime civilian expert officials are yet to take up work in any number, while NATO countries question the same, registering the fact that ministry posts continue being filled by retired chief officers. It is necessary to mention here that Western training programmes arranged for the promotion of defence sector reform only helped to prolong this state of affairs since invitations to these were principally extended to military personnel⁷⁸.

The greatest-change in the area of the civil control of armed forces took place concerning defence budget planning. The Visegrád Countries replaced the

⁷⁸ Szemerényi R.: op. cit. 79.p.

previously reigning smoke-screen and secrecy by the gradual introduction of an "on-going plan". Adaptation is naturally different in the case of each country but commonalities are important too. Since integration necessitates the modernisation of armed forces, every country attempts to spread costs for as long a period as possible and give priority in planning to programmes directly promotional of NATO compatibility (the formation of fast-reaction forces, the training of peacekeeping units, PfP exercises, IFOR participation). Financing PfP programmes has been solved in varying ways. In case of Hungary for instance such items appear under the expenses of the parliamentary State Secretariate utilisation of redundant military facilities (sale, state management, leasing, etc.) has become a similarly delicate question.

The greatest difference between NATO practice and that of Central European Countries can be demonstrated in the relationship of military leadership and civil control. Following the change of regime politicians involved in civil control proved to be — to put it mildly — well meaning incompetents from which the military was unable — at times unwilling — to perceive anything but the latter. The general impression began to prevail that those in charge lack military understanding while deciding in vital questions. The ensuing mistrust is still prevalent so that the military's view of every attempt at the intensification of civil control is inevitably full of doubt. Lack of trust has in places reduced the level of frustration the influence of military elite diminishes in decision making. Moreover, civilian society saw to the appearance of organisations that question the necessity of the very existence of armed forces. Whilst at the highest level every country may account for spectacular reforms — this is the reason why retirements and appointments in this stratum receive far greater attention than in case of any other social group — changes at middle and basic level are slow and in places are experienced to be for the carriers the attraction of the military is on the wane, the loss of skilled personnel is great indeed. Pressure emanating from the lower echelons inspires the military leadership to an ever greater degree to question supposedly incorrect decisions brought by the politicians.

The relationship between civil-military and the media does not seem unambiguous either. Some military press has hitherto existed in these countries and still does. It has not however developed to keep pace with social change. It tends only to publish with a narrow stratum of readers in mind whilst the

editorial staff remained inbred. All this is naturally not valid in case of the so called civilian press and other media. These channels play an ever greater part in society receiving a realistic picture of its own armed forces, which includes, among other subjects, how the tax-payer's money is spent as well as what the civilian in uniform does and why? As the world over however, the relationship of the civilian press and the armed forces is controversial. Soldiers do not like reporters meddling in their affairs — this is of course valid of other walks of life — and their irritation is understandable in the light of the press predilection for scandal. Every country's press produces a fair crop of these. The release of information is therefore solved in a variety of ways, in the case of Slovakia one may even talk of special obstacles as well as information management. On the other hand the military employs new-found sources of publicity more and more often so as to enlist social and political support for new types of tasks such as peacekeeping, humanitarian aid and catastrophe management. During the past few years however civil-military relationships have increasingly more emphatically been presented as the direct condition of Euro-Atlantic Integration and this in itself distorts development based on internal movement. The Visegrád Countries have also received the "white bood" — stht contain conditions of entry into the organisations aimed at such as the European Union, the WEU and NATO. In case of this last organisation point 72 of chapter 5 defines the necessity "for states aspiring to membership the establishment of adequate democratic civil control over its armed forces". The question is therefore, what does the expression "adequate democratic civil control" cover? Since every NATO member state operates its own specific national model and no uniform NATO model exists, it is understandable that each Central European country involved thinks in terms of and employs different solutions. On the basis of this it is possible to summarise by saying, they already comply with conditions out lined in the expansion study, although not to the perfect degree which is not possible. Civil control of the armed forces is an inseparable part of each country's democratisation. Just as a single government measure will not bring about society's acceptance of democracy, civil control will not be solved by issuing a legal document, however detailed. The PfP programme and the preparation of armed forces for international tasks generally, are proving to be very useful instruments generally, are proving to be very useful instruments for the maintenance of compatibility between the individual national solutions.

The "task"-s defined for the Visegrád Countries at the end of the book written by J. Simon leading expert on the subject, are edifying indeed. Let us view non through American eyes what is to be done by each country.

According to J. Simon even with Kwasniewsk's rise to power in December 1995, Poland preserved the hear-consensus in defence watters. Duc to practical steps taken by president Walesa, Polish high command increased its influence in opposition to the ministry to a degree unusual in Central Europe particularly in the areas of personnel, defence finances, military intelligence and training. It is a fact that this state of affairs was substantially contributed to by frequent top level changes at the ministry. When General Wilecki was appointed chief of staff in August 1992 he little realised that no less than six ministers will in future be working alongside him. The professional dominance of the high command is prolonged by the fact that balance cannot be brought about as no civilian group of experts backs-up the work of the Sejm's defence committee. The committee refusal therefore in spring 1995 of general Wilecki's report had no practical consequences. To comply with society's general value judgement parliament maintains a defence budget of 2,5 % — possibly to be increased to 3 % — which is unusually high for the region. In Simon's conclusion therefore, Poland has much to do ... in order to achieve "genuine" civil control. The 1996 defence reform bill that radically clipped high command's wings was the first step along the way.

Hungary is in need of an inter-portfolio body within which the prime minister and the ministers for foreign affairs, defence, home affairs, finance as well as trade and industry could liaise with each other. It would be a kind of National Security Council, able to develop national Security strategy. The existing National Security Cabinet can be looked upon at most the first step towards such a body. A further point to mention is the fact that the defence minister's annual report to Problems arising from the separteness of high command and the ministry of defence also need to be resolved. The ministry's PARP mechanism, the PPBS and the Defence Resource Mnagement Model need finalising. the chief obstacle exists outside the ministry of defence. Hungarian defence budget planning follows a "from above - to below" pattern in direct contradiction to that of NATO members' practice. And finally Hungarians need to execute the uncasy task of modernising the armed forces, first and foremost

by taking the politically possibly unpopular step: raising the 14 % level of military budget by a substantial amount. The current low figure indicates in anycase that the ministry of defence is unable to gain society's support for its plans.

The Czech Republic needs to solve the question posed in section C.of paragraph No 63 of the Constitution, regarding the president's exact legal role in classified situations. The current solution according to which the minister is to counter sign presidential measures decreed in crises, may cause confusion. It is also necessary to mention that the parliamentary defence and foreign affairs committees control over the armed forces is limited. Society's inadequate acceptance of the Czech military, accompanied by levels of training and readiness that leave much to be required are well-known facts. Czech political elite — similarly to it is Hungarian counterpart — is get to convince society of the fact that hoped for NATO membership cannot be achieved with an army in wreck and ruin.

Slovakia's internal lack of stability poses serious — in some areas insurmountable — difficulties in the solution of military and security tasks in the fore front at present. First of these is the constitution and the current unhappy state of affairs concerning relations between the prime minister and the president of the republic Questions such as the president's legal role in government crisis (the ordering of elections) and the influence of the National Council remain unclarified. The unresolved situation is made use of by prime minister Meciar in order to president Kovacs position who lost the right of being able to appoint or recall chiefs of staff (June 1995). The body exercising control over military intelligence has no opposition members so that a public service function has become subjugated to party political aims. The basic treaty signed with Hungary on 26th March 1996 did not clarify matters either⁷⁹.

It is apparent that the American list of desirables is rather lengthy. One could obviously compile similar from the points of view of other NATO member states. The leadership of the four countries are charged with the cludy of having

⁷⁹ Simon, J.: NATO enlargement.. op-cit. 289-314.p.

to reconcile these requirements with the possibilities of the process of internal political development.

IV. The expansion debate. What West and East had done?

IV.1. The EU - WEU option

Following the 1989-90 changes Central and East European countries freed from communism, hoping for their rapid development as welfare societies, saw the future primarily in terms of EU membership, convinced that Western institutions await them with open arms. The Visegrád countries were no different. Their fundamental orientation was supported by four elements:

- 1) Central European countries always felt part of European Christian civilisation, regardless of how short or long lived democracy had previously been in them. In any case, after the decades of Soviet rule the majority of population as well as the newly empowered political.
- 2) Everyone was clear about the fact that the region is not as developed as Western Europe. Even countries such as Greece and Portugal, towards the end of the EU GDP per capita statistics are well ahead of the Visegrád Countries that lead the Central European field. In consequence therefore the "Return to Europe!" desire also contained hopes regarding an impetus for economic growth. The post 1989 inflow of foreign capital and the development of market economies — together with all problems of the reform — provided support for this in tangible experiential ways.
- 3) Western states are linked by numerous political and economic institutions which can be closely related to the development of social and economic stability following World War II.
- 4) In addition the structure linking Europe in the field of security included the world's leading great power, the United States. Each of these factors played a part in the Central European countries' definition of their West-oriented foreign policy.

Hopes vested in rapid integration have, during the past almost ten years, significantly diminished. The Union answered the expansion challenge by the signing of the Maastricht treaty and subsequently by the admission of Austria,

Finland and Sweden so that Eastern countries have to remain content with associate membership and the criteria of the Union's "White Book". From the latter it is plain to see that the European Union regards expansion a burden if not downright contrary to its economic interests. As far as political interests that override economic considerations are concerned, expansion is not a matter of urgency either.

It is well worth observing how the initial expansion impetus evolved into the construction of various parking — lane solutions even in case of institutions such as the WEU. How did yesterday's euphoria turn into today's disappointment supported by statements such as for instance the definition made by a member of the French National Assembly according to which East European Countries constitute "dangerous economic competition, the unsettled hinterland of emigrants and a nest of instability retrogressive to Western Europe's economic growth"⁸⁰. It seems taht contrary to its attitude to the entry of Spain, Portugal and Greece, the EU is unable — or unwilling — to play the role of stabiliser in the case of Central Europe's democratic development so as to make the process irreversible although — as the disintegration of Yugoslavia had shown — the need for this is great indeed. Vaclav Havel's warning, according to which "Although Europe is extraordinarily structured and varied from the geographic, national, cultural, economic and political point of view, all its constituent parts are deeply interlinked so that we have ample grounds for regarding it as a unified political entity"⁸¹ — fell on deaf ears. It was also the Czech president who stated that NATO's omission of rapd expansion amounted to the third betrayal of Central Europe by the West which — Similarly to those of 1919 and 1945 may make the region a pawn in the rivalry of great powers.

Instead of rapid expansion the first five years following the fall of communism saw the West making the Visegrád countries lobby in every sense, including economics, politics and military security stated a Belgian expert

⁸⁰ De Lipowski, J.: Les accords entre la Communauté et l'Europe Centrale et Orientale: une occasion manquée? Rapport d'information. Nr. 696. Assemblée Nationale. Paris. 10. novembre 1993. 5.p.

⁸¹ Europe documents. Nr. 1874. 8. mars 1994.

uncomprehendingly⁸². In the economic sense this resulted in associate instead of full membership and meagre aid extended in the framework of the PHARE programme whilst EU companies were allowed maximum scope for movement throughout Central and Eastern Europe. Political lobbying is curtailed and not thoroughly structured by the consultation mechanisms laid down in the December 1991 agreement. From this study's point of view however military-security political lobbying is of greater interest.

Following the changes, Central European countries altered their security and defence policy, although at a differing pace. Subsequent to the dissolution of the Warsaw Treaty newly independent national security strategies were developed, the armed forces became depoliticised and civil direction and control were established within the process of democratisation. Although regarded as necessary, rapid modernisation could not be begun due to the available out-of-date armaments manufactured in Warsaw Pact countries, the lack of adequate financial resources and the economic recession brought about by having to change to market economy. Many initiatives have however been taken in this direction. All countries involved hoped for an end to the security vacuum, a departure from the grey zone and integration with the West. These desires however were only partially answered by the framework developed hitherto (joint exercises, cooperation with the West European GAE0, the tripartite French-German-Polish security cooperation and bilateral military-political agreements).

The Visegrád four demonstrated their intent and ability to undertake international responsibilities and projected their political will for exploiting their new status in ways other than merely importers of security, by participating in peacekeeping and peace creating missions (Yugoslavia, Gulf War).

After initial enthusiasm Western Europe's stance gradually changed to procrastination and the formulation of an ever greater number of integration pre-conditions caused increasing dissatisfaction and confusion in Central

⁸² Dumoulin, A.: L'Europe Occidentale et le groupe de Visegrád. Europe Orientale et Centrale: les options de l'Europe Occidentale. Institut Royal Supérieur de Défense. Proceedings. Février 22-23. 1995. Bruxelles. 80-84.p.

Europe. The fact that in spite of all the effort aimed at establishing internal stability, democracy and regional stability, obstacles in the way of rapid integration continued to mount, filled Budapest, Prague and Warsaw with incomprehension⁸³. In his 1991 report entitled: *Les conséquences de l'évolution de l'Europe centrale et orientale pour la sécurité européenne*. Assemblée de l'Union occidentale. doc. 1293 1991 27th Nov, by Jean-Marie Caro proposed that the WEU's political committee should initiate the process of association between the Union and the three Visegrád Countries. Protracted negotiations in 1994 in Kirsnberg "resulted" in the offer of associate membership to nine Central and East European countries which although ensured consultation and participation opportunities to those involved, never-the-less fell far short of ambitions. Partly because no mention was made of security guarantees which in the light of the dramatic escalation of the Yugoslav crisis and of the Russian political leadership's resurfacing imperial reminiscences seemed as pressing as they did immediately following the change of regime and partly due to the fact that although the Visegrád countries followed with great interest all attempts at the resuscitation of the WEU and the not really successful experiment for developing a defence identity, they were only too aware of the WEU having no means for the provision of such guarantees.

Symbolic quasi-results did not therefore signify much to the Visegrád Countries even if the French were satisfied enough to state: a forum has at last been born where talks can be held without the presence of the Americans or the Russians⁸⁴. Real debate did not centre around Central Europe's entry but the WEU's and NATO's future security/political role, and there could be no doubt about the outcome. The lack of joint European will for a common European defence and foreign political strategy and the absence of a longterm strategy as well as the unreasonably tough integration criteria set out in the White Book, all amounted to NATO being cast in the lead role in the process of solving the integration of Central Europe. The fifteen member states declared, they had no wish to begin negotiations with those countries aiming to join the Union until after the end of the 1996 intergovernmental conference.

⁸³ Parzymies, S.: *L'Europe centrale et l'Union européenne: un point de vue polonais*. Les Cahiers du CREST. 1993. 31-33.p.

⁸⁴ Balladur, E.: *La politique de la Défense: essentielle et permanente*. Défense Nationale. Novembre 1994.

The complex economic criteria set out by the EU (see the questionnaire issued to countries wishing to join) has slowed down the integration process to a considerable degree. This development further weakened the already loose ties of Visegrád cooperation which were similarly affected by NATO's January 1994 PfP proposal much in the forefront of events, as it offered a series of selective, a la carte choices to Central and East Europeans whose NATO integration endeavours were sarcastically branded "childhood illnesses while recovering from communism" by a French author⁸⁵.

Enormous task-clouds are gathering for Western Europe on the threshold of the millenium, to complete prepararzioms for Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and to enalerge the Union after positive results to the IGC. Regarding the latter, debate is fierce within the Union in connection with the order of negotiations concerning the twelve countries wishing to join.

While Europe's leaders continued to pledge that these projects would all proceed on schedule, doubts remained, exacerbated by continued slow economic growth. With political leaders more concerned about short-term or domestic political necessities, public-relations campaigns to promote the new currency /euro/ and prepare for a series of ratification debates and referendums on the future of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty on European Union and on the enlargement. All of these four major projects remained hostage, moreover, to unemployment averaging almost 11 % across Europe. High unemployment exacerbated budget deficits, making the Maastricht Treaty's criteria for EMU more difficult to meet. With average EU economic growth for 1996 at a mere 1,4% reducing unemployment proved extremely difficult. While structural problems lay at the heart of the high unemployment, efforts to achieve the Maastricht criteria prevented public spending from stimulating temporary demand. Indeed, most countries were cutting public spending deeply, although a number of dubious plans were also proposed for one-time transfers to stabilise the 1997 numbers.

⁸⁵ Boniface, P.: Europe centrale et orientale: une sécurité encore indéfini. Relations Internationales et Stratégiques. IRIS. Automne. 1994. 34.p.

In the final analysis not even the most optimistic among us believe that a Central European state will receive EU membership before 2003-2005.

IV.2. The NATO viewpoint

The Alliance itself took many steps on the road to expansion. At the beginning of the nineties, just like the EU, NATO did not seriously deal with the security requirements of the Visegrád states. In general we can say that NATO simply followed along with events, only reacting to the structural and mechanical collapse of its former enemies⁸⁶, whilst most efforts were expended on internal changes. NATO extended its hand of friendship and invited six former Warsaw Pact members to address the NAC and to establish regular diplomatic liaison with NATO. On 6-7th June 1991 NAC implemented a broad set of further initiatives to intensify NATO's programme of military contacts at various level with Central and East European states, and after the August 1991 coup attempt in the Soviet Union the ministerial statement differentiated, for the first time the Soviet Union from the other Warsaw Pact countries. The Atlantic Alliance started its political and military transformation during the Rome Summit at early November 1991. The Rome NATO Summit wanted to satisfy East European expectations without offering either membership or security guarantees to these countries of differentiating among them. During this meeting the North Atlantic Cooperation Council /NACC/ was created.

The NACC included all the former WP countries and the newly independent Baltic states. During the first ministerial meeting December 1991 it adopted a Statement on Dialogue, Partnership and Cooperation that endorsed annual meetings of the NACC at ministerial level, bimonthly meetings of the NAC with liaison ambassadors plus additional meetings as circumstances warrant. The number of members extended very soon 35 /to include the former Soviet republics/ While the NACC had good goals its limitation immediately became apparent. The immense diversity among NACC partners led to Central Europeans demands for differentiation and increasing demands for membership in the Alliance. Czechs and Hungarians Polish explained that the common

⁸⁶ Vö.: NATO pillanatkép. Tények és kihívások, amelyekkel a Szövetségnek szembe kell néznie a 90-es évek végén. Bp. SVKI. 1996.

denominator "former Warsaw Pact member" can not hide the large distances and differences between Central Europe and Central Asia. Despite well-intended goals, the cooperation partner's demands on the NACC made it quite apparent how limited this organisation has been. NATO recognised the problem of inadequacy and in January 1994 in lieu of extending membership, the NAC adopted the Partnership for Peace programme, a type of consensus amongst "those not wanting to offer any thing"⁸⁷. The CEE states received the initiative in a mixed fashion, mostly seeing it as a way out of offering full NATO membership, The strongest criticism came from Poland.

With the lengthening of the Yugoslav conflict there was a pressure upon international bodies to do something, this included NATO. The political basis for the Alliance involvement in the resolution efforts came at the Oslo meeting of the NAC in June of 1992. Here the ministers agreed : "to support on a case-by-case basis in accordance with their own procedures, peacekeeping activities under the responsibility of CSCE". The support of the OSCE in December of 1992 also was similar in so far as it would "support peacekeeping operations under the authority of the UN Security Council." The NACC then followed by agreeing that NATO and cooperation partners would share experience with one another and with other CSCE states in the planning and preparation of peacekeeping training and exercises. The Alliance brought many important decisions along with the WEU in relation to the use of NATO's maritime assets. These forces at first observed and then enforced the UN embargo on the Adriatic. NATO air assets did the same with the No-Fly Zone implemented over Bosnia, securing also the support for UNPROFOR units on the ground. They also broke the siege of Sarajevo, creating afterwards the necessary conditions for the start to the Dayton talks. The role performed by NATO in and around former Yugoslavia is illustrative of the way in which NATO operations outside the North Atlantic Area have ceased to be controversial. The traditional debate about "out of area" operations has been placed in a totally different light since the end of the Cold War. After all, NATO is the only organisation possessing a military structure that allows it to take effective military action. There is a general consensus that such action should be taken only on the basis of a mandate issued either by the United Nations - as was the case with IFOR or by the SFOR - if the operation is not of a peace

⁸⁷ International Herald Tribune. January 5.1994.

enforcement nature. The major role played by the United States in NATO operations in and around former Yugoslavia emphasises both the importance of Americans in relation to NATO's new tasks and the significance of NATO to US foreign and security policy.

Many see the summit of January 1994 as a watershed for NATO. The Summit did attempt to fuse the more flexible force structure packages for peacekeeping requirements /CJTF/ with NATO's new need to stabilise the East by adopting the PfP program. enlargement

In support of the development of a European Security and Defense Identity and the strengthening of the European pillar of the Alliance through the WEU, the Brussels summit agreed that NATO and WEU would consult through joint Council meetings and endorsed the CJTF as a means to facilitate contingency operations, including peacekeeping operations with participating nations outside the Alliance. NATO did not accede to Central Europe's desire for immediate membership, but the PfP proposal did establish NATO's long term commitment to expand, leaving vague both the criteria and time-line for enlargement. Operating under the authority of the NAC, active participation in PfP is seen as a necessary condition to joining NATO.

The PfP has helped not only to focus political attention on issue of democratic control of the armed forces, but also to initiate military cooperation of a practical nature. While the goals of CJTF and PfP are explicit and can be seen as a hedging against possible future problems in the East, their implementation would have immediate and unintended implications: it weakened the Central European sub-regional cooperation by turning local actors into competitors, it undermined domestic support for the region's democratic reformers and the fragile civil-military relations. The ambiguity of the PfP has, however, had the effect of bringing about what it was originally intended to discourage: the questions of which new members will be admitted to NATO, and when, have gradually moved up to the top of the political agenda. During his tour in Central and Eastern Europe, president Clinton declared that it was no longer a question of whether the alliance would be enlarged, but of when.

The report on the study of NATO enlargement was published in September 1995.⁸⁸ It emphasises that, although the alliance will decide on its enlargement, the process of enlargement should be transparent and predictable and should

⁸⁸ Study on NATO enlargement. September 1995.

not create new lines of demarcation in Europe, nor pose a threat to any country. The report also lists the political and military criteria to be met by new members and makes clear that enlargement may not be at the expense of NATO's effectiveness. The report was the subject of talks with interested partnership states in what was known as an intensified dialogue.

During the following period the NATO enlargement debate has focused on the question of which countries should be offered membership in the first round. Yet equally important is how the alliance deals with countries left out in that round - the so-called have-nots⁸⁹. Since the debate began in 1993, very different views on the scope and pace of enlargement have coexisted within and among NATO members. The first group wants an open door policy based on self-differentiation. The political message is that the door is open - at least in theory - to all PfP partners and that it is up to would-be members to establish the speed and extent of their transition to full NATO membership. This approach is more or less the official policy of Clinton administration. The second approach to enlargement can be termed parallel expansion. It holds that the list of NATO candidates should be the same as the list of current and potential members of the European Union. This way NATO enlargement is part of the process of unifying the continent to produce a single Europe whole and free. This approach has a large number of supporters in Europe, including NATO members, Eastern European countries and the Baltic states. A third view holds that NATO should limit enlargement to a few countries, based on strategic criteria, and then cap the process. This case NATO's assessment of its own strategic interests would determine what countries are or are not candidates.

Russian opposition to NATO's expansion was addressed with a proposal for a special NATO-Russia agreement and a permanent council proposal for the two. The document was signed in Paris on May 27th 1997. During the talks the US President stated that the act ensures for the one Europe ideal searched for for so long, since NATO no longer has any enemies. The parties agreed in the document to work together to top any kind of return to a Europe of divisions and opposition, or the isolation of any state. The Permanent Council's task will be to resolve differences in opinion, to bring, where possible, joint decisions on

⁸⁹ Asmus, Rr.D.-Larrabee, F.S.: NATO and the Have-Nots. Foreign Affairs. 1996. Nr.6. 13-20.p.

joint actions, whilst talks will never touch upon the internal affairs of parties. NATO stresses that it does not wish to place nuclear weapons on the soil of new members, nor position significant troop groupings either. The meeting in Paris removed the last obstacle to the invitation at the Madrid summit of July 1997 of inviting new members.

5. Summary and Future Perspectives

1. The Visegrád states lost the opportunity to jointly realise the shared aims they had. It is certain that a joint effort would have been more effective. Their shared fears of Moscow should have provided enough inspiration, but it did not. There were two internal factors which led to the breakdown in cooperation. The "cavalier seul" of Prague, which after the velvet divorce eased its load, felt that it could achieve integrational goals faster alone. They forgot that the realities of expansion rarely met with the imagined expectations of candidates. The behaviour of the Slovaks provides us with the most striking example on which this work rests. The national political elite created by the new state form took the most immediate task as the establishment of national sovereignty in all its forms. It does this understandably, but completely wrong-headedly with a model based on the nation-state paradigm of the 19th century. The result is an isolation from the region and from the whole community of Europe. This is supported by the failure of Meciar's force during the referendum of May 25th of this year

2. The debate on NATO expansion rapidly outgrew the region and was raised to another plane under the NATO-Russia talks. For decades NATO policy was Moscow-centric, fully understandable as long as the Warsaw Pact existed and the Soviet Union dominated Eastern Europe. This pattern persisted after the Warsaw Pact was dissolved and its members gained their independence. For the Visegrád countries it was very hard to realise that this Moscow-centrism still has been a strategic consideration. This feeling did not disappear perfectly with the signature of the Moscow-NATO agreement in Paris late June 1997.

3. These states, with the exception of Slovakia, are ready and able to behave as normal members of the Alliance and sharing the same values they are looking for full fledged membership with the same responsibilities and benefits. After

the July invitations it will be mostly technical and not political problems which have to be settled. All affected governments have postponed large procurement decisions till after July.

4. NATO membership is not seen in the light of exclusive security needs but part of a layered collection of integrational tasks, which are iterative. Here one can mention the EU, the membership in which is considered much more important for a longer run than that of the Alliance's. All of these countries expect NATO membership to help the integration in European Union as well.

5. The Czechs, Poland and Hungary, although their economies still reflect transitional problems, on joining NATO wish to exploit the wave of expansion to create interoperable and modern forces.

6. All expectations predict a stabilisation of internal political forces on joining and a strengthening of the civilian democratic control of forces.

As far as the future is concerned, the CEE states cannot be regarded irrespective of the wider continental perspective. Whatever the pace of Euroatlantic integration turns out to be, however long the negotiations and ratifications take, the economies of the region have committed themselves and converted and so the further development of these countries cannot be taken as separate from that of Europe as a whole. Therefore when making predictions about CEE and Europe in general, we must talk about the EU region. This connection is also held by the creator of one of the most well-known scenarios to date, which came from RAND⁹⁰. He examines the impact of three scenarios on the evolution of East Central Europe. The first scenario is that Europe "muddles" along, does not develop into a strong united entity with a cohesive foreign and security policy, but avoids being engulfed by nationalism and protectionism. The second is that Europe becomes fragmented and inward-looking and the third one, that a strong united Europe emerges, one capable of being a genuine partner of the world.

⁹⁰ Larrabee, S.: Europe in the year 2010. Implications for Central Europe and the Balkan. RAND. P-7992. 1997.

In the case of "Europe muddles along" - this scenario was considered at the highest probability - growth will remain slow, unemployment will continue to be high, enlargement will occur but take place gradually. Europe will develop a stronger CSFP but it will not speak one voice on security issues and that is why NATO will remain the main organisation for harmonising Western security. At the same time the voice of Europe within NATO will grow but Europe is unlikely to develop significant capability for independent action. Additionally, European Union faces an enlargement crunch, that means, over the next decade the EU faces a possible expansion of 25-26 members. Taking into consideration that EU cannot possibly absorb such a large number of new members without significant international changes, particularly a move to qualified majority voting, the Common Agricultural Policy and the Structural Funds it means that the first new members are not likely to gain full membership in EU before the year 2003. Of course the process has been the most pronounced and far-reaching in Central Europe. Three of the four Visegrád countries - Hungary, Poland and Czech Republic - have emerged from the recession that followed the initial efforts to move toward market reform in 1990 and 1991. In these countries growth rates are rising, inflation has dropped and privatisation has also taken root and to compare to the Eastern European countries and to the Balkan they have got significant advantages. The exception to the rule in Central Europe has been Slovakia. Its chances of early membership have declined. While growth rates are high /nearly 7 %/, the overall process of reform has slowed. In addition the ruling political elite has shown increasingly authoritarian tendencies.