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**PROJECT IS FUNDED BY THE INTERNATIONAL VISEGRAD FUND**

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Journal on European Perspectives of the Western Balkans  
Volume 7 Number 2 (13) October 2015

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# Letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia

I welcome the initiative of a special volume of European Perspectives devoted to the issue of the relations between the Visegrad Group and Slovenia. This is in itself an evidence of co-operation between the V4 and Slovenia, as the edition won financial support from the Visegrad Fund!

Over the last quarter of a century, the relationship between the V4 and Slovenia has evolved through different stages. It now emerges that what was perhaps seen in those early days as a hesitation on the part of Slovenia had as much to do with complacency (about Slovenia's relatively strong position, above all economically) as well as with an over-emphasising of the differences in our post-war experience (in domestic development and in the geo-political placement) and political transition from Communism. Twenty-five years later it seems that even in this we have had more in common than it appeared then, as we experience similar challenges in our transitions.

But in 1990's, difficulties in perceptions had not only existed on the Slovenian side: at the time, many in the V4 countries have struggled to understand the unique Slovenian position in the so-called Yugoslav wars, and satisfied themselves with an overly simplified explanation of an ethnic conflict. If anything, the relative brevity of the armed conflict in Slovenia confirmed that – at least in Slovenia – it was much more about politics and economy. Current developments in the Western Balkans and their up-hill road to the EU seem to corroborate this interpretation of the conflict in the 1990's.

Yet Slovenia successfully escaped the chaos, while not forgetting about solidarity, offering – at the peak of the conflict – shelter for over 70,000 refugees from the war-thorn areas, as well as other assistance. Slovenia also established itself internationally as a credible interpreter of the conflict, and as an advocate of the

region. At the same time, the V4 countries gave a helping hand to Slovenian ambitions to pursue its EU and NATO agenda. Most of bilateral contacts with V4 countries in those times focused on this. Thus in a short time, Slovenia – in parallel to V4 countries - also emerged as an EU and NATO candidate country. To some, it was a surprise that one of the former republics of a war-torn region is now a candidate country. But it was only natural, given the historical and cultural proximity of V4 and Slovenia.

It is precisely this common Central European origin that both Slovenia and the V4 countries somehow overlooked in those years. While often portrayed as elusive and with loosely defined boundaries, Central Europe is an “imagined community”, but remains a real geopolitical and also economic space, a place of interaction of largely Slavic Europe with Germanic Europe, with experience of a multi-ethnic Empire with distinct common cultural features. It is often forgotten that seventy-year long Slovenian experience with the South-Slav political entity was preceded by several centuries of common Central European heritage.

Of course, the scholars in this volume are not expected to dwell on nostalgia of the past. Nor are the politicians. Central Europe today is much more than nostalgia. The economic and transport links from the Baltics, via V4 and Austria down to the Adriatic coast of Slovenia are real – as real as they used to be before WWI. For Slovenia, the V4 and the rest of Central Europe are central to its economy and to its geographic position on the route to the Adriatic, with Koper as the Mediterranean port of Central Europe. This, however, does not mean that contacts are reduced to business interests: rich cultural links are being restored across Central Europe.

The new strategic papers of Slovenian foreign policy (the Declaration and the adjacent strategy paper) presented in July of this year are quite clear about this. The Declaration defines Slovenia as a Central European and Mediterranean country, lying at the heart of the Alpine-Adriatic-Danube region, and the meeting point between the Western Europe and the Western Balkans. The adjacent Strategy Paper goes at some length explaining the ambitions of Slovenia in Central Europe.

Naturally, the Central Europe is much more than V4 alone. I am thinking above all of our Austrian and Bavarian friends, but also about the business connections in northern Italy and key transport and energy links with our Baltic partners and allies. And – as far as politics is concerned – the debate about V4 and Central Europe has for Slovenia also moved beyond the over-simplified question of an eventual enlargement of the Group. The V4 has for some time experimented with ad hoc V4+ formats that have gathered political and economic partners from neighbourhood and from afar. Not to discount is also the interesting experience of various trilaterals within Central Europe. One would expect that the experience from these different “plus” (and “minus”) formats will gradually lead to some degree of permanency, however loose these formats might be, guided by real interests of their economies and people.

I am confident that this special volume of the European Perspective will work towards that aim.

Karl Erjavec  
Minister for Foreign Affairs  
of the Republic of Slovenia



# Letter from the Editors

The whole idea of a special issue devoted to the Central Europe was triggered last year, when in Slovenia different discussions were taking place, in the frame of preparing and accepting the new Foreign Policy Strategy. The Central Europe, as a region, was on numerous occasions highlighted and put in the spot of special interest. Thus, the idea of collecting different views from the V4 countries and others on the role of Slovenia in the Central Europe became real, once it got the support of the International Visegrad Found.

In the issue in front of you, we gathered papers from all V4 countries as well as from Slovenia, Austria, Canada, etc. The papers tackle different aspects and views, but the focus on the Central Europe stays in all of them. Some are focused on historical facts, some on economic relations and others dwell on energy issues. Several of them explain why Slovenia is or is not in the “heart of the Central Europe” and (if) how and why the V4 Group should enlarge. In this sense, some authors posed the question if Slovenia is in fact the one country in mind, when enlargement of the V4 or the V4+ concept is in focus. The issue is narrowly geographically focused and in this sense, we are even more honoured that so many prominent authors have contributed their views and papers on this matter.

The special issue of the European Perspectives, together with all the papers, represents an excellent basis for understanding, whether being academic, businessperson, diplomat or practitioner dealing with the relations within the Central Europe, since it provides many new views, new information, new data, and new interesting analysis on Slovenia’s role in the Central Europe.

We would like to thank the International Visegrad Found for supporting this project, the Minister of Foreign affairs of Slovenia for contributing the Foreword and to all the authors, contributors, reviewers and colleagues at the Centre for European Perspectives, for performing an excellent job in the preparation of this special issue.

We are glad that our practice of having occasional special issues is carrying on so fruitfully. It is also a sign of attracted interest of academic community that reacts when ideas and proposals are current and relate to the moment. One can additionally be sure that readers would be satisfied with the offer of food for thought as well. As a matter of fact that is exactly what we at the Editorial Board want most. Last but not least – it's always academically inspiring to work in an editorial team as it was the case with this special issue.

Wishing you, as always, inspiring reading and a thrilling contemplation. We'll be back in spring 2016.

The Castle of Jable  
November 2015



Assist. Prof. Dr. Gorazd Justinek  
Guest Editor

Prof. Dr. Milan Jazbec  
Editor in Chief

# articles

## Is Slovenia a Central European Country?

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## Relation of Slovenia and the V<sub>4</sub> from perspective of changing foreign policy of Slovenia

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# Is Slovenia a Central European Country?

Milan Brglez<sup>1</sup>, Jana Arbeiter<sup>2</sup>, Boštjan Udovič<sup>3</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Central Europe is often defined by geographical, economic, ideological and cultural factors and presents an important part of diplomatic symbolism in the regional relations, therefore it should be possible to develop a wider understanding that Central Europe can be linked to cooperation between 'core' and 'adjunct' countries. Even though that from the end of 1990s, political commitment in Slovenia towards the Central Europe is very high, 'core' countries do not understand it as their own, meaning that Slovenia should more intensively focus on how step forward in its integration path to the Central European club. This paper tackles the question whether Slovenia is Central European country, through the role of symbolism in foreign policy and diplomacy, and through historical, cultural, political and economic connection with Central European countries.

**KEY WORDS:** diplomacy, foreign policy, symbolism, Visegrad Group, Central Europe, history, Slovenia.

## POVZETEK

Srednja Evropa je pogosto opredeljena na podlagi geografskih, gospodarskih ideoloških in kulturnih dejavnikov in tako predstavlja pomemben del diplomatske simbolike v regionalnih odnosih.

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Prav zaradi tega bi bilo potrebno razviti širše razumevanje, da lahko Srednja Evropa povezana tudi s sodelovanjem med državami višegrajske skupine in ostalimi. Čeprav je politična zavezanost k Srednji Evropi v Sloveniji visoka že od leta 1990, pa je države višegrajske skupine še vedno ne razumejo kot ene izmed njih, kar pomeni, da bi se Slovenija morala intenzivneje osredotočiti na svojo prihodnjo integracijsko pot proti višegrajski skupini. Članek, preko vloge simbolike v zunanji politiki in diplomaciji, ter skozi zgodovinsko, kulturno, politično in ekonomsko povezavo s srednjeevropskimi državami, obravnava vprašanje, ali je Slovenija srednjeevropska država ali ne.

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** diplomacija, zunanja politika, simbolika, višegrajska skupina, Srednja Evropa, zgodovina, Slovenija.

## INTRODUCTION

Different states can be objectified through symbolic actions and interactions and as it is known, diplomats *also inter alia* symbolically represent their state (Faizullaev 2012; Berridge 2005; Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations 1961, Article 3), therefore we can say that diplomacy is an important means, through which states pursue their foreign policies, which are framed in a ministry of foreign affairs (Berridge 2005, 3). Symbolism is therefore very important part of inter-state relations and presents an important instrument in foreign policy. In this article we will tackle the question if Slovenia is a Central European country or not and what it should do to become one, which is possible through the analysis of diplomatic symbolism in the regional relations and historical connection to the all four countries of Visegrad Group. In order to show that Slovenia could somehow become a part of this quartet it is important to find connection with these countries, which is maybe not obvious at the first glance. The ongoing debate about the definition of Central Europe is one, which opens different possibilities for Slovenia to show that is symbolically connected to all four countries and that this kind of cooperation could benefit all of them, by which each country would gain some kind of symbolic power in the international arena.

In the first part of this article we will focus on the role of symbolism in foreign policy and diplomacy, moving to the historical

overview on Slovenian path towards the Central Europe, focusing on relations between Slovenia and V4 countries, where we will try to show the symbolical connectedness with them. Furthermore, we will also tackle the problem with the definition of Central Europe and why Slovenia should become a part of it, through political and economic component, analysing official governmental documents and export and foreign direct investment flows to all four Visegrad countries. Finally, we will try to show whether Slovenia is Central European state or not and countries of the Visegrad Group should consider accepting Slovenia into this club.

### **THE ROLE OF SYMBOLISM IN FOREIGN POLICY AND DIPLOMACY: A THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION**

In diplomacy, what matters, is symbolism, meaning that nobody cares about what is done, but everyone tries to find the 'secret meaning' of what was done (Udovič, 2015b). As such diplomacy deals more with perception than with facts (cf. Faizullaev 2012, 92). Thus, in the diplomatic intercourse forms and customary practices play an important role in establishing, developing and promulgating relations between states and societies (Brglez 1996; 2011). Jönsson and Hall (2005, 37) highlight that diplomacy should be defined by its three constitutive elements: communication, representation and reproduction of international society. If representation is one of the core elements of diplomacy, because diplomats represent their countries or organizations acting on their behalf and also represent them symbolically (Jönsson and Hall 2005, 38), then institutionalization of diplomacy is of high importance for international relations where through progressive development of international relations, it came to the merge of common symbols and references, sets of common expectations and agreed-upon rules, regulations and procedures and a formal institution (Jönsson in Hall 2005, 40). Diplomacy is therefore a sort of social interaction between states and their representatives, in which communication – verbal and non-verbal – plays an important role (van Ham 2010, 3). But what really matters in the construction of diplomacy is the self-perception. However, it is not relevant whether this is built gradually or by a drastic change, what counts is how firm the position of the self-perception of a

state in the international society is. For example: taking a term “*liberte*” drives us to France, furthermore when we speak of “the Queen” we link the word with United Kingdom. These two illustrations serve as clear examples how just one word can bear the whole notion of politics, economics and societal relations. Moreover, as in each societal interaction, also in diplomacy the self-perception is challenged by the fact how “the Other” sees “us”. This reflection of “One” in the spectrum of “the Other” is not a classical interdependence between two actors, but it encompasses also the structural component, meaning that the relationship includes also the ability to set standards and create norms and values which are accepted as legitimate and desirable [by the two actors – comm. authors], without the use of any kind of physical force (van Ham 2010, 3–8). We can therefore talk about symbolic power more specifically, which is defined through the relationships between those who carry out this power and those who receive it (Bourdieu 1992, 170) and is therefore included in the functioning and the structure of the perception of citizens, thereby introducing a sense of legitimacy of the existing social order (Bourdieu 1995, 104; Adler-Nissen 2014, 5). As such, the symbolic power of diplomacy does not lay only in facts that are officially taken or presented, but includes also the verbal and non-verbal communication, the structure of ministries of foreign affairs, the structure and size of diplomatic representations and finally the statements in official documents about issues related to the foreign policy and diplomatic milieu (cf. also Berridge 2005). Thus, the external representation of a state is what matters – but not only physically (as pointed out by Faizullaev 2012, 94), but also ideologically. Each activity that a state performs is individually (and subjectively) assessed on a symbolic level.

O’Neill (2001) distinguishes three types of symbols in international relations: a) *value symbols*, which include association of other actor’s identity and values with different actions or objects; b) *message symbols*, which represent different ways of communication through metaphors and other prototypes; and c) *focal symbols*, which represent events that induce other actors to predict what they will do in an important situation (*ibid*). In the case of establishing the Central Europe, the logic of the value symbols is applied. It should be taken into consideration that the “value

symbols” in Central Europe covers mostly the common cultural heritage, issuing from the single historical past that Central European countries had within the Habsburg monarchy, especially in the field of culture, which is today still the main common denominator of the definition of Central Europe.

The understanding of these characteristics of symbolic representations is the precondition for analysing the symbolic positioning of Slovenia in Central Europe: when and why has this happened and how is its self-perception concordant with the perception of others. As Faizuallaev (2012, 113) points out “diplomatic symbolism helps to objectify the state, enables easier comprehension of international politics, and contributes to the formation of a shared sense of inter-state relations”. Central Europe, as being a regional complex defined and understood differently, is therefore not just a complex issue for conceptualising, but covers also an important part of diplomatic symbolism in the regional inter-state (economic, political and cultural) relations.

### **A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW ON SLOVENIAN PATH TOWARDS THE (SYMBOLICAL) CENTRAL EUROPE**

The discussion on Central Europe in Slovenian foreign and domestic policy is a sort of symbolism that permeates the Slovenian *raison d'être* since its independence (gained in 1991). At that time Slovenia, trying to find its path from the Balkans towards the European Union, started to define itself as a Central European country. However, its central-Europeanism was in the first period not linked to the classical perception of (today's) V4, but it was more linked to the historical perception of *Mitteleuropa*, present mostly in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (Udovič 2015a). According to some data obtained by Udovič (2015a) until 1997 Slovenia was not willing to be part of the group of the Central European countries, as understood by international community, but claimed that it should be treated as Austria, which was at the time perceived as a western European country. In such manners also the Slovenia's politicians behaved, using each opportunity to dismiss the idea of joining the V4 and to establish close relations with the V4 countries. Two reasons can be found out for

such behaviour of Slovenia in the period. The first is that Slovenian foreign policy in the period 1992 – 1997 was directed as a sort of “escape from the Balkans” (Bojinović and Požgan 2014; Udovič 2014), meaning that Slovenia tried to link itself as much as possible to the western European countries or to countries that were understood as western European (in Slovenian case these are Austria and Germany). The next issue why Slovenia had not strengthened the cooperation with V4 is linked to the pre-1991 period when in Slovenia these countries were understood as undeveloped, poor<sup>4</sup> and too much linked to the socialist and non-aligned legacy (Rupel, 2011, 138). However, after a terrible blow in 1997, when Hungary, Czech and Poland became members of NATO and Slovenia did not,<sup>5</sup> the position of Slovenia towards the V4 gradually changed.

The first steps towards a closer cooperation with V4 were made in late 90s, when Slovenia tried for the first time, unofficially, to “renegotiate” its position with the V4. There were some debates in Slovenia on whether Slovenia should still join the V4, and what would be the benefits or disadvantages, but the enhanced process of EU accession blurred the cooperation between Slovenian and the V4 countries. Instead of supporting each other, Slovenia and V4 countries became competitors (cf. Rupel, 2011, 98). As pointed out by Wilkin (2007) and Andreosso-O’Callaghan (2003), Slovenia and V4 countries lost lots of opportunities in the EU accession process, because the EU15 and institutions treated them as separate units and used in relations with them *divide et impera* and the salami tactics. Instead of common grounds the V4 and Slovenia presented the differences and divergences among them, trying to “acquire (and retain) a sort of first-mover advantage” (Udovič 2015a).

The 2004 enlargement have not changed the relations between the V4 and Slovenia dramatically. Even though Slovenia has quite good relations with all four countries (being V4 members), the

<sup>4</sup> Again, we here strive to symbolism – in the colloquial Slovenian language “češki” means something “poor or inadequate”.

<sup>5</sup> According to Rupel’s memoirs the German chancellor Kohl asked the Slovenian president Kučan whether Slovenia would rather joined the EU or Nato. As described by Rupel Kučan answered that EU is a Slovenian priority and that is – according to Rupel – the main issue why Slovenia had not been invited to Nato in 1997, but only in 2004.

fact remained that the V4 have been “sort of” obstructing the accession of Slovenia to V4” (Udovič, 2015a). In the informal diplomatic debates it was often explained that V4 is (Udovič, 2015a)

*an obsolete structure and thus there is no necessity that it should be widen to Slovenia, since all members of V4 are now also members of the EU and NATO and can cooperate better within the EU than in an outdated network.*

Albeit, the V4 was in some forums presented as outdated, Slovenia re-gained its interest to join the V4 in late 2008, when Samuel Žbogar became the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Udovič, 2015a). Thus the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as other political actors started a sort of diplomatic actions to “enlarge” the V4. In 2009 the Slovenian president dr. Danilo Türk visited Poland and was a special guest of the president of V4 (Poročilo MZZ 2009, 85), in 2011 the Slovenian minister of foreign affairs Samuel Žbogar was invited by the Czech minister of foreign affairs Karl Schwarzenberg as a special guest to the meeting of V4 ministers of foreign affairs (Poročilo MZZ 2011, 29). However the fact remains that these visits are “special visits” and as such are held only on personal/political invitation.

A step that maybe can in the future lead to the enlargement of the V4 was initiated in early 2013 by Czech president Miloš Zeman during his visit in Slovakia, when he announced that the V4 should be enlarged (Vidmajer 2013).<sup>6</sup> Even though his idea was not widely accepted, the Czech president re-affirmed its position during its visit to Ljubljana, a year later, when he presented his idea that the “new V4” (sometimes called V4+) should include also Slovenia and Austria (MMC RTV SLO 2014).<sup>7</sup> This is a sort of re-establishment of *Mittleuropa*, claims Udovič (2015a), and is happening because of two things. The first is that Czech Republic is not willing anymore to act in the shadow of Poland, which has been – even though not officially – with a tacit consent of Germany and France taking the rout of the V4. The second

<sup>6</sup> It is interesting that Czech R. from the first steps of V4 acts as a sponsor of Slovenian membership in V4 (cf. Rupel, 2011: 139). VIR: <http://www.delo.si/novice/svet/meje-in-omejitve-visegrajske-skupine.html>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.rtv slo.si/slovenija/foto-ceska-sloveniji-ponuja-visegrad-plus/333738>

reason, why Czech Republic is interested in widening of the V4, is because it would like to establish a balance of power between all members and to leverage the power of the so-called “Weimar triangle”. The idea of enlarging the V4 with Austria is therefore a try to take the wind out of sails of Warsaw-Berlin-Paris and to (at least partially) shift the level of decision-making to the axis Prague-Vienna-Berlin (Udovič 2015a).

As facts stand now, it is not expected that the V4 would enlarge with Austria and Slovenia in the following years. Firstly, because Austria seems not to be interested to establish a formal alliance with ex-socialist countries, where it would be just “one of them”. Secondly, the widening of V4 opens the issue of Croatia that presents itself as a Central European country. Third, within V4 the idea of enlargement is not widely embraced and with an inner opposition it is not expected that the V4 would become V4+. Finally, it should be noted that the foreign policy of V4 countries on one hand or Slovenia and Austria on the other hand are quite divergent. This has been visible in the past (e.g. the so-called Vilnius declaration), but it is even more clear today, when the EU countries face the issue of migration. It should not be forgotten that the V4 were the only countries that oppose to the quotas presented by the European Commission, when on the other hand Slovenia and Austria followed the arguments presented by the EU institutions. In the current situation it seems that in Central Europe two blocks have been established (regarding the issue of migration). One is presented by V4 and the other by the circle of Germany-Austria and Slovenia. Taking this into consideration it is non-realistic that the establishment of V4+ would be plausible in the forthcoming years.<sup>8</sup>

## WHAT DEFINES CENTRAL EUROPE: CULTURE, ECONOMY OR POLITICS?

The defining of Central Europe always depends from the standing-point of the person, speaking about Central Europe (cf. Katzenstein 1997, 4), and includes different variables that serve

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<sup>8</sup> Our statement can be confirmed also by an information obtained by Udovič (2015a) that Slovenia in European forums in most cases takes positions similar to western EU member states.

as the denominator of Central Europe. Historians mostly use the common history of Central European countries, politicians the political coagulation or conglomeration of states and their inter-state relations, the economists the economic variables (such as export, import and foreign direct investments). Even more Iordachi (2012, 44) explains that *»the concept of Central Europe was born after the related concepts of Eastern and Western Europe; its meaning has thus been dependent on those two related geopolitical categories, Central Europe being conceived as a buffer zone in between the East and the West»*. If we agree with the notion presented by Iordachi (2012), then the next question that is put on the plate concerns the countries, being part of East and West Europe. Is Poland an Eastern European country or a Central European? Where belongs Ukraine? What is the ide(ologic)al position of Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia and Slovenia? (cf. Iordachi, 2012, 48). These are the primary questions that arose when the definition of Central Europe is put at glance.

Nevertheless the scientific relativism, most authors (Šabič and Drulak 2012) agree that the core of Central Europe is presented by four states: Czech R., Slovakia, Poland and Hungary. What goes further is again a subject of academic and political debate. Not only, because some states are not geographically linked to the enumerated ones, but also because the “core countries” are not willing to expand the concept of Central Europe to other states, being afraid that it may lose its “added-value”. Thus, one factor that defines Central Europe is the geographical one. The next, which has a strong impact, is the economic one. All the enumerated countries are ex-socialist countries that developed in the period 1945–1990 in a centrally-planned economic system. Even more, all these four countries after the dissolution of the bipolar world opted for a “big bang economic transition” (Kunčič and Šušteršič, 2012, 239)<sup>9</sup> that was mostly based on quick privatisation, transition by FDI and de-regulation of public and private entities. The third factor, which defines Central Europe, is the ideological one. The above-mentioned states evolved from a different ideological backgrounds,<sup>10</sup> but the collapse of the com-

<sup>9</sup> The authors do not agree with the explanation of Kunčič and Šušteršič (2012, 239) that Hungary had a sort of “gradual transition”.

<sup>10</sup> Czech Republic was in the past the most liberal, while the other three were more conservative.

munist system framed them in a single ideological platform – “less state interventionist and more politically closed to the USA politics than to the politics of the EU” (Udovič 2015c). Finally, it should be noted that the Central European countries have a common cultural ground. Udovič (2015c) defines them as countries from the

*Habsburg cultural circle with a strong influence of socialist elements, willing to strengthen relations with the successor of the common predecessor (Austria), but at the same time trying to enhance their own statecraft and re-positioning themselves in the international relations.*

This means that the Central European countries act in the limbo between the establishment of their (individual) regional aggrupation (with an equal footing) or in joining the existing patterns of the widened EU. On the one hand they opt for a single regional group (V4), but at the same time they try to act independently. This is especially visible in the case of the Weimar triangle and in relations with Russian federation. As presented by Freire (2012, 125) each of the Central European country has its own foreign policy towards Russian Federation. Whether Poland is the most reluctant in cooperating with Russian Federation, Czech Republic is far more open to possible relations with Russian Federation. However for Slovakia and Hungary the cooperation with Russian Federation presents a sort of pragmatic *sine qua non*.

The presented facts open the issue on what therefore defines the Central Europe. The geographical and the cultural factors are clearly the most important definers of Central Europe, but are there also some other factors that should be taken into consideration? They can be. Simoniti (2012) claims that language is an important part of the Central European identification,<sup>11</sup> Udovič (2011) points out that the diplomatic and economic intercourse within these four countries should not be neglected. Nevertheless, whether we adopt also these two presumptions, the fact remains that the concept of Central Europe generates in each per-

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<sup>11</sup> Three out of four ‘core’ Central European states are Slavic states.

son its own perception on culture, tradition, languages and political-economic relations, which means that there is impossible to find a single definition on it, but what makes sense is to develop an wider understanding that Central Europe is something that exists and should not be linked only to failures, but mostly to chances and possible cooperation among its 'core' and 'adjunct' state.

## DOES SLOVENIA BELONG TO THE CENTRAL EUROPE?

The question of Slovenian belonging to the Central Europe is in the Slovenian academia and politics often the question that discloses the political connotation of the speaker. This can be attributed especially to the fact that Slovenia started to "feel" with Central Europe in the late 90s, when it (a) realised that it will not become a member of the "Western countries club", (b) it entered in the Eastern European group in the United Nations (and obtained within this group a non-permanent seat in the UN SC) and (c) it realised that its 'escaping from the Balkans' was not totally successful and therefore tried to find a new "regional group" to which it should belong. All these three reasons and the accession process to the EU accelerated the perception in Slovenia that Slovenia should be (and for sure also is) a Central European country. The result of such perception were also changes in the behaviour of political and economic actors within the country. In the next lines we will present just some examples of them.

## POLITICAL COMMITMENTS

The first official document where Slovenia stated that it is a central European country, was the Foreign Policy Declaration (FPD)<sup>12</sup>, adopted in December 1999 by the Slovenian National Assembly (UL RS 108/1999). In the preamble of the FPD it was stated that through "*strengthening Slovenian international position [...] as democratic, stable, successful **central European** [bold by authors] country [...]*", while it was written in the paragraph on Central European countries that "*Republic of Slovenia is a Central European country [...] that builds on its Central European*

<sup>12</sup> Foreign Policy Declaration of the Republic of Slovenia - Deklaracija o zunanji politiki Republike Slovenije, adopted on 17 December 1999.

*identity*". In the subpart on South-Eastern Europe was elaborated that the "*Republic of Slovenia affirmed itself as a Central European country through its successful development and by its foreign policy*". These three extracts from the text of the FPD presents a strong Central European direction in the Slovenian foreign policy in the late 90s. Even though in the early 2000s the Ministry of Foreign Affairs tried to "blur" the commitments of Slovenia to Central Europe, the label of "Slovenia as a Central European country" survived until 2015 when the new FPD was adopted.

In the first chapter (paragraph 3) of the 2015 FPD (Values, legal basis and geopolitical position) it is written that "*Slovenia is a Central European and Mediterranean country*"; chapter III (Geographical and substantial priorities of Slovenia), paragraph 1 (so the first aim – comm. Authors), states that "*[the aim of Slovenia is to] enforce political and economic ties on state and regional level in the Alpe-Adria-Danube space, with countries of Central Europe and with Central European organisations [...]*".

This excerpt from the FPD illustrates that Slovenia is strongly committed to Central Europe and perceives itself as an important part of the Central Europe. A strong commitment to Central Europe is not only represent by the FPD, but has been also important in its preparatory works, which were held not only in public debates, but also in private debates on various forums or in a *tête-à-tête* manner. One of the reservation on the Slovenian central European identity was presented at the yearly meeting of Slovenian ambassadors, where some of them argued that maybe the "Central European identity of Slovenia" should be dealt more delicately and should not be visible in the declaration at *prima facie*. Their main arguments were that in the diplomatic intercourse what really matters is not how somebody sees itself, but more how somebody is seen by the others. As such two ambassadors explained that maybe the 'core' Central European countries do not see Slovenia as being "one of them". Bucik (2015) went even further, when he claimed that "the FPD does not reveal anything about the Slovenian identity" and that "such FPD could be written for all similarly geographically-located countries". Here it was possible to see a large gap on this, what should be in the declaration. Whether the diplomats asked for a more "blurred defi-

“identification” on Slovenian geographical-cultural-ideological positioning, Bucik (2015) claimed for a sort of elaboration of Slovenian identity, which should be defined through natural endowments, geographical position, social and societal characteristics and finally, its economic performance. The difference between the both approaches that were opened, was just the difference in view on what should be presented as the key point of Slovenian identity. On the one hand diplomats exposed that the process of “identification” is an abstract process, where not only what the subject wants is taken into consideration, while on the other hand Bucik’s position was a clear nominalistic position, where foreign policy is understood just a sort of eclectic umbrella for all activities done within the state.

Nevertheless some marginal opposition<sup>13</sup>, the political parties agreed that the concept of “Central European state” should remain in the FPD and this was adopted almost consensually.<sup>14</sup> On the July 2015 plenary session of the National Assembly the declaration passed with a two-third majority vote. With the adoption of the FPD the National Assembly confirmed the political commitment of Slovenia to Central Europe, its historical heritage, characteristics and political amenities and disadvantages.

## ECONOMIC COMMITMENTS

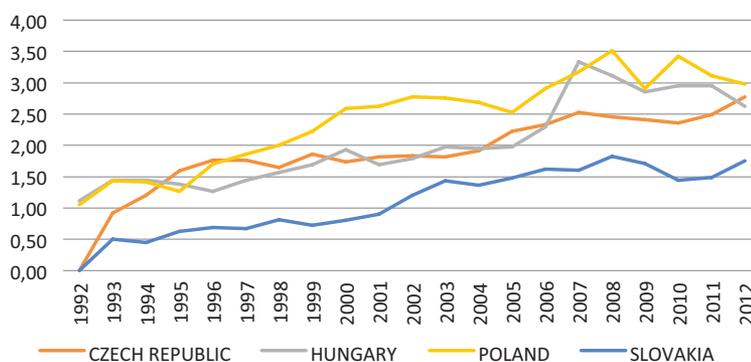
The end of the cold war and the opening of borders between West and East offered also some new opportunities for Slovenian enterprises, which had the possibility to expand to western and eastern markets. The redirection of the Slovenian enterprises on western markets was a necessity, because the ex-Yugoslav countries were facing a harsh war, while the expansion on central and eastern European markets was mostly a choice of those enter-

<sup>13</sup> Some opposition about the fact that the FPD mentions that Slovenia is a constitutive part of Central Europe was visible also among some intellectuals stating that Slovenia, because of its values, never belonged to Central European society, but (together with Austria and Germany) to Western Europe (Udovič, 2015c).

<sup>14</sup> On the other hand it is interesting that the documentation illustrates that in the last five years there was almost no debate at the Committee of Foreign Affairs (Odbor za zunanjo politiko) related to the Slovenian identification as a Central European states. It seems that the official position of Slovenian government from 1999 onwards that Slovenia is a Central European country has been widely embraced and therefore the parliamentarians tacitly agree with such statement of the executive branch.

prises that were bold and able to cope with challenges present at these markets. The statistical data show that the Slovenian export between 1991 and 1994 grew for 12-times, the export to Czech Republic and Slovakia for 10-times, while the export to Poland increased by 5-times. On the other hand the import from Hungary (to Slovenia) grew for 12-times, import from Czech Republic and Slovakia increased by 8-times, while the Polish import was in 1995 7-times higher than in 1991 (SURS 1995, 346). Figure 1 presents the main trends of Slovenian export in the period 1992 – 2012.

Figure 1: Share of total Slovenian export to the ‘core’ Central European countries

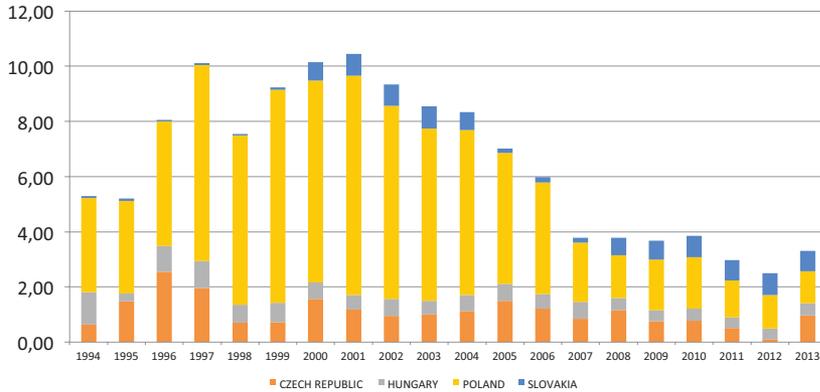


Source: own calculations based on data from Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (1992 – 2012).

As seen in the figure 1 the ‘core’ Central European countries presents an important share in Slovenian export, which has been growing also in the region of Central Europe. The Slovenian export in Central European countries reached a peak in the period 2007–2008, where it amounted up to 11 % of the total Slovenian export. What is it interesting is that the largest amount of the export went to Poland and Hungary, while in Czech R. the share of Slovenian export is stagnating from 1996 onwards. On the other hand the share of export to Slovakia has been increasing steadily since its independence (SURS 2012).

A totally different situation is to be found in the case of outward foreign direct investments. These were quite high in mid-90s and after year 2000 started to decrease (figure 2).

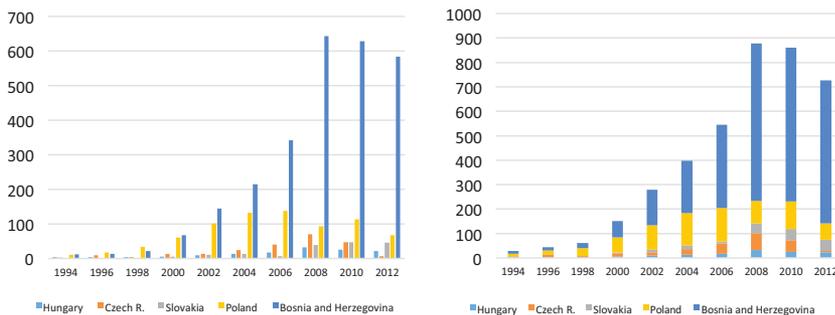
Figure 2: Share of stock of total outward FDIs in 'core' Central Europe countries



Source: BSI (2013, 64).

However the decrease was in relative terms, which means that the whole amount of FDIs increased, but the increase in the whole amount of FDI has not been followed by the increase of FDIs in 'core' Central European states. A detailed analysis shows that the increase after the year 2000 is to be attributed to the Slovenian FDIs in the Western Balkan countries, while at the same time the nominal value of investments in 'core' Central European countries remained increased on a slow pace – cf. figure 3 (BSI, 2013, 64).

Figure 3: The absolute amount of FDI stocks in selected countries (comparative and cumulative view)



Source: Prepared on the basis of BSI (2013, 64).

Taking into consideration figures 1, 2 and 3 the key question is whether Slovenia belongs to the group of countries from Central Europe and it is more a sort of Western Balkan country. Figure 1 shows that the 'core' Central Europe countries present a share of almost 10 % of Slovenian export, while at the same time Slovenia exports to the Western Balkan countries around 15 % of its total export (SURS, 2013). On the other hand the situation in the field of FDI is totally different – whether Slovenia has more than 70 % of its FDI's stock in the Western Balkans, the 'core' Central Europe in 2012 presented something more than 3.5 % of the total stock of outward FDI's.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The key question, on which we have to answer is, if Slovenia is Central European state or if Slovenia should become a Central European states. Even though we know that a single answer to this question cannot be given, we showed in this article that the commitment of political elites towards the Central European component is very high in Slovenia from the end of 1990s. Furthermore, we are aware that on the one hand we have declarations and political commitments and on the other reality. This reality is one that shows that Slovenia is not (yet) part of Central Europe, firstly, because the 'core' Central European States do not understand Slovenia as "their own", but only as a possible associate member which does not possess all the rights which Central European states do; and secondly, because Slovenian economy has not internalized the importance of Central Europe for its development. The result is extremely low activity of the Slovenian economy in these markets and it is lower than would be expected, based on theoretical models, which connect internationalization with geographical and psychological proximity (Hollensen 2010). 'Core' Central European states are certainly geographically and psychologically close to Slovenia – firstly because of its common cultural and historical traditions, secondly because of similar cultural and ethnic traditions, thirdly (with the exception of one) because of the language. All these preconditions represent more than excellent basis for the development of intensive political and economic cooperation, but there is still a long way to get there.

From the symbolic aspect of belonging to Central Europe, it is important to point out that Slovenia has in all 'core' Central European countries opened its diplomatic missions at the end of June 1992 and deployed its ambassadors to these countries. In June 1992, Slovenia deployed Ambassador Ferenc Hajos to Hungary (UL RS 31/1992), in September 1992, Ambassador Zvone Dragan to Czechoslovakia (UL RS 46/1992) and in February 1995 Ambassador Bojan Grobovšek to Poland (UL RS 8/1995). This also marked the symbolic importance of these countries for Slovenian participation in the context of Central Europe. But the question, which still remains is Slovenian membership in V4. Even though the Czechs were intensely inviting Slovenia in the mid-90s (Rupel 2011) to this special club and despite the fact that Slovenia was not willing to accept this invitation, this trend later changed. Slovenia wanted to become a part of the quartet for quite some time, but it never received the invitation. Some interviewees from the diplomatic circles indicate that the reason for this was firstly that Slovenia occasionally behaved towards these countries a bit exalted, which was done primarily on European forums and secondly that Slovenia still sees these countries as underdeveloped, while others indicate that this is the result of internal frictions between the V4 countries, which would like on the one hand expand the integration, as this would *de facto* reduce the impact of the so called Weimar Triangle and on the other hand, they are very well aware that enlargement of V4 can reduce the influence of all members, especially if the V4 would also include Austria and Croatia. There are still many open questions in this field and it is very important in the future not how this questions will be solved, but what will be the scope of the symbolism of its solutions.

Nevertheless, Slovenia must, if it really wants to legitimize itself as Central European country, make few steps in the direction of more intensive integration with 'core' Central European states. Perhaps Slovenia should focus further efforts in the broadening the concept of Central Europe, which is still distinctly narrow, with what Udovič (2015c) refers to as the "Member of the Habsburg historical and cultural circle". Udovič (2015c) sees in this label neutrality, because it derives from historical premises and abandons the geographical factor, which is always cir-

cumscribed and it attaches it the width, because it allows itself a self-evaluation of their own positions and it does not have any conotation, because it does not have any ideological clutter, rather it provides only a cultural range of defined. Finally, such wording precludes “the Other” that anyone disputes the positioning in Central Europe. It is true that this may allow inflation of the concept (cf. Politi 1997), but on the other hand, creates a kind of security community (Deutsch 1970), which will be built on the needs of each country and the entire community, which – because it will be unified – will have even greater additional, symbolic value.

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# Relation of Slovenia and the V4 from perspective of changing foreign policy of Slovenia

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## ABSTRACT

The Visegrad cooperation – launched by Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia (later Czech Republic and Slovakia) – served as an important framework for these countries to enhance trust and cooperation among themselves and foster democratization and integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures. Since the foundation of the Visegrad group, all Central European states have become members of the European Union and the cooperation needed to find new purposes. It started to work with V4+ formats too which allows other countries to get involved in discussions and cooperation on issues of common interests. Slovenia is one of those countries that regularly takes part in such V4+ meetings. As part of the requests to reform the V4 structure, many raised the issue of accession of new countries, among others Slovenia's. But is it a real option? What would be the benefits for Slovenia and the Visegrad group? This paper will aim to put cooperation between the V4 and Slovenia into the context of Slovenia foreign policy targets and instruments and highlight possibilities and constraints of cooperation.

**KEY WORDS:** Slovenia, Visegrad group, foreign policy cooperation alternatives

## POVZETEK

Višegrajsko sodelovanje – ki se je pričelo z Madžarsko, Poljsko in Češkoslovaško (kasneje Češka in Slovaška) – je služilo kot pomemben okvir za te države, pri krepitvi zaupanja in sodelovanja

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ISSN 1855-7694 ©2015, European Perspectives, UDK: 327 (4)

in spodbujanju demokratizacije ter vključevanju v evro-atlantske integracije. Od ustanovitve višegrajske skupine, so vse srednje-evropske države postale članice Evropske unije in za to je sodelovanje moralo poiskati nov namen delovanja. Višegrajska skupina je tako začela sodelovati z V4+ formati, ki omogočajo drugim državam, da se vključijo v razprave in sodelovanje o vprašanih skupnega interesa. Slovenija je tako ena tistih držav, ki redno sodeluje na takšnih V4+ sestankih. Kot del zahtev za reformo strukture V4, mnogi postavljajo vprašanje o pristopu novih držav, med drugim tudi Slovenije, k višegrajski skupini. Toda ali je to dejansko realna možnost? Kakšne bi bile koristi za Slovenijo in višegrajsko skupino? Ta članek poskuša sodelovanje med V4 in Slovenijo postaviti v kontekst ciljev slovenske zunanje politike in izpostavlja možnosti in omejitve takšnega sodelovanja.

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** Slovenija, višegrajska skupina, alternative zunanjepolitičnega sodelovanja

## INTRODUCTION

The Visegrad group was formed in 1991 with the aim to provide a cooperation framework for the former socialist Central European countries - Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia (later Czech Republic and Slovakia) – that intend to build good neighbour relations, to overcome challenges related to social and economic transformation and to support their integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures. The participating countries worked out a common working mechanism that is mainly based on regular meetings at various levels which deals with issues of mutual interests and coordination among sectoral ministries. Chairmanship of the Visegrad group rotates on a yearly basis among its members. It has only one real institution of the cooperation, the International Visegrad Fund was established in 2000 through which partners of the Visegrad group can support activities that foster common goals of the group. In 2004 all Visegrad countries became members of the EU which basically meant that new set of goals had to be determined for the cooperation. Since then the Visegrad group serves as a forum which allows the member countries to build common position on issues on the agenda of the EU and to build network with other countries within and outside of EU as a group.

For Slovenia, the beginning of 1990s coincided its first years of independence. After the proclamation of its independence, Slovenia had to define its own foreign policy pillars, among which the accession to the EU and NATO gained high priority. While the latter was motivated by a political will and public view that security policy had surpassed a restrictive notion defence of homeland and it should contribute to global peace and support human rights (Gow and Carmichael 2000, 193-194), the former relied on much clearer economic and political interest of Slovenia.

Relation to Central Europe has also improved after proclamation of independence. Slovenia joined several regional cooperation frameworks, among others the Central European Initiative in 1992. After signing bilateral free trade agreements with members of the Visegrad Group, Slovenia agreed to join the Central European Free Trade Agreement in 1996 with due to enhance its economic relations with the region. These steps contributed its strengthening relations with Central Europe and to underpinned Slovenia's effort to distant itself from the Balkans and to build the image of a Central European country. Despite these improving links, accession to the Visegrad group did not get a general support of the political elite in Slovenia. This careful approach was partly the consequence of the fact that the other countries had different background as they had belonged to Eastern bloc under Soviet control and their economic gap with the EC was much bigger than Slovenia's one. At the beginning Slovenia seemed to have much better starting position than its Central European partner regarding the European integration process which underlined some belief that Slovenia might proceed alone faster. But the situation seems to change: membership in the EU and new foreign policy objectives and obligations have brought Slovenia closer to the Visegrad Group which holds regular meetings with Slovenian representatives in V<sub>4</sub>+ format and the question has been raised whether a more structured cooperation is possible.

In this paper I aim to highlight changes in the foreign policy of Slovenia that increased the importance of closer relations with V<sub>4</sub>. Nonetheless, I will argue that there are factors that will limit this process and make it unlikely that Slovenia becomes part of the V<sub>4</sub>.

## FOREIGN POLICY OF SLOVENIA – FINDING NEW GROUNDS

Formulation of the foreign policy of Slovenia was mainly determined by its newly gained independent statehood in the 1990s. After proclaiming its independence from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on 26 June 1991, Slovenia had to redefine its position in international relations in line with its own national interests and capabilities. The first step was to become members of those international organizations (i.e. United Nations, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, OECD, and Council of Europe) that ensure Slovenia's international recognition and participation in international affairs. This task was not easy as the Slovenian diplomatic corps represented less than five per cent of the former SFRY (Bojinović Fenko and Šabič 2013, 9).

Slovenia used to belong to multinational and federal states (Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, federal states uniting South Slavic nations like the former SFRY) and this was the first time when Slovenia could define its orientation on its own. Slovenia has always had a strong relations to Italy, Austria and Hungary as well as to former Yugoslav states. After becoming independent, it rather distanced itself from the conflict-burdened Balkans and emphasized its Central European character. On the other hand its geographic position on the Mediterranean also had an impact on its self-identification.

Nevertheless, it did not influence that fact that the main objective of foreign policy of Slovenia was the integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. As part of SFRY, Slovenia belonged to the Non-Aligned Movement but Slovenia turned its orientation toward the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization as many from the third countries in NAM did not support Slovenia's independence and Slovenia wanted to strengthen its relation with its Western allies in security policy. Slovenia finally became NATO member in 2004.

Similarly to other Central European countries, Slovenia took steps in order to strengthen its relation with EU. The relation was not new as the former SFRY had strengthening economic relations with the European Community since 1970 and it had signed an economic agreement with the Community in 1980

which was regularly prolonged and its scope was extending. The share of members of European Community from Slovenia's export was 54% in 1992, while EFTA members and former Yugoslavia's states represented respectively 7% and 23% (Szilágyi 1998, 219). Political relations were more complex as the European Community was hesitating how to handle the dissolution of the SFRY though later its members were among the first to recognize seceding countries. Slovenia was finally recognized by the members of the European Community on 15 January 1992. Slovenia was in a good starting position as it was the richest former Yugoslav republic and there was a belief among its decision-makers that it could finish the accession process alone faster than together with other countries.

The other Central European countries having similar aspirations as Slovenia to join the EU lagged much more behind economically and as they came from the Soviet bloc faced different challenges (e.g., stronger presence of Russia's influence). As Slovenia had much stronger relations with its Western partners and it seemed to be a rather ideal applicant both for the NATO and the EU in comparison with its Central European partners, it was not obvious how the accession to the Visegrad group could contribute to its Euro-Atlantic integration process and whether it might slow down the process. Therefore, an independent approach gained support. Nonetheless, Slovenian political decision-makers underestimated the importance of political weight in the integration process against lack of cost that would accompany Slovenia's integration to the NATO and EU (Gow and Carmichael 2000, 196-197, 202-207). Slovenia also had to face soon a long-lasting debate with Italy over property rights of foreigners in Slovenia which significantly hindered the smooth integration process. Negotiations on the association agreement could only start in 1995 which was finally signed in June 1996. However, ratification of the agreement by Slovenian Parliament was postponed for domestic reasons (it needed the amendment of the constitution) and the agreement could get into force only in July 1997. The slow pace of reforms despite the relatively good economic situation of the country (59% of EU average GDP in 1996) weakened the negotiation position of Slovenia and slowly it turned out that some Visegrad countries would proceed faster

than Slovenia. However, early optimism had been showered by negative messages from the EU (Szilágyi 2005, 859-64).

The third pillar of the foreign policy emerged from the controversial relation with the former Yugoslav states and the Balkan region in general. Though there was an intention from the side of the Slovenian diplomacy to distance itself from the Balkans, its historical background and geographic proximity made it necessary to become active in the Western Balkans again, and it was also the will of its allies too. The EU took over the leading role in the stabilization process of Balkans and offered them the European perspective. Consequently, Slovenia's former relations and experience has been re-evaluated. In 1999, the Slovenian Parliament adopted the 'Declaration on Foreign Policy of the Republic of Slovenia described "Slovenia primarily as a Central European country with one mission - to help stabilize South East Europe" (Bunič and Šabič 2011, 168). In October 2002, the Government of Slovenia adopted a document 'Appropriate Foreign Policy' that reconfirmed the importance of the region, and the Euro-Atlantic integration as the first pillar of the Slovenian foreign policy. (*Ibid.*)

Support of the Western Balkan countries also fits into the value-based normative diplomacy approach represented by several Slovenian diplomats and Presidents. As a small state, Slovenia could contribute this way to the political objectives of the EU foreign and security policy. Furthermore, this approach was also based on rational economic interests as it supports Slovenia's economic and trade relations in the region.

## **CHANGES IN THE FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES**

The above mentioned foreign policy pillars remained mainly adequate after EU accession in 2004. However, some moderate changes could be realized. These changes partly stemmed from contractual obligations of Slovenia and the need to apply common foreign and security policy guidelines as a member state in line with the 'Wider Europe' concept introduced by the European Commission's paper in 2003 and the External Relation Council's commitment to increase development assistance by the new

member states. This tendency has been also underpinned by Slovenia's role played during the EU Council Presidency as well as OSCE Slovenian chairmanship (*Ibid.* 169-170).

As member of the EU, Slovenia became also a donor country which gave a momentum to Slovenia's development assistance policy. Slovenia adopted its Act on International Development Cooperation in June 2006. Then in July 2008, the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the Resolution on International Development Cooperation of the Republic of Slovenia until 2015. The latter sets out the geographical and sector-specific priorities for Slovenia's international development cooperation until 2015, along with mechanisms for its implementation. Among others Slovenia decided to increase development cooperation funds to 0.17% of GNI by 2010 and to 0.33% by 2015 in line with its international obligations. It also defined the priority geographic areas: first priority remained the Western Balkans and on the second place it mentions Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (MFA 2008). In accordance with its legislation, Slovenia increased its ODA but as a consequence of the economic crisis, it was unable to implement the prescribed ODA/GNI ratio (Timofejevs Henriksson 2015, 441-442).

The increasing importance of the Eastern neighbourhood for the EU did not leave the Slovenian foreign policy intact. Eastern Partnership countries' share (particularly the one of Moldova and Ukraine, as well as Georgia) in official development assistance (ODA) showed a moderate increase though it didn't mean that Western Balkans lost its first place as target area of Slovenian official development assistance which is clearly visible from OECD DAC data (see table 1). In 2010, the share of the Western Balkans from the bilateral ODA of Slovenia was 74 per cent (9.48 million euro) compared to the one of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia together that was 2 per cent (0.27 million euro) (Bunič and Šabič 2011, 166 based on MFA data 2011). In the same year, the Government also adopted a set of guidelines including the three main objectives, namely stability of the region, EU accession and a positive climate for doing business in the region.

Table 1: Slovenia ODA, total net, million USD (current price)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
<b>Europe total</b>	16,52	16,13	12,77	10,01	10,29	10,49
<b>Albania</b>	0,16	0,63	0,23	0,23	0,62	0,26
<b>Belarus</b>	0,05	0,01	0,06	..	0,02	0,02
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	1,6	1,69	1,51	1,49	0,83	1,07
<b>Croatia</b>	4,28	3,73	3,43	..	..	..
<b>Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia</b>	3	1,33	1,27	1,75	2,95	3,67
<b>Kosovo</b>	..	1,95	0,92	1,07	1,19	1,35
<b>Moldova</b>	..	0,02	0,05	0,19	0,11	0,08
<b>Montenegro</b>	1,33	1,31	1,71	2,41	2,25	2,06
<b>Serbia</b>	2,51	1,91	0,96	1,33	0,86	0,91
<b>States Ex-Yugoslavia</b>	0,81	3,24	2,52	1,23	0,94	0,69
<b>Turkey</b>	1,08	0,2	0,01	0,22	0,15	0,1
<b>Ukraine</b>	0,09	0,11	0,1	0,02	0,16	0,2
<b>Africa total</b>	0,79	0,62	0,62	0,72	1,12	1,13
<b>America total</b>	0,41	0,05	0,59	0,45	0,07	0,07
<b>Asia total</b>	2,24	1,21	0,93	0,99	0,94	0,73
<b>South and Central Asia total</b>	1,03	0,5	0,69	0,74	0,6	0,33
<b>Afghanistan</b>	0,15	0,14	0,51	0,62	0,44	0,31
<b>Georgia</b>	0,19	0,12	0,12	0,11	0,11	0,01
<b>Middle East total</b>	0,77	0,63	0,2	0,24	0,3	0,31

Source: OECD DAC database

The Government also adopted a new Strategy of the Participation of the Republic of Slovenia in International Operations and Missions in March 2010. The strategy points to geographic areas of strategic interests on different grounds. In case of Eastern Europe and Caucasus, it emphasizes their importance in energy security, supply of raw material resources and prevention of various forms of illegal trade. It further underlines the significance of

the Mediterranean from both political and economic reasons and in terms of security and migration. The Middle East, Asia and Africa are only mentioned from a broader international security point of view (Government of Republic of Slovenia, 2010, 10).

EU membership did not only influence the general direction of Slovenian foreign policy but had further impact on international and European aspects of sectoral policies too that made the extension of the role of the foreign policy necessary as well as increased the importance of coalition building with other member states. Among others, cohesion policy and common agricultural policy, development of trans-European transportation and energy networks, and environmental policy can be mentioned as the most important policy fields. The financial and economic crisis also hit the economy of Slovenia severely which also caused a serious domestic crisis which harden the circumstances for structural reforms (Szilágyi 2013).

## **COOPERATION BETWEEN SLOVENIA AND THE V<sub>4</sub>**

In June 2000 on the V<sub>4</sub> Summit held in Prague, the prime ministers of the Visegrad countries expressed their willingness to strengthen their cooperation with Slovenia within the V<sub>4</sub>+ format. In the beginning of 2000s, Slovenia's presence on such meetings were rather occasional. Firstly, consultation started in the field of justice and home affairs, education and culture but there were some occasions when Slovenia discussed issues on the EU enlargement with the V<sub>4</sub>.

Slovenia gradually got closer to the Visegrad Group from 2007/2008 and got engaged in common positions and joint declarations adopted on the common meetings. This was a natural consequence of developments and changes the EU and its member states went through. Accession to the Schengen Area, the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty and changes in the decision-making procedure within the EU increased potential benefits of Visegrad cooperation for Slovenia. Together with Austria, Slovenia formed a strong cooperation with the V<sub>4</sub> in justice and home affairs in the frame of a common working group. The V<sub>4</sub> became very active in policy fields like visa liberalization, region-

al cooperation with ENP countries, EU enlargement, support for the countries of the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe, Hague Programme, implementation of the Treaty of Lisbon, the Common European Asylum System and the development of a common migration policy, Schengen cooperation and visa policy, cooperation in the fight against terrorism and organized crime, police cooperation, security issues, as well as fire and civil protection (Visegrad Group Annual Report – 2007/2008 Czech Presidency). Cooperation in the field of justice and home affairs remained strong and V4 cooperation with Slovenia and Austria continues within the Salzburg Forum.

Number of common fields of interest increased by new challenges like strengthening need for developing regional energy and transportation networks. V4 countries realized the existence of common concerns like the lack of adequate interconnections and limited possibilities of reverse flow among the countries of the region. During the Hungarian V4 presidency (2009/10) Visegrad countries established the V4 High Level Energy Working Group in order to facilitate better cooperation in the field of energy. The agenda of the WG covered issues like construction of missing north-south interconnectors through the region, as well as the establishing of the planned Croatian and Polish Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminals. They organized a V4+ Energy Security Summit, held in Budapest, on 24 February, 2010 which adopted a declaration that was later co-signed by Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia as well (Visegrad Group Annual Report – 2009/2010 Hungarian Presidency) Since then ad hoc working groups have been working on different issues (i.e., North-South corridor, regional interconnectors, energy supply security policy harmonization, LNG) at expert level (*Ibid.*).

The Hungarian Presidency of the V4 also intended to enhance cross-border activities of SMEs, to reduce their administrative burdens and to create a framework for better cluster cooperation in the V4 region. Participants of the V4 Economic Ministerial Meeting held in Budapest on 26 November 2009 adopted a Memorandum of Understanding Cooperation in the field of Cluster Development of the V4 Countries, which gave strong political

support for the realisation of joint EU funded cluster development projects. As a result of the Memorandum, a joint application was submitted in the framework of the Central Europe Programme in May 2010, together with V4 countries plus Germany, Italy and Slovenia (*Ibid.*). The increasing number of issues touching common fields of interest of the V4 countries and Slovenia raised the question whether relations between them should be more structured and institutionalized.

In April 2014, the Presidents of the Czech Republic and Slovenia met and agreed to formalise cooperation between Central European countries within the 'Visegrad plus' format, which would signify the formalisation of links between the Visegrad Group countries, and Slovenia and Austria. According to President Pahor, this would reinforce Slovenia's Central European character." (Website of the President of Republic of Slovenia). The question of enhanced cooperation was also touched upon on the event co-organized by the Central European Policy Institute, the demosEUROPA-Centre for European Strategy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia and Slovenian Association for International Relations in May 2014 in Ljubljana where CEPI and demosEUROPA presented their report under the title 'Central Europe Fit for the Future: The Visegrad Group Ten Years after EU Accession'. On this occasion, Amb. Stanislav Vidovič, Head of the Department for European Policies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia "called it a historical mistake when Slovenia missed joining the V4 because it believed that would have slowed down its own progress"(CEPI 2014). Ambassador Vidovič emphasized the need for cooperation in the field of defence, including common procurements, energy security and improving transport infrastructure. He further added that Slovenia was is ready to join V4 and harmonise its positions prior to the European Council meetings." (*Ibid.*). Slovenia decided to work out a proposal on the possible structure of cooperation.

On the same event experts reminded on constraints and factors that might hinder or support Slovenia's enhanced cooperation with the V4. Jiří Sýkora, a Visegrad expert drew attention to the V4's lack of willingness to further institutionalize the Visegrad group (CEPI 2014). This aspect has been confirmed by sev-

eral officials from the V4 countries. Nevertheless, as Milan Nič, Managing Director of CEPI noted Slovenia might need to offer its cooperation as part of a package including actors like Austria and Croatia that could get great political support by the Visegrad countries (CEPI 2014).

## **FUTURE OF COOPERATION – OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS**

As elaborated above, despite the initial careful approach toward the V4 during the 1990s, improvements in relations imply that cooperation between the V4 and Slovenia will be enhanced in the future. Common interest and the need to build coalition regarding questions like the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, changes of regulations of the Cohesion Policy brought the Visegrad countries and Slovenia closer to each other. This way all participating countries can strengthen their standpoint in the EU decision-making process.

Another advantage that Slovenia could benefit from is the harmonized support of common targets related to the Eastern Partnership countries. Importance of Eastern Europe as geographic area of Slovenian development assistance slightly increased since the accession to the EU. However, this contribution remained relatively low and joint initiatives and grants with the V4 might raise the efficiency and impact of their efforts.

Regarding the Western Balkans, the benefits on both sides seem to be more balanced. As it was also mentioned, Western Balkans' integration into the EU is a high priority for Slovenia which invest a lot in that region. Such efforts have been reconfirmed in the new foreign policy strategy of Slovenia adopted in July 2015 (Ministrstvo za zunanje zadeve 2015, 3). Similarly, the V4 provides enormous support many projects via the International Visegrad Fund. Since August 2014, the most important platform of regional cooperation of the Western Balkan countries is the so called "Berlin process" that is supervised by Germany, Italy, France and Austria as well as the European Commission from the EU. As main supporters, Croatia and Slovenia are also involved into the negotiations at some level. The Berlin process

is a crucial platform because main directions for developing connectivity (both energy and transportation) in the Balkan region are decided through this forum. Those decisions might influence development of other networks as part of the South-North corridor. From this perspective Slovenia – together with Austria and Croatia – might be able to channel or represent the preferences of the Visegrad group too. This factor could make Slovenia as an incentive partner too. Such a role would coincide with Slovenia's foreign policy aims and intention as elaborated in the new foreign policy strategy (*Ibid.* 14-15).

However, there are some limits and constraints how far the cooperation framework will be able to improve. Firstly, Slovenia might make positions in the Visegrad cooperation even more diverse and hard to coordinate. Such a concern arises related to other countries like Slovenia and Croatia too. For this reason, probably both sides would rather prefer a structured cooperation which focuses only on sectoral policies where articulation of common position is viable. It has been also mentioned that it might be more attractive for the V<sub>4</sub> to involve Slovenia together with Austria and Croatia as it might raise the weight of the group even more. The defence of the marketing value of the 'V<sub>4</sub> brand' built around the cooperation of the four Visegrad group countries could bring us to the same conclusion. Nonetheless, there are wide range of opportunities to combine human and financial capacities and resources in order to reach higher impact and visibility of their activities.

## CONCLUSION

The paper intended to outline the changes in the foreign policy of Slovenia that have led from the initial distance from the V<sub>4</sub> to an increased demand for cooperation between the Visegrad group and the former Yugoslav republic. In the 1990s Slovenia went through a self-identification process in the field of foreign policy as it newly gained its independence. As Slovenia was in a good economic situation and there was a belief that Slovenia could proceed better on its own, there was hardly any incentive to approach the V<sub>4</sub> cooperation.

However, in the late 1990s and in the beginning of the 2000s, signs got stronger that expectations regarding the EU accession were too high and reforms rather lagged behind. Early advantages of Slovenia in economy narrowed and other Central European countries even surpassed Slovenia. Meanwhile, common challenges to adopt EU policies and conditionality started to bring the V4 and Slovenia closer to each other. This was also supported by the fact that V4 became more opened and put more and more emphasis on cooperation with other countries in the so called V4+ format.

Common foreign and sectoral policy objectives provide better opportunity for cooperation in the future but the exact form and structure still leave several questions opened. The will to formalize relations have been reconfirmed by the decision-makers but so far there is lack of real proposal to be evaluated. It seems to be unrealistic to establish a more institutionalized cooperation or membership relation with Slovenia but it might be a more frequent and structured format than the recent V4+ format. It is also a crucial question whether the V4 would prefer to strengthen relations only with Slovenia or with other countries like Austria and Croatia in this more structured form of cooperation that could even more increase the weight of the Visegrad group.

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[http://www.mzz.gov.si/fileadmin/pageuploads/foto/1507/STRATESKI\\_DOKUMENT\\_-\\_KONCNO\\_-\\_PDF.pdf](http://www.mzz.gov.si/fileadmin/pageuploads/foto/1507/STRATESKI_DOKUMENT_-_KONCNO_-_PDF.pdf)

# Central Europe as a Legal Phenomenon

Matej Avbelj<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

This article argues that Central Europe is not just a cultural but also a legal phenomenon. This is made explicit if law is approached through the integral conception of law, defended here. Pursuant to this conception: law is an institutional normative order that is both highly dependent on the (legal) culture, which it simultaneously frames. It is argued that history has inflicted many pathologies on the Central European culture and consequently on the law too. These pathologies, briefly illustrated on the Slovenian example, form part of the broader Central European legal malaise. This can be addressed successfully only through the veritable regional cooperation of Central European countries that partake of these legal challenges. To do so, an appropriate forum is needed. The Visegrad Group comes across as a natural and best suited candidate. However, due to its self-conceived political exclusivity this option appears to be foreclosed. Paradoxically, in so doing, the Visegrad Group is defeating the very objectives for which it has been created. The article thus concludes that the Visegrad Group has to enlarge to stay faithful to its own values, which also, and in the first place, mandate the eradication of the Central European legal malaise.

**KEY WORDS:** Central Europe, Integral Conception of Law, Rule of Law, Democracy, Visegrad Group, Slovenia.

## POVZETEK

Srednja Evropa ni le kulturni, ampak je tudi pravni pojav. To trditve najboljše utemelji integralno pojmovanje prava, ki ga zastopa ta

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prispevek. V skladu z njim je pravo institucionalni normativni sistem, ki je odvisen od (pravne) kulture, ki jo hkrati uokvirja. Prispevek izhaja iz predpostavke, da je zgodovina pustila veliko brazgotin na obrazu srednjeevropske kulture, s tem pa tudi na njenem pravu. Te brazgotine, ki so v obliki pravnih patologij, ilustrirane na primeru Slovenije, predstavljajo del širše evropske pravne malaise. Z njo se je mogoče spopasti le z ustreznim regionalnim sodelovanjem vseh srednjeevropskih držav v okviru za to primernih forumov. Višegrajska skupina se v tem pogledu ponuja kot najboljša kandidatka. Vendar pa se zdi, da zaradi lastne politične samo-ekskluzivnosti v naprej odklanja to možnost. Tako smo soočeni s paradoksom, da politična zasnova višegrajske skupine v naprej onemogoča dosežek prav tistih ciljev, za katere je bila ustanovljena. Višegrajska skupina tako potrebuje širitev, da bi ostala zvesta svojim vrednotam, med katere sodi tudi oblikovanje resnične vladavine prava, katere odsotnost je skupni srednjeevropski problem.

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** Srednja Evropa, integralno pojmovanje prava, vladavina prava, demokracija, višegrajska skupina, Slovenija.

## INTRODUCTION

To think about Central Europe as a legal phenomenon is, if not unique, certainly unusual. Most typically, Central Europe is not even thought about. It is part of a Cold War legacy that Europe is politically divided between the West and the East, to the exclusion of anything, let alone central, in-between. So, Central Europe is and remains of a concern mostly to its own inhabitants, but even they have had very different takes on it. Peter Handke might have thus put it most straightforwardly. For him Central Europe is but a meteorological phenomenon (Cox 2005, 193). It does not exist in any meaningful way as a social phenomenon. Others, like Drago Jančar (2004), have been deeply opposed to that and have almost mocked the idea by suggesting that in this case a language, equal to meteorological science should be invented, such as “*altocumulus lenticularis, cirrus filozus radiatus, altostradus translucidus* [...]”, in short a language which would create a possibility for the ideas, people and goods of Central Europe to circulate in the same way as the air, wind and clouds above it.” Irony and cynicism are what Central Europe is often escorted by, and so is the language of tragedy. Milan Kundera (1984), has most openly spoken about the

tragedy of Central Europe, while, in contrast, his Czech counterpart Vaclav Havel (1990) was conceiving of it not just as a historical and spiritual phenomenon, but as a special body which can make a genuine contribution to Western Europe.

It is not unusual, however, as it has been just done, to define Central Europe through the mouth of writers. For Central Europe was, and probably still remains, mainly a cultural phenomenon. Its revolts and revolutions, as Kundera (1984) writes, were prepared, shaped and realized by culture and its actors. This culture, however, is haunted by deeply embedded anachronistic paradox. What makes Central European countries Central European is their common history, to which they paradoxically have a unifying sentiment of deep distrust, and yet their present endeavors are, to accentuate the paradox further, anachronistically about restoring this very past: the past of their common culture, the past of the modern era (Kundera 1984).

How does this connect back to law? It will be argued, in what follows, that law too is, of course, a cultural phenomenon. This might be concealed by many of its conceptions. However, a special conception of law, the integral conception of law, which will be defended here, makes law's dependence on culture more than explicit. This is particularly pertinent in the context of Central Europe, which has put, as we have seen, so much reliance on culture. The paper will thus claim that as a cultural phenomenon, Central Europe is also a legal phenomenon. Main characteristics of Central European law, always drawing on the legal system of Republic of Slovenia as its prototype example, will thus be described to demonstrate the same kind of uneasiness that could be detected in Central Europe's culture at large. Glory and pain, utopia, with little prospects for improvement. For this reason, the argument will proceed, Central Europe has to engage in closer co-operation: to understand common causes and potentially devise common solutions for the acute legal problems that it has been faced with. Visegrad Group, the most established and yet not formally institutionalized co-operation by its four member states could provide a forum for such a co-operation, but, as will be argued in conclusion, it appears to have consciously forfeited this opportunity.

## THE INTEGRAL CONCEPTION OF LAW

Law is a social concept, which in most banal terms denotes that it is man-made. It is thus not something objective, beyond concrete societal contexts and potentially externally given. Law is thus a social artefact and hence also a product of a specific culture: legal, political indeed overall social culture of a given society, typically a polity. Most conceptions of law, eg attempts at its definition, do fully acknowledge this fact. Other than religious conceptions of law, which, at least in part and depending on a religion, insist that laws have been bestowed on humanity by some divine power, law, in particular our modern law, is generally recognized as a social product. However, there still exist many influential conceptions of law that attempt at the latter's divorce from its broader social context as much as possible. One of such conceptions, long dominating precisely the legal mindset in Central Europe, is a Kelsen's (1989) positivist take on law: pure theory of law.

The pure theory of law is a general, abstract, descriptive, value neutral, non-ideological and therefore scientific theory of positive law (Kelsen 1989, 19). In its pursuit of purity and scientific character, law must be clearly divorced from morality and all other normative interferences from an overall social environment, in which the law is placed. Kelsen's theory is, of course, a theory of law, not of how the law is in real practice, but due to its dominant role in the Central Europe countries, it indeed grew up also into what the law actually is or ought to be. At least in scholarly minds and, consequently, in the minds of their disciples who as institutional actors have for many decades been turning this theory into practice.

Such an approach to law is very different from that prevailing in the Anglo-Saxon world. While legal positivism might be a leading theory there too, it has a different, sociological face, which puts a lot of emphasis on the conduct of actual institutional actors and hence necessarily stays away from the law's alleged purity (Hart 1994; MacCormick 2008). Nevertheless, the prevailing positivist conceptions, even in the Anglo-Saxon part of the world, insist on a more or less strict separation of law from morality and hence from letting in the broader cultural considera-

tions in applying the law and, in particular, in assessing its validity (Waluchov 1998, 394). However, even this approach has been strongly challenged, most notably by Dworkin who has bluntly argued that no such separation of law from morality is ever possible. For Dworkin (1986, 248), law and legal practice are an exercise in political morality. It is thus the external normativity in law and legal normativity in the overall cultural dimension of a given polity that must be taken together and considered as a common whole.

Dworkin's approach to law, combined with MacCormick's (2008) institutional theory of law, has led me to argue in favor of the so-called integral theory of law. Accordingly, the law is conceived of as an institutional normative order (MacCormick 2008). This comes into being and stays alive through the legal norm creation in the institutions, filled by institutional actors. Law as an institutional order must also be generally complied with. It must be efficient, which depends on the acceptance of legal norms by its addressees. In the integral conception of law it is the human factor which is decisive. Citizens must in general and normally act in accordance with the law, irrespective of their motivation to do so, whereas institutional actors: officials, and in particular judges, must uphold the law out of their genuine commitment to the law as such (Hart 1994). However, the institutional actors and the ordinary citizens too will do so, if they are men and women of integrity. If their moral posture is real and grounded in actual practices, rather than existing only on paper or in high-flying declarations. When that is the case, law as an institutional normative order will function well. The legal norms will be produced in the institutions occupied by skilled actors with integrity, so they will be of high quality, as adopted, and in fact applied in practice, as intended to. As such they will also be generally complied with by the populace as a whole. Integrity of people is translated in the integrity of law, which reversely strengthens the former further.

Presence or absence of integrity is thus a guarantee for a virtuous or vicious circle of law. But what is integrity? In answering this question, we are getting at the gist of the integral conception of law and its clear link with culture. Integrity, drawing on the work of Lynne McFall (1987), is a combination of two elements:

morality and coherence. It can be distinguished between: personal and social morality, the former being a constitutive part of the latter, which infuses or corrodes the former (McFall 1987, 17). Morality, personal and/or social translates into personal, institutional and social integrity. A person is a person with integrity, if he in practice complies with his coherent moral normative prescriptions to which he adheres in theory (McFall 1987, 7). Institutions will exhibit institutional integrity, if they are filled with individuals with integrity and the same is true of the society at large. Hence, if the society at large lacks integrity and is corrupt, this negative effect will trickle down into institutions and from there – by way of a domino effect to each and every individual. In a society with the absence of integrity, law cannot perform its prescribed social function. It remains a formal law, whereas practice leads a life of its own. In such a situation law takes a role of a smoke-screen for concealing the misuses and abuses of social goods and at the same time in its distorted existence bizarrely functions as a means for preventing justice to be done.

## CENTRAL EUROPEAN LAW AND ITS MALAISE

How does this bear on the situation in Central Europe? Central European law belongs to the continental European tradition with a strong influence, first, of Roman law and later Germanic law (Mattei et al. 2009). It is a legal tradition that cherishes a strong central authority, the state, and comprehensive legislative achievements (codes) developed top down to systemize and order the law. This legal tradition has also always been extremely hierarchical, emphasizing the locus, the site of authority which issues the law. The legal mindset in such a carefully hierarchically built structure is thus not only authoritative, but sometimes borders on the authoritarian. By this I mean the lack of willingness to enter into a discursive engagement. Law in this part of Europe is not considered as a discursive practice, in which what counts is persuasiveness, logical coherence of the arguments and the overall justification on which a particular statute or individual judicial decision rests. Instead, statute is the statute, because it has been adopted in a formally correct way. And the decision of the

court, irrespective of its actual quality, must be complied with because it has been handed down by the court (Kuhn 2011).

Failing to consider the law as a discursive practice has to do both with the prevailing Central European mentality, which has never really lent itself to a dialogical practice, and even more so with the above described Kelsenian idea of purity of positive law. If law is to be isolated from any other normative system, which is of course both unreal and impossible, then there is no need to see it as a discursive practice. Law is a pure science of its own. Legal acts and decisions are generated in a hierarchical manner, almost automatically cascading down from the Grundnorm, to statutes, by-laws and individual judicial and administrative acts. Not only there is no room in this jurisgenerative process for a discursive, argumentative exchange. There should be none, as this would risk introducing into the purity of law external untidiness. Law is thus a sealed-off hierarchical system, and this is also how the institutional actors are required to behave. They must be detached, pure and formal. As such the officials must be obeyed by the common people for who they are and which positions they occupy, rather than for what they do and how they execute their tasks. This, the old Austro-Hungarian legal mindset as it were, was fully and best captured in the work of Franz Kafka.

The foregoing paragraph should not be read as blaming Kelsen for the “tragedy” of Central European legal tradition(s). Kelsen was after all a legal theorist. His theoretical account of law nevertheless fitted nicely the overall, always a little bit introvert psyche of Central Europe. It did so, because this conception of law due to its alleged purity could have lent itself to any external normative, ideological order. The law combined a formal frame with authoritarian institutional tendency that could be effectively filled with just any content. This might explain why the very sophisticated legal orders of Central Europe could so easily fall prey to and be instrumentalized by totalitarian regimes such as fascism, Nazism and communism. What Kafka experienced in the 1920s was thus still far better from what followed immediately prior but especially after the WWII. It was then when the old Austro-Hungarian legal mindset of little appeal was covered by an additional layer of communist legality.

Hence Central Europe in terms of law witnessed the worst of the two worlds. Again a proper tragedy. The Austro-Hungarian hierarchical legal sterility combined with brutality of communist legality for the achievement of the purported aspirations of the working class that went under the name of socialist law (Quigley 1989). This social engineering with law has left a lasting impact on it. Law was conceived of in purely instrumental terms. Rather than rule of law, Central Europe witnessed a rule with the law. Anything goes – you name it, and the law will sanction it. This in turn, of course, led also to the creation of a particular class of ruling lawyers. Foremost politicians or apparatchiks they were there on a special mission: as a fist of the working class. For this you needed not the best of minds. To the contrary, meritocracy was ruled out, as it was hard to imagine how the best of minds could be able to endure such a high demand of organized hypocrisy and loyalty to the regime's true objectives despite the proclaimed and formally adhered to civilizational principles of rule of law.

After the collapse of the totalitarian communist regime in the late 1980s, Central Europe faced the need of a profound change, also in the field of law. But again, as in general, here too it could have only looked back to the ostensibly better past, which was, as described above, not really a place to be looking for the inspiration for the future. Simultaneously, the Central European legal systems, while substantively collapsed, had to do something with the institutional actors that served and supported the *ancien regime*. Much of that has remained untouched and even if personal changes took place, in some countries more than in others, the mindset has somehow persisted. A strange combination of Austro-Hungarian post-communist law settled down in Central Europe, which was soon glossed over with the Brussels exported supranational law of the European Union (Bobek 2015). This has created an appearance of a fundamental change, when in practice things have stayed fundamentally the same. The legal education in largely unreformed state law schools across Central Europe has played a key and decisive role in that regard.

Slovenia is probably the best illustration of this phenomenon (Avbelj 2014). In contrast with many other Central European countries, Slovenia refused to carry out any lustration or to

change its (legal) elites (Adam and Tomšič 2012, 53-70). While it did adopt a western-style liberal constitution, in practice it has failed to live up to its constitutional requirements. Much of the blame for that can be apportioned to the Slovenian rule of law institutions and its dysfunctional judiciary in particular. The data gathered by the Council of Europe confirm that Slovenia, while boasting of the highest number of judges per capita in Europe, has the least efficient and the most expensive judiciary (ECHR 2012). As a result, the popular trust in judiciary is among the lowest in Europe (European Social Survey 2011). All of this is unsurprising given that, as Bugarič (2015, 229) has argued, Slovenian rule of law institutions “have been deeply politicized by the cadre from the old political nomenclature.” The appointments of the current President of Slovenian Supreme Court<sup>2</sup> and the State Prosecutor General<sup>3</sup> are just two, but probably the most revealing examples of this practice. The former’s case is particularly instructive as he has been appointed despite the fact that he took part in a senate that rendered the last death-sentence verdict in the Socialist Republic of Slovenia and despite many indications that during the communist regime he participated at verifications of killings of renegades on the Yugoslav - Italian border.<sup>4</sup> But, to paraphrase Jančar’s (2004) mockery of a meteorological approach to Central Europe: “Why in God’s name? Why did he [allegedly] have to be where there was shooting?”

Be that as it may, this appointment was followed by a lukewarm reaction by the Slovenian public sphere, which prompted the Constitutional Court justice Jan Zobec (2012) to publicly address this, for him an ethically unbearable situation. He argued:

*“The paramount problem of the Slovenian judiciary is the judiciary itself. First of all, the politics residing inside it, which has been preserved as part of the heritage of the totalitarian era in form of obstinate mental patterns firmly rooted in the old regime, expressing itself in collectivist and corporatist mindset. There, in the judiciary, this mindset (as one form of the parallel, concealed, or deep state)*

<sup>2</sup> Branko Masleša, <http://www.sodisce.si/vsrs/predstavitev/2011021014160780/>.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Zvonko Fišer in 1977 prosecuted a local maid and two Catholic priests for having erected a cross commemorating extra-judicially killed “national traitors” during the WWII. <http://www.rtvsllo.si/slovenija/fiser-zrtve-komunisticnega-nasilja-oznacicil-za-narodne-izdajalce/249361>.

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Masleša has, however, repeatedly refuted these allegations as false and malicious.

*thrives and feeds itself in terms of mode de pense, values and world-views thanks to institutional closure and complacency. In a normal state with established democratic tradition and legal culture this would engender positive effects – it would foster what would already be there: internally, mentally independent judiciary. Unfortunately, in Slovenia it is also being fostered what there already is: anything but an intellectually autonomous and independent judiciary. ‘Free riders’, those who dare to think independently and critically (which ought to be inherent to each and every judge’s intellect) are sidelined, isolated and stigmatized as conflicting, litigious and simply weird individuals.« [In such an institutional environment] “The politics needs to do nothing, it needs not to impact on the judiciary in anything or with anything in order to submit it to itself and to put it under its influence for the time to be. This influence is already there, inside the judiciary, and it has, so to speak, been always there.”*

This paragraph probably captures best the Central European legal malaise, which has been discussed above in more abstract terms.

## **AN APPEAL FOR A CLOSER CENTRAL EUROPEAN LEGAL ENGAGEMENT**

To the extent that what has been presented is a faithful account of the legal situation in Central Europe and that Slovenia is not too extreme a case for extrapolating its example on the wider region, what could be done to address these problems? There is no easy answer to this question. Since law is a cultural phenomenon, the historically inflicted pathologies on the Central European culture *lato sensu* translate in the law too. The changes, while necessary and indispensable, will therefore take time, but we must start working on them today. The first step is to recognize the need to change. That the present situation, the way the rule of law and the overall system of democracy functions in these countries is far from what was envisaged at the break-up with the totalitarian regimes. It is also still far away from the rule of law and democracy in Western Europe, which is itself far from perfect too. Coming to terms with reality is therefore necessary, as well as acknowledging that much time has been wasted in the last two decades of democratization and that sometimes history has

been, also because of that, repeating itself by way of constitutional back-sliding (Muller 2014).

Once this political soul-searching exercise is successfully passed, then the solutions must be sought for. As the problems have deep historical roots and exhibit commonalities across Central Europe, also the identified solutions could be shared and common. However, to achieve that they first need to be sought in common, together in the spirit of collaboration among the countries of Central Europe. An appropriate forum for this collaboration is therefore called for. The European Union, which most of Central European countries are part of, is not best suited to address this distinct, highly regional problem. Largely because the people and institutional stake-holders in the West simply lack the understanding of the deep causes of the Central European legal malaise and, faced with a plethora of other overwhelming ad-hoc challenges, really lack interest in these “provincial” shortcomings, as long as they do not cause externalities to the EU as a whole. Something else, a collaborative framework specifically tailored to Central Europe therefore seems to be needed.

The Visegrad Group comes across as potentially the best candidate for that. Established in 1991 by Poland, then Czechoslovakia and Hungary, the group was destined to achieve five basic objectives: full restitution of state independence, democracy and freedom; elimination of all existing social, economic and spiritual aspects of the totalitarian system; construction of a parliamentary democracy, a modern State of Law, respect for human rights and freedoms; creation of a modern free market economy and full involvement in the European political and economic systems, as well as the system of security and legislation (Visegrad Declaration 1991). Essentially all of these objectives are directly or at least indirectly related to furtherance of an actual rule of law and are, in fact, objectives that are not only shared across Central Europe, but are even constitutionally mandated by the constitutions of the respected Central European states. Several of these objectives, state independence and accession to the European integration in particular have been met, while others, especially those pertaining to the veritable rule of law and democracy, remain unfulfilled.

This speaks strongly in favor of using the Visegrad Group as a promoter and guardian of the rule of law in Central Europe. Its lax constitutional structure, which has not been legally formalized, but instead exists only as a political, economic and social initiative, which integrates the highest level politicians, experts and civil society members of its four member states, proves highly suitable for such a forum. The only formal legal institutionalization within the framework of the Visegrad Group is the International Visegrad Fund, established in 2000 as an international organization based in Bratislava. It stands for a civic dimension of the Visegrad Group by providing funding, project grants and individual scholarships to finance the NGOs and individual citizens in its four member states as well as their neighboring countries (Visegrad Group). The Visegrad Group thus offers itself as a perfect forum for addressing the problems of the legal malaise in Central Europe. Its objectives, mission statements and actual practice over the past two decades, which has made the Group indeed a well-established brand and a respected partner, could not have been better tailored to addressing the legal challenges at stake.

However, there is just one, but apparently decisive detail, which might present an insurmountable obstacle for meeting this goal: the Group's apparent political desire to retain its narrow and exclusive membership. As a political initiative the Visegrad Group does not put any formal legal obstacles in place, which would prevent other countries from taking part in it. However, it follows from its several political declarations that no extension of the initiative is foreseen or that the latter might be even barred. In the declaration issued on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Visegrad Group it is made clear that the Group remains open to co-operation based on common values with other countries, but only through the V4+ format. In short, the V4 has been politically self-conceived of as an exclusive club. This can be detected already in its founding Visegrad Declaration in 1991, where it is explained that the creation of this group was about "creating an imaginary historical arch linking the idea of this meeting to the idea of a similar meeting, which took place in 1335 and was attended by John of Luxembourg, King of Bohemia; Charles I of Anjou (Charles Robert), King of Hungary; and Casimir II, King

of Poland. The central motif of the two meetings was the desire to intensify mutual cooperation and friendship among the three Central European States.” Again, history and the political present in the name of the past preclude, at least on the symbolical level, the “enlargement” of the Visegrad Group.

This is unfortunate, since the Visegrad Group is apparently too narrow a representation of Central Europe. The latter is much more than V4 and furthermore, albeit in more symbolic terms, exclusivity has never been part and parcel of the kind of Central Europe that its four countries paradoxically yearn for. In words of Drago Jančar (2004): Central Europe has been a space of diversity, pluralism of ideologies, fragmentation, small nations, several languages spoken; a cultural Babylon. However, as this contribution sought to demonstrate Central Europe has also been a legal phenomenon, one with many problems caused by its specific historical evolution. Central Europe as a legal phenomenon thus requires a strong and more inclusive legal co-operation. Such that will go beyond the exclusive Visegrad 4 and its mathematically envisaged + partners. Furthermore, if the latter indeed wanted to realize the objectives stipulated some 20 years ago and, at the same time, for Central Europe to be liberated from its pervasive legal malaise, the Visegrad Group would need to be enlarged with other Central European countries to successfully and meaningfully address the legal problems that they have in common. Slovenia would be, at least for the reasons stated above, more than eligible for a membership in this club.

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# Would Slovenia fit into V4?<sup>1</sup>

## A review of Visegrad Group countries and Slovenia`s positions on Ukraine and Russia

Marek Lenč<sup>2</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

This paper presents a comparative analysis of Visegrad Group (V4) countries positions towards Ukraine and Russia since the outbreak of Ukrainian crisis at the end of 2013 till the reaching of the Minsk II agreement at Belarus talks on February 12, 2015. It also seeks to analyse the level of coherence in attitudes towards the Ukraine crisis and the Russia-Ukraine conflict<sup>3</sup> between V4 countries and particularly Slovenia and thus enhance academic debate on possible V4 enlargement. Following the last year events in Ukraine, some Central European countries are under heavy criticism for their unwillingness to properly address Ukraine crisis-related security and economic challenges, lack of joint action and too much of division on important European issues. The paper discusses the most recent foreign political development in V4 countries as well as in Slovenia by offering a comparative analysis of these countries responses to Russia`s annexation of Crimea, imposition of sanctions against Russia as well as approval of European aspirations of Ukraine. The overall assessment would enable us to identify the existing

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<sup>1</sup> “This article is published within a research project VEGA n. 1/0518/14 - Ten years of foreign policy of the Slovak republic within the EU external action and its perspectives.”

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ISSN 1855-7694 ©2015, European Perspectives, UDK: 327 (4)

<sup>3</sup> Using the term „Ukrainian crisis” does not refer to the whole course of events in Ukraine since November 2013. It would be appropriate for describing situation that emerged between November 2013 and March 2014, however, the events following March 2014 are not anymore just about Ukraine (Shelest, 2015, p. 191-192).

or vice versa non-existing level of coherence among five Central European countries (V4 plus Slovenia).

**KEY WORDS:** Visegrad Group, V4, Slovenia, Ukraine, Russia, conflict, foreign policy

## POVZETEK

Članek predstavlja primerjalno analizo pozicije držav višegrajske skupine (V4) nasproti Ukrajini in Rusiji od izbruha ukrajinske krize od konca leta 2013 pa do doseženega sporazuma Minsk II v Belorusiji, 12. februarja 2015. Članek prav tako poskuša analizirati stopnjo usklajenosti odnosa do ukrajinske krize in konflikta med Rusijo in Ukrajino med državami V4 in zlasti Slovenije ter okrepi akademsko razpravo o morebitni širitvi V4. Po lanskih dogodkih v Ukrajini, so bile nekatere srednjeevropske države pod velikimi kritikami zaradi njihove nepripravljenosti za pravilno obravnavo ukrajinske krize in s tem povezanih varnostnih in gospodarskih izzivov, pomanjkanja skupnega ukrepanja in preveč delitve glede pomembnih evropskih vprašanj. Članek obravnava najnovejši zunanje politični razvoj držav V4 in Slovenije, s pomočjo primerjalne analize reakcij teh držav na rusko idejo o priključitve Krima, uvedbe sankcij proti Rusiji, kot tudi soglasje evropskih teženj Ukrajine. Skupna ocena bi omogočila, da bi lahko ugotovili obstoječe ali neobstoječe ravni usklajenosti med petimi srednjeevropskimi državami (V4 + Slovenija).

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** višegrajska skupina, V4, Slovenija, Ukrajina, Rusija, konflikt, zunanja politika

## INTRODUCTION

Since the late 1990s, Ukraine has attached great importance to its partnership and cooperation with the countries of the Visegrad Group. Given geographic proximity, close historical and cultural links coupled with the common challenges of the post-Soviet political and economic transformations, it was only natural for independent Ukraine to seek close ties with its western neighbours – not only bilaterally, but also in sub-regional multilateral forums like the **Visegrad Group+** and the **Central European Initiative**. Over the last decade Ukraine's politicians and publics have seen the V4 countries as role models of democratic reforms

and friendly supporters of Ukraine's European aspirations. (Romanyshyn 2015)

Ten years ago, after the „*Orange revolution*,” Ukraine became a top priority for Central European countries for the first time. However, after the disappointment from Ukrainian revolutionary elites combined with the reluctance of West to sacrifice its relations with Moscow over Kyiv, Ukraine remained priority only at the declaratory level. The integration of V4 into the Euro-Atlantic structures only deepened the stagnation of cross-border cooperation and led to a stagnation of mutual economic relations. From the Slovak perspective, in the first 10 months of 2014 the bilateral trade with Ukraine was 16 times smaller than with the Czech Republic, 9 times smaller than with Poland or six times smaller than with Austria.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the current situation is significantly changing the perception not only of Kyiv and Moscow, but also of V4 states and that is happening despite the fact that all EU Member states remained of principle when it came to condemnation of Russia's actions in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine.

### **THE PILLARS OF V4 COOPERATION – BETWEEN COHERENCE AND AMBIGUITY**

The Visegrad cooperation is based on fully non-governmental structures and in fact on zero institutionalism.<sup>5</sup> The non-institutional approach could in fact be viewed as a flexible instrument for reaching important goals of all four member states. On the other hand, the community without any institutionalisation, any mutually agreed rules and institutions may bring risk of some ambiguity and instability.

The institutions of any community are perceived as a mark of respecting rules, declared unity with respect to some idea about cooperation and as a signal for surroundings that the actors appreciate this cooperation and they wish to enforce their mutual intentions. In the past, the Visegrad cooperation responded to in-

<sup>4</sup> It should not be forgotten that in 2014 Ukraine was undergoing so far the most difficult year in its modern existence. However, in terms of population, Ukraine accounts for similar position as Poland.

<sup>5</sup> This attitude results from their bitter experience due to involuntary cooperation in the Comecon and the Warsaw Pact.

ternal political pressure in individual countries sensitively several times, which also had an impact upon bilateral relations as well as on multilateral cooperation in the region. All four countries, though to a different extent, are influenced by the instability of political scene as well as by the presence of undemocratic phenomena such as clientelism or authoritative tendencies in their political culture. Populist trends are present all around the region and they are visible with respect to several political actors; furthermore, they manifest a significant nationalistic accent. (Terem-Lenč 2011)

Despite some occasional bilateral tensions, Visegrad Group represents an important mechanism for regional cooperation, coordination of positions on crucial European issues, development of transport infrastructure as well as reinforcement of energy security. As a tool for strengthening of the external dimension of cooperation with third countries Visegrad uses so called „V4+” format. For illustration, only in 2014, V4 used this format in different variations (Head of States, PM, Ministerial level) for meetings with *Eastern Partnership* (EaP) countries (informal meeting - April), *South Korea* (July), *Bulgaria and Romania* (September), *United Kingdom* (October), countries of the *Western Balkans* (October), *Swiss Confederation* (December), *Austria and Slovenia* (December) and *Ukraine* (December). Over the last years, it was mainly the Polish and Slovak presidency which was very effective in using this instrument. Under the Slovak presidency, from July 2014 till June 2015, political representatives from more than 20 countries gathered in Slovakia to attend their multilateral meetings with Visegrad Group delegations. As illustrated above, both Ukraine (since 1998) and Slovenia are frequently included into this format.

## FROM MAIDAN TO MINSK

The Ukraine crisis brought a seismic breakdown to the European post-cold war architecture. Since the end of the NATO campaign in Kosovo, Europe enjoyed more than a decade of relative peace and prosperity and no major war erupted in its neighbourhood. The Russian use of force in Ukraine changed this paradigm. The conflict is of course first of all about the territorial

integrity of Ukraine and indeed its very existence. But it is also about the future of Russia, the EU as well as the future of Visegrad Four countries.

The key moment for the outbreak of sincere Maidan protests was the decision of Ukrainian government<sup>6</sup> to suspend the process of preparation for signature of the Association Agreement (AA). The protests were driven mostly by the desire for rule of law, protection of human rights, stronger association with Europe as well as the refusal of a corrupt state<sup>7</sup> and later on gradually grow into larger numbers, dismissal of President Yanukovych on 22 February 2014 and the establishment of an Interim-Government under the leadership of Arseniy Yatsenyuk. Since then Ukrainian-Russian relations led to a disaster including Russian military intervention in Crimea, military conflict in Donbass, disputes regarding the gas deliveries for Ukraine as well as over the implementation of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) of the AA.

In less than 12 months, from the moment of annexation of Crimea by Russian Federation till the end of February 2015, the European Council met nine times (with 3 extraordinary meetings) while the situation in Ukraine and actions against Russia have been constantly on the top of the EU political agenda. Following Russia's use of force against its Western neighbour, the EU decided to apply restrictive measures against Russia including cancellation of summits, suspension on negotiations over its membership in international organizations, asset freezes and economic sanctions.<sup>8</sup>

The measures were applied despite occasional divergent positions of particular EU Member States as some of them were even close to defend Russian national interests. This could be

<sup>6</sup> Based on Decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine from 21<sup>st</sup> November 2013, N 905-p.

<sup>7</sup> According to Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index Ukraine was in 2013 the world's 144<sup>th</sup> most corrupted country (out of 177 ranked).

<sup>8</sup> Overall, till the end of February 2015 it comprised cancellation of EU-Russia summit, cancellation of bilateral summits between EU Member States and Russia, suspension of bilateral talks on visa matters, suspension of the New Agreement between the EU and Russia, suspension of Russia membership in G8, support for suspension on negotiations over Russia's membership in the OECD and the International Energy Agency, asset freezes to 37 entities and 151 persons (including visa bans), as well as economic sanctions on five major state owned Russian banks, three major Russia energy companies, three major Russian defence companies, ban on exports of certain energy-related and technology equipment as well as arms embargo on all items enlisted on EU common military list. (EEAS 2015)

seen as indirect result of absence of a common long term strategy towards Russia at the EU level. However, the key-mediator role in the Russia-Ukraine conflict was taken by Germany and France mainly through Normandy format. There could be no dispute over the fact that from all these countries it was Germany that invested by far the most efforts in creation of all EU Member states common position towards Russia.<sup>9</sup> Finally, the mediation attempts of Normandy format led to agreement comprised of 13 points<sup>10</sup> during the summit of leaders of Germany, France, Ukraine and Russia on 11-12 of February. However the, so called, Minsk II agreement has to be understood not as the end of the process, but rather as its beginning. In enforcement of this agreement a significant diplomatic offensive has been undertaken and any further setbacks leading to its failure will show inability of EU leaders to reach its political goals with Russia.

The Visegrad Group`s varying positions on Ukraine and their internal divisions caused by Russia`s belligerence certainly questioned the effectiveness and credibility of the group to act as a united actor. According to Romanyshyn, the *„current discrepancies reflect a broader distribution of views within the EU, with Hungary matching up with Greece and Cyprus forming a pro-Russian wing, while Poland joins the Baltic countries on a strongly pro-Ukrainian line and the Czech Republic and Slovakia fall somewhere in between.”* (Romanyshyn 2015)

## THE SURPRISING RHETORIC OF VISEGRAD – BETWEEN WORDS AND ACTIONS

The Ukrainian revolution ended in bloody clashes between the protesters and police between 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of February leading to more than 100 deaths, escape of President Yanukovych to Russia,

<sup>9</sup> Germany had to handle disputes with France over delivery of Mistral war-ships to Russia (autumn 2014), new Italy`s prime minister Renzi positions over the need to „engage constructively” with Russia after breaking its promises on Ukraine (October 2014), unilateral approaches of Austria (June 2014) and Hungary (February 2015) to hold bilateral visits of Russian president Vladimir Putin, Hungary`s open flirtation with Putin`s authoritarian model as well the pro-Russian positions occurring in Greece, Cyprus, Slovakia, Czech republic, not forgetting the domestic pressure from German business lobby, former leaders and political parties.

<sup>10</sup> These, among others, include mainly commitments of Ukrainian government to reform its constitution, holding of local elections in Donetsk and Lugansk oblast by the end of 2015 as well as restoration of the control of the state border to Ukrainian government.

his dismissal on 22<sup>th</sup> February and establishment of Interim-Government, as required by the Constitution. The deal between opposition and pro-government forces which managed to end the violence, was brokered on February 21<sup>st</sup> thanks to direct Polish involvement through its Foreign Minister (FM), Mr Radosław Sikorski, along with German and French FM, Steinmeier and Fabius.

Only three days later, on February 24<sup>th</sup>, a strong endorsement came from the V4 as the FMs called for „*strengthening Ukraine's relations with the European Union, including the signature of the AA/DCFTA*”, offered Ukraine to „*share their transitional experiences with the new inclusive government,*” emphasized their „*readiness to resume and develop the reverse flow of natural gas supplies*” and called on all actors „*to refrain from any action that could undermine sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine.*” (Visegrad Group, 2014a) On February 28<sup>th</sup> Visegrad Group delegation including FM of Czech Republic, Lubomír Zaorálek, FM of Hungary János Martonyi (presiding at V4), FM of the Slovak Republic, Miroslav Lajčák, as well as Deputy FM of the Republic of Poland, Katarzyna Pelczynska-Nalecz visited Ukraine and „*declared their unanimous support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty.*” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 2014) Following the takeover of Crimea by Russian Federation, the Prime Ministers (PM) of the Visegrad countries revoked their own countries bitter experiences of 1956, 1968 and 1981, condemned Russia's actions and „*called on Russia to respect its international commitments and legal obligations, including the Budapest Memorandum.*” (Visegrad Group 2014b).

Later on, in December 2014, at the meeting with Ukrainian FM Pavlo Klimkin, FM of V4 reaffirmed their „*strong support for the full and unconditional implementation of the Minsk Protocol and its Memorandum*” and reconfirmed their „*commitment to the policy of non-recognition of the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula by the Russian Federation.*” Based on the conclusions of the V4 presidential summit (November 2014) and previous FM statement on Ukraine (October 2014), the V4 FM also agreed to strengthen cooperation through bilateral as well as International Visegrad Fund toolbox. The annual commitments to Ukraine (through EaP programme) are already exceeding €1.3 million, which makes

Ukraine today the largest external recipient of the IVF's scholarship grants and support programs for higher-education institutes. (Visegrad Group 2014d) This is where one we should start to be careful about the particular positions of V4 countries.

From all Visegrad countries, **Poland** was the only state which supported Ukraine unambiguously having the most consistent policies and positions on Ukraine since co-launching (together with Sweden) the Eastern dimension of ENP at the Prague summit back in 2009. Poland's vision of Visegrad's strategic role has much to do with its national interests and that is to bring Eastern Europe, mainly countries such as Ukraine and Belarus, much closer to the EU. In this regard, there could not a surprise, when Poland under the governmental leadership of PM Tusk and FM Sikorski adopted assertive attitude towards Russia following its aggression in Ukraine.

Naturally, Poland vis-à-vis events in Ukraine refused to compromise on European values and its commitments to international law despite previous signs of reset in "*Polish-Russian*" relations. Similarly, Warsaw showed zero hesitation when introducing sanctions against Russia. By PM Tusk own words, „*this is the price to pay.*” (Polish PM says..., 2014) The Ukrainian crisis has also demonstrated that Poland lacks similar partners in the region, who fully share its understanding and concerns about Russia, mainly if we speak about V4. However, Poland has also seen its political role being decreased during the crisis as the country was not represented in a series of high level diplomatic meetings during the summer of 2014. It shows that there was „*no political will to include Poland in the talks by Moscow, which is not surprising, but also by Berlin and Paris.*” (Klus 2014)

On the contrary, **Hungary's** reaction was the most pro-Russian one. This was mainly thanks to the positions of PM Viktor Orban who is „*openly questioning the value of democracy and praising alternative models of governance, such as the ones currently in place in Russia and China.*” Moreover, in Ukraine, he is undoubtedly viewed as one of “*Putin's friends*“ who is trying exploit Ukraine weakness. This was well demonstrated by his unprecedented call „*for the autonomy of Ukraine's 150,000-strong Hungarian minority, and the federalization of the country,*” which was made in the middle of Moscow's interventions in Eastern Ukraine. (Romanyshyn

2015) Another pro-Russian stance was taken by Orban against the introduction of sanctions against Russia when he stated that this policy „hurts us more than it does the Russians. In politics we call this shooting ourselves in the foot.” (Prime Minister on Kossuth..., 2014) The roots of Hungary`s positions carry both economic (energy dependence on Russia) as well ideological aspects (abandonment of liberal values which goes hand in hand with Orban`s increasingly authoritarian style of leadership).

The response of the **Czech Republic** to the Ukrainian crisis was ambivalent. The official government line, also thanks to FM Zaorálek, was in strong contrast with the pro-Russian line taken by PM Sobotka and President Miloš Zeman. Even though both camps condemned Russia`s violation of international law by annexation of Crimea, they also avoided clear demonstration of political support for Ukraine and tend to criticize the economic logic of sanctions. For example Zeman, in one his interviews (summer 2014), stated that „all sanctions are nonsensical and ineffective.” (Zeman comes..., 2014) Besides his deep distrust towards the „policy of sanctions”, Czech President also criticized the Euromaidan political protests, suggesting that Kyiv should not have illusions about Crimea`s return to Ukraine. In November 2014, Zeman called „Europe`s economic support of Ukraine nonsense,” which according to him did not take into account the country`s ongoing civil war. Ukraine`s Ministry of Foreign Affairs called the statements „unacceptable” and the Czech Ambassador was called for an explanation. (Romanyshyn 2015).

In the case of **Slovakia**, its relations with Ukraine never became a real priority at the political level, despite the fact that such efforts were declared by several governments. In certain moments, relations with Kiev were even side-lined, especially when it came to the Slovak interests in Moscow. The position of the current PM Robert Fico was heavily affected by the course of events during Russia-Ukraine gas dispute in 2009. If we look back on some of Fico`s crucial statements regarding the suspension of gas deliveries, it is more than clear that the side to be blamed and hold responsible was Ukraine. These events returned Slovak-Ukrainian relations almost to a point of zero.

Regarding the outbreak of the current conflict, Slovakia never really stood on the Ukrainian side when it comes to overall impression of verbal statements from whole political spectrum. Slovakia was internally divided and its attitude could be labelled as even more ambivalent than the Czech one, mainly thanks to PM statements, which were also very sensitively perceived by Ukrainian public. They covered various issues, ranging from acknowledgement that as neighbours Slovakia and Ukraine „were unable to establish normal political relations<sup>11</sup>,” through labelling Ukraine as „unreliable partner” (in relation to the gas crisis), to questioning of Ukraine’s abilities to manage difficult challenges arising from rapprochement with the EU<sup>12</sup>. Besides this, Slovak PM also has remained very critical on introduction of sanctions against Russia. On August 14<sup>th</sup> Fico said: „Why should we jeopardize the EU economy that begins to grow? If there is a crisis situation, it should be solved by other means than meaningless sanctions. Who profits from the EU economy decreasing, Russia’s economy having troubles and Ukraine economically on its knees?” (Slovakia grumbles as EU..., 2014) It is very rare that an ambassador responds to the statements of PM in his hosting country, but in the case of the Ukrainian ambassador to Slovakia it happened.

However, in the case of the official position of our diplomacy, Ukraine has found a strong partner in Slovakia. Since the outbreak of protests on the Maidan till Minsk II agreement, Slovak FM Lajčák travelled to Ukraine six times. In the format of Foreign Ministers of the V4 Lajčák was even one of the first foreign statesmen who visited Ukraine after the regime change (the day after the Russian annexation of the Crimea). In March 2014, under the auspices of Slovak and Swedish diplomacy a meeting of „Friends of Ukraine” was organized in Brussels. And, finally, Slovak-Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce and Industry was estab-

<sup>11</sup> After the culmination of protests on Maidan Fico stated that „despite the fact that Ukraine is our neighbor, we share almost 100 km boundary, as a politician, I have to say that we never managed to establish normal political relations.“ (Fico uznal..., 2014)

<sup>12</sup> In September 2014 Fico stated in his interview for Nový Čas that „we want peace in Ukraine, because it is our neighbour..., because it is a transit country... It is also good that AA was signed, which gives Ukraine a perspective to bring it closer to the EU. However, I think that Ukraine can hardly handle difficult challenges related to the accession to the Union, because it is before absolute disintegration. And I reject the idea that Ukraine could at some point be a member of NATO, because it could undermine the security in the region.“ (Premiér Fico otvorene o konflikte..., 2014)

lished last year. But most important dimension of bilateral relations between these two countries is energy security.

In this regard, Slovakia launched reverse gas flow of Vojaň-Uzhgorod pipeline through Velké Kapušany last September and later on finished works on another switch point - Budince. The fact that there was no „*Russian Winter*” in Ukraine last year was achieved mainly due to the position of Slovak government and its diplomacy. To a smaller extent, Ukraine was also receiving reverse gas flows from Poland and Hungary. However, Hungary, under the pressure from Russian political circles unprecedentedly stopped its deliveries taking identical position as Russia while helping to bring Ukraine to its knees.

From the Ukrainian perspective, Slovakia has strategic importance at least for three reasons. The first is the already mentioned reverse gas flow. The second is a self-confident statement of Russian Gazprom that after 2018 the transit of Russian gas will be completely diverted from Ukraine to Turkey. Thirdly, the European Commissioner for Energy Union is a Slovak, Maroš Šefčovič. In this regard, it is going to be Šefčovič, who will be in charge of the forthcoming trilateral talks between the EU, Russia and Ukraine over Russian gas supplies.

Based on the different views among V4 countries, Adam Klus, identified „*five interrelated and partly overlapping factors which structurally set Poland apart from the other three countries and effectively prevent the Visegrad Group from being transformed into an actual politico-military alliance.*” (Klus 2015) These shall include:

- 1) differential in national potentials,
- 2) significant gap in military capabilities,
- 3) different geographic exposure,
- 4) limited common historical experience,
- 5) different geopolitical position in the context of great power politics.

Moreover, the Ukrainian expert community seems to be similarly sceptical about the V4 potential, ability as well as interest to

stand behind Ukrainian interests. In a survey conducted among Ukrainian experts by Institute of World Policy (June 2014) on perception of EU Member States attitudes towards Ukraine, from all 28 EU Member States, Poland ranked 1<sup>st</sup>, followed by Lithuania and Sweden. The three other V4 countries ranked 7<sup>th</sup> (Czech Republic), 9<sup>th</sup> (Slovakia) and 19<sup>th</sup> (Hungary). (Who is Our Friend in the EU, 2014) Overall, besides the condemnation of Russian annexation of Crimea and support for the full implementation of the Minsk Protocol and its Memorandum, V4 were driven by different national positions and their economic interests. This could be mostly seen at Hungary's, but also Czech and Slovak, attitudes and their verbal reluctance to choose norms over economic interests.

## THE VIEW FROM LJUBLJANA

As regard to the official position, **Slovenia**'s political elites seem to oscillate between the EU's official line on Ukraine and Russia represented by President Pahor and more reserved positions of PM Cerar and FM Erjavec. After the Russia's takeover of Crimea FM Erjavec clearly emphasized Slovenia's position stating that „*the integrity and inviolability of Ukrainian borders needs to be maintained.*“ However, besides Slovenia's offer to act as a mediator in the conflict, FM Erjavec also openly criticised EU's previous plan to sign Association Agreement with Ukraine without proper communication with Moscow saying that „*Slovenia has been underscoring all the time that it is also necessary to be in a continuous dialogue with the Russian Federation.*“ (Foreign minister offers..., 2014) Following domestic criticism of positioning too close to Russia, Erjavec explained his position stating that it would be a mistake to stop talking to Russia as „*Russia is the key to the solution of this crisis.*“ (FM criticised..., 2014)

Over the last years, the key driver in mutual Russian-Slovenian economic relations was Slovenian participation in the Russia-lead South Stream pipeline project. The economic aspects of this project were also discussed during the visit of Russian FM Lavrov in Ljubljana on July 8<sup>th</sup> 2015. However, following the obstacles from Bulgaria and EU (e.g. lack of construction permits and political will) Russia decided to withdraw from the project

and build a pipeline through Turkey - making a decision that harmed future economic investments in the country.

Slovenia's positions on Ukraine were also discussed with V4 partners during the summit of Presidents of Visegrad Group and Austria and Slovenia where the head of states expressed „*their support for a sustainable political solution of the crisis.*“ (Visegrad Group, 2014c) Yet, it was for the first time in the history of Visegrad that head of states of Austria and Slovenia joined four other Visegrad countries for a meeting at a highest level.

Moreover, Slovenia has remained rather sceptical about the purpose of introduced sanctions and will probably be one of the strong advocates for abandonment of the EU sanction policy on Russia. The statement from PM Cerar in July 2015 made very clear that Slovenia's interest is „*to see an end to EU-imposed sanctions against Russia as it's hurting trade between the two nations.*“ (Slovenia wants end to..., 2015) In addition, PM Cerar comment came only two weeks after FM Erjavic's reaffirmation on Slovenia's sanctions policy against Russia during his official visit to Kyiv.

## CONCLUSIONS

To sum it up, V4 positions towards Ukraine and Russia represent a twofold story – one at the multilateral and second at the bilateral level. The Ukrainian „*revolution of dignity*” followed by Ukrainian crisis and latter Russian aggression found Visegrad Four (V4) countries unprepared in having a common European answer for these crucial events. This was well demonstrated by significantly different, sometimes even opposite understandings and positions regarding European prospects of Ukraine as well as Russia's actions and their consequences for the Central European security. All five Central European countries mirror a broader distribution of positions within the EU, with a strong pro-Ukrainian line of Poland on one side, Hungary aligning in a pro-Russian stance on the other and ambivalent positions of Czech Republic, Slovenia and Slovakia.

In many respects, Ukraine is the largest V4 neighbouring country which is now located outside of the common rules and standards of the European Union. For Visegrad Group there

could not be a better opportunity than the one today and that is to clearly stand up for the European aspirations of the Ukrainian government and do maximum for a peaceful solution of the current crisis.

The conflict on the Eastern periphery of Central Europe left many observers with strong impression of a divided V4. The credibility and effectiveness of the Group to act as a united actor has been challenged. Since the outbreak of the first protests in Kyiv, it was clearly Poland which demonstrated most consistent position in terms of reflecting solidarity and political support for Ukraine from all Central and Eastern European states. Yet, it was not V4, but rather **Baltic Four** (B4) that showed much more determination in search for common positions. As a result, Poland's elites might find themselves dealing with a dilemma of „*normative escape from V4*” and prefer to align with Baltic states on Ukraine and Russia related issues. Moreover, the creation of another Central European regional cooperation platform - **Slavkov initiative** - which brings together Austria, Czech Republic and Slovakia, with Hungary possibly joining over time, illustrates the overall fragility and current division of the Visegrad Group. From the long-term perspective these tendencies may seriously weaken and harm future prospects of V4.

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# Logistics performance and its connection to competitiveness of the national economy in Slovenia and the Visegrad Group

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## ABSTRACT

The importance of logistics in achieving competitive advantage and better performance is increasing almost daily. Logistics is gaining in importance due to changes in the business environment and the increasing integration of global economies. Its role is evident especially through lowering costs and adding value to the final product. Throughout the paper, we will research core (basic) aims of logistics and its relationship to the competitiveness of the national economy. With a literature review and a comparative study, we will research the correlation between the Logistics performance index, developed by the World Bank, and the Global competitiveness index, developed by the World Economic Forum. The research will focus on Slovenia and on the four countries of the Visegrad Group, but the findings have potential for broader application in the region.

**KEY WORDS:** logistics, correlation, Logistics performance index, Global competitiveness index

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## POVZETEK

Pomen logistike pri doseganju konkurenčne prednosti in večje učinkovitost se povečuje skoraj vsak dan. Logistika pridobiva na pomenu zaradi sprememb v poslovnem okolju in vse večje integracije svetovnih gospodarstev. Vloga le-te je razvidna predvsem z zniževanjem stroškov in dodajanjem vrednosti končnemu produktu. V celotnem dokumentu, bomo raziskovali temeljne cilje logistike in njen odnos do konkurenčnosti nacionalnega gospodarstva. S pomočjo pregleda literature in primerjalne študije, bomo raziskali korelacijo med indeksom uspešnosti logistike, ki ga je razvila Svetovna banka in indeksom globalne konkurenčnosti, ki jo je razvil Svetovni gospodarski forum. V članku se bomo osredotočili na Slovenijo in na štiri države višegrajske skupine, vendar imajo ugotovitve potencial za širšo uporabo v regiji.

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** logistika, korelacija, indeks uspešnosti logistike, indeks globalne konkurenčnosti

## INTRODUCTION

The life cycles of products produced by global industries are becoming shorter; the prices of products have dramatically slumped; the transportation of goods is faster; messages can be instantly delivered to any place of the world; and the production mode has been modified to meet customer needs (Lin, Liang, Ye and Lee 2005). These changes in economic environments are causing increased interest to control flows of people, materials, money, energy, in order to efficiently and effectively use scarce resources. Logistics (as a still relatively young scientific discipline (Klaus 2010)) can strongly help maintain contact with current challenges both at the micro (individual enterprise) and macro level (national economy).

Empirical studies show that revenue growth through improved customer service, product availability, and order accuracy can be directly linked to the capabilities of a logistics organization (Irista 2003).

As Klaus (2010) claims, there is no disagreement anymore about the enormous practical relevance of logistics and its steadily growing impact upon day-to-day economic activities. Waters

(2003) explains that nothing is produced, no material moved, no operation is carried out, products cannot be delivered to the buyer, and no buyer can be treated without logistics. He continues that “without logistics there can be no operations – and no organisation”. Similarly, Christopher (2005) notes that “logistics has always been a central and essential feature of all economic activity”.

Further explanation comes from Rushton, Croucher and Baker (2014). They say that although there is a cost associated with the movement and storage of goods, it is now recognized that logistics also provides a very positive contribution to the value of a product. This is because logistics operations provide the means by which the product can reach the customer or end user in the appropriate condition and required location. It is therefore possible for companies to compete on the basis of providing a product either at the lowest possible cost or at the highest possible value to the customer (Rushton, Croucher and Baker 2014).

According to Fender (2013), logistics has also an increasingly important role in corporate strategy and competition. He claims that this may be explained by three interrelated factors (Fender, 2013):

- There is a rapidly increasing internationalization of the economy and of companies, not only in their structures, but also in their industrial operations, including engineering and manufacturing.
- Internationalized companies have implemented new organization schemes in their supplier and distributor networks to reconcile globalization needs with the requirements to adjust to specific national and local conditions.
- There are new micro-economic bases to competitiveness, now increasingly the result of the quality and relevance of the relationships constructed among the actors in a value chain; that is, there are organizational effects that outweigh traditional forms of “productivity on the job.”

Many authors agree that logistics affects economic activities through four types of utilities (Coyle, Bardi and Langley 2003; Bowersox, Closs and Cooper 2002; Swenson and Fawcett 1998;

Bloomberg, LeMAy and Hanna 2002): form utility, possession utility, time utility and place utility. Form utility refers to the specific product or service that a company offers to its potential customers (Investopedia, 2015). It is reflected in the process of creating the appropriate goods or services that meet customers' needs. Time utility is the value added by having an item when it is needed. Place utility means having the item or service available where it is needed. Many companies have come to understand the value of place and time utility only after unfortunate and costly events – after materials are unavailable and the production line has been shut down or after a product is sold out and customers have opted for a competitor's offering instead (Fawcett and Fawcett 1995).

## THE IMPACT OF LOGISTICS ON NATIONAL ECONOMY

The impact of logistics is also important on the national level. As Rushton, Croucher and Baker (2014) explain, logistics is an important activity making extensive use of the human and material resources that affect a national economy. Serhat and Harun (2011) describe that it is no longer enough to think about logistics management at the firm level only, but rather more attention must be shifted to the industry and global or national level. They see logistics management as a competitive weapon and an important dimension of competitive strategy.

Mačiulis, Vasiliauskas, and Jakubauskas (2009) say that a modern society can effectively function only by having an effective transport and logistics system. Another explanation comes from Na (2007), who explores effects of modern logistics on economic growth of six provinces in central China. He claims that the logistics industry is seen as the national economic development's "booster" and "accelerator". He continues that modern logistics industry permeates to every sector of the national economy; it is the basic industry of a national economy, its level of development is a measure of the degree of modernization of a country and an important indicator of overall national strength.

There are mainly two different theoretical views on the relationship between economic growth and modern logistics. One is the theory of "logistics push", holding the opinion that modern

logistics can contribute to regional economic development; the other is “economic pull”, noting that the rapid economic development also pulls the further development of modern logistics (Nan and Yan 2007). Similar explanations come from Stock and Lambert (2001). They see globalization as the main cause for a strong connection between logistics and the national economy. They argue that from the national perspective, it is clear that the distribution from point-of-origin to point-of-consumption has become an enormously important component of the gross domestic product (GDP) of industrialized nations. As a significant component of GDP, logistics affects the rate of inflation, interest rates, productivity, energy costs and availability, and other aspects of the economy. Investments into transportation and distribution facilities, not including public sources, are estimated to be in the hundreds of billion dollars worldwide. Considering its consumption of land, labour, and capital, and its impact on the standard of living, logistics is clearly a huge business (Stock and Lambert 2001).

According to Brewer, Button and Hensher (2001), achieving a high level of performance in logistics is important for the profitability and for the efficiency of national economies and the global economy. They prove that as international trade increases as a percentage of national domestic activity, so does the interactive effects of the productivity of national and international logistics increase. They conclude that it is understandable that corporations and nations should be interested in measures of performance at the macro level.

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOGISTICS PERFORMANCE AND COMPETITIVENESS OF THE COUNTRY**

According to Popescu and Sipos (2014), efficiently performing logistic is of vital importance for economic growth, for diversification and poverty reduction. For this reason, logistics has become of public interest for governments, regional and international organizations, although it is still mainly carried out by private operators. Their analysis shows the relationship between logistics performance and economic development based on an econometric model. The results of the econometric analysis show

quite a strong relationship between Logistics Performance Index (LPI) and GDP per capita across the EU countries, which is one of the starting points of this research also. Serhat and Harun (2011) further demonstrate that there is a strong dependency between logistics performance and national competitiveness. For their research, they used the Logistics performance index, developed by the World Bank, and Global competitiveness data, which is gathered from the World Economic Forum. They show that providing better quality of logistics services will help to increase the volume of the trade of a country and will add value to the country's competitiveness. As a result, countries with lower competitiveness must improve their logistics infrastructure as a priority and should take measures in customs to facilitate the international trade in order to increase their competitive power. Only when these two absolute requirements, i.e. logistics infrastructure and customs, are successfully met, can a country be classified as highly competitive.

Similar research comes from Karmazin, Markovits-Somogyi and Bokor (2013). They analyse the correlation between logistics performance and national competitiveness index for Hungary, a member of the Visegrad Group. They show that there is a very close relationship between the global competitiveness index (GCI) and logistics performance index (LPI) values, and it can be rightly assumed that an increase in LPI will entail an amplification of the GCI value as well. Thus, what has been introduced as the opinion of the experts, has also been proven by the result of objective evaluations (Karmazin, Markovits-Somogyi and Bokor 2013).

The World Economics Forum (WEF) ranks countries worldwide each year according to their competitiveness. The different aspects of competitiveness are captured in 12 pillars, which compose the Global Competitiveness Index. The Global Competitiveness Report for 2014-2015 assesses the competitiveness landscape of 144 economies, providing insight into the drivers of their productivity and prosperity. The report remains the most comprehensive assessment of national competitiveness worldwide, providing a platform for dialogue between governments, businesses and the civil society about the actions required to

improve economic prosperity. Competitiveness is defined as the set of institutions, policies and factors that determine the level of productivity of a country. The level of productivity, in turn, sets the level of prosperity that can be earned by an economy (World Economic Forum 2015).

Parallel to the World Economic Forum, the World Bank has also conducted a survey ranking countries, but with focus on logistics. The survey to determine the Logistics Performance Index (LPI) was carried out four times since 2007 and included 160 countries worldwide, ranking the states from a logistics perspective (The World Bank 2015). The Logistics Performance Index overall score reflects perceptions of a country's logistics, based on six dimensions (Arvis et al. 2014):

- Customs: measures the efficiency and effectiveness of the customs clearance procedure (speed, simplicity and predictability of customs agencies).
- Infrastructure: measures the quality of a country's transport and telecommunications facilities.
- International shipments: measures how easy it is to arrange shipments at competitive prices.
- Logistics quality and competence: measures the competence and quality of logistics services.
- Tracking and tracing: measures the tracking and tracing of shipments.
- Timeliness: measures shipment delivery time punctuality.

The index ranges from 1 to 5, with a higher score representing better performance (The World Bank 2015).

Based on the above, the purpose of this paper is to examine Slovenia's, Czech Republic's, Hungary's, Poland's and Slovakia's logistics performance and competitiveness according to the before mentioned indexes combined with more general logistics indices. Moreover, the goal is to find if the expert opinions shown above, stating that logistics performance is connected to national competitiveness, is true for the selected countries as well.

## PERFORMANCE OF LOGISTICS IN THE OBSERVED COUNTRIES

If we look at some basic data through the logistics point of view, we can assess that Slovenia has a favourable geostrategic position, especially from the point of its cooperation with the Visegrad group. The total size of Slovenia is 20.273 km<sup>2</sup>, it has around 2 million inhabitants and 18.092 € GDP per capita (SORS 2015). Slovenia has four neighbouring countries: Italy, Austria, Hungary and Croatia, amounting to 1.370 km of borders and 46.4 km of coastal area (SORS, 2015). Hence, Slovenia is a smaller European country. Important European routes and corridors lead through Slovenia such as the fifth and the tenth corridor, which link the North and South of Europe as well as the East and the West. Slovenia's maritime transport is carried through Port of Koper, which is also the maritime gateway for a larger number of countries with no access to maritime shipping or with geographically inappropriate positions for some maritime transport paths. Port of Koper as one of North-Adriatic ports represent one of the most optimal alternatives to shipping company owners for the purpose of reducing costs, especially is the cargo is coming from the recently developed Asian countries as is often the case. If we compare the distance from two example ports in Singapore and Malaysia, it becomes evident that the route to Port of Koper is significantly shorter than the routes to North-European ports (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Comparisons between Port of Koper and some North-European ports

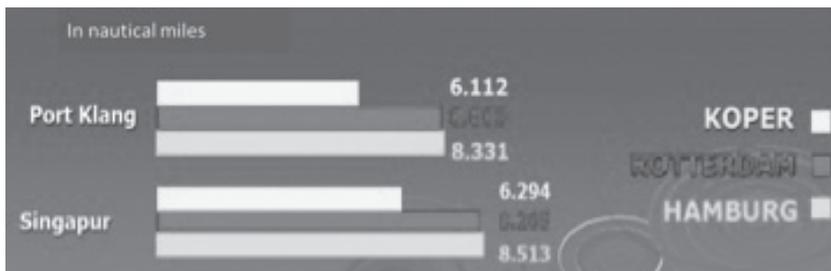
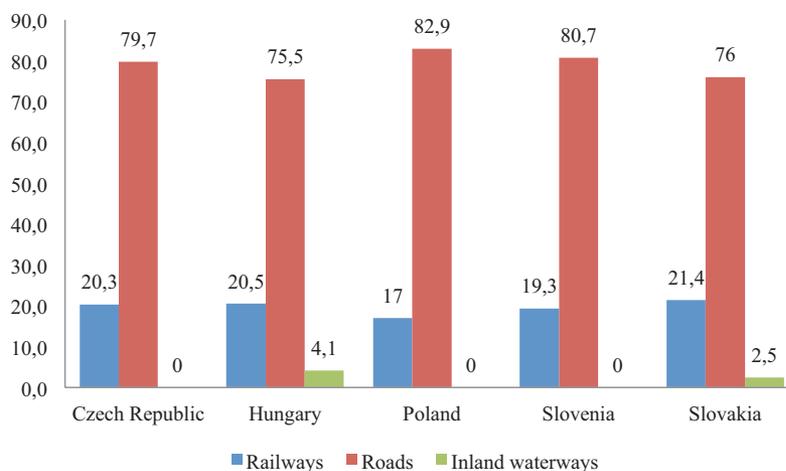


Figure 2: The percentage share of each mode of transport in total inland transport expressed in tonne-kilometres, 2013

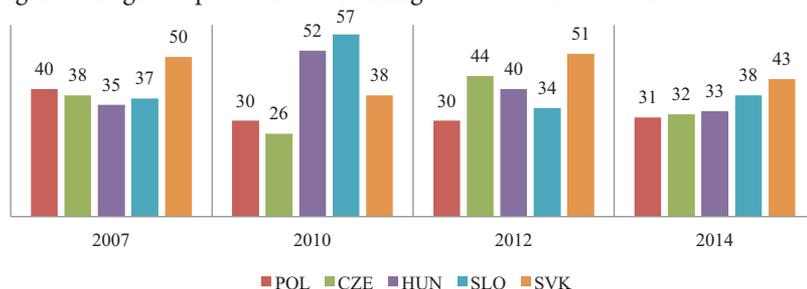


Source: Data from EUROSTAT, 2015

One of the main indicators of logistics activity is the modal split of inland freight transport. For the observed countries, the data for 2013 is shown in Figure 2. It is evident that road freight transport is the prevalent modality in all observed countries. Poland stands out as the country with most road transport, and in Hungary and Slovakia it is evident that the use of inland waterways replaces road, not rail transport, since the share of road transport is lowest in the two.

On the base of logistics indexes, a large number of countries worldwide are ranked every year. The position of a country on this ranking shows its state of logistics in comparison to all other countries (the higher the ranking, the better the country's logistics in comparison to other countries). Figure 3 shows the rankings of the observed countries in the last couple of years. Slovenia's LPI ranking in year 2014 was the 38<sup>th</sup> place among 160 countries, with only Slovakia ranking below in the 43<sup>th</sup> place. Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary ranked higher with the 31<sup>st</sup>, 32<sup>nd</sup> and 33<sup>rd</sup> place respectively. We can see that the rankings change quite a lot over the years, with the lowest out of the observed by Slovenia in 2010 (57<sup>th</sup> place), and the highest by the Czech Republic in the same year (26<sup>th</sup> place).

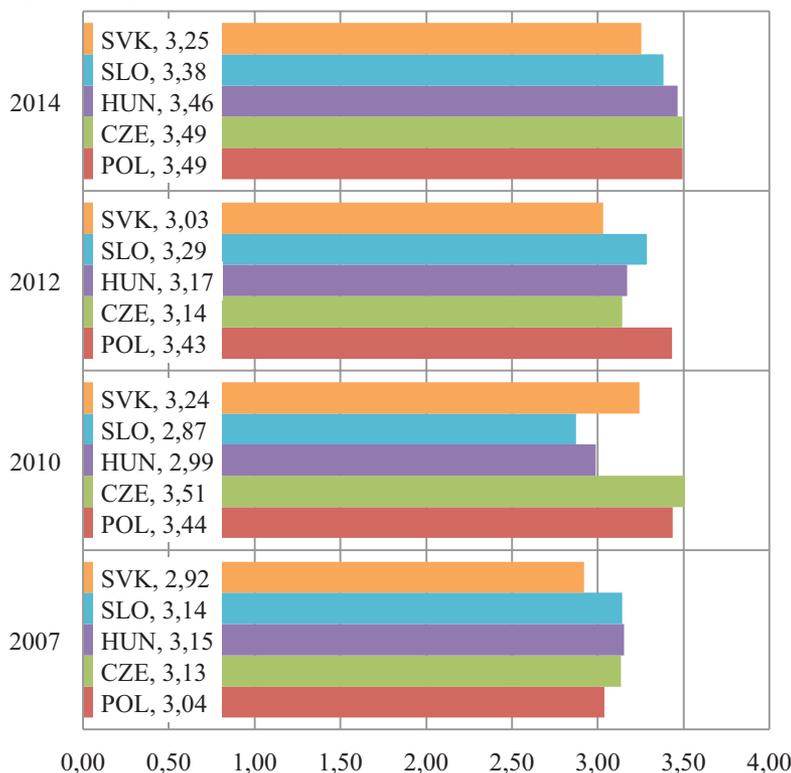
Figure 3: Logistics performance rankings of the observed countries



Source: Data from the World Bank, 2015

Rankings are made on the basis of logistics performance indexes in various fields, which are combined into one index, the Logistics performance index. The indexes for the observed countries in the last years are shown in Figure 4. Slovenia’s LPI index in the year 2014 was 3,38. The lowest score was Slovenia’s in the year 2010 with 2,87 and the highest Czech Republic’s in the same year (3,51).

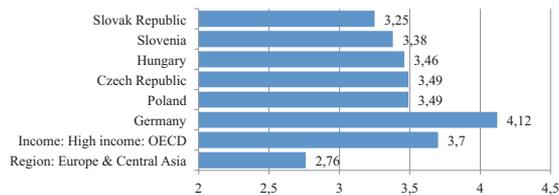
Figure 4: Logistics performance index for the observed countries in 2007-2014



Source: Data from the World Bank, 2015

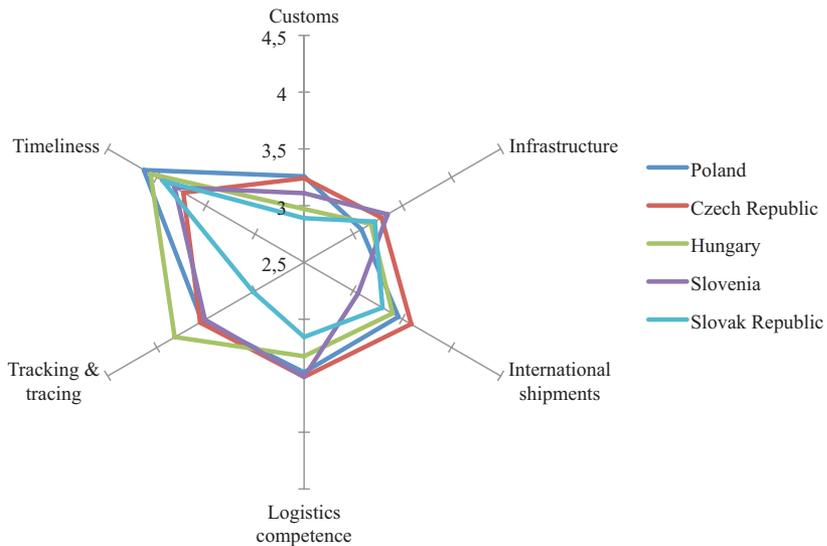
If we look at the comparison of indexes for 2014 and compare them with Germany as the highest scoring country and with a group of high income countries of the OECD and the average score for countries of Europe and Central Asia (see Figure 5), we can see that Germany has a significantly higher score, the average score for high income OECD countries is higher than that of the observed five countries as well. However, in comparison to the average LPI score of the region of Europe and Central Asia, the observed countries have a significantly higher score and therefore the logistics processes in these countries are more developed than in the region as a whole.

Figure 5: Comparisons of LPI index with top performer Germany and some averages for the year 2014



Source: Data from the World Bank, 2015

Figure 6: Performance scores for six dimensions of LPI for Slovenia for year 2014



Source: Data from the World Bank, 2015

Further examination of the six dimensions of LPI for the observed countries for the year 2014 shows that the best performance was achieved in the field of timeliness, where the observed countries scored just slightly lower or are even comparable to high income OECD countries. The most concerning factor in Poland is infrastructure, in Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovak Republic customs procedures, and in Slovenia international shipments.

An assessment of the observed countries' detailed LPI shows reason for concern, since they have mostly not only stagnated, but have fallen in their rankings in the observed years. The difference is not due to their lower overall scores, but mostly due to other countries increasing their logistics development and consequently overtaking this region in the rankings.

The second most relevant measure observed in this paper is the global competitiveness index (GCI). If we take Slovenia as an example, Slovenia's ranking for the years 2014-2015 was 70<sup>th</sup> place (out of 144 countries) with a score of 4,2 (on a scale from 1 to 7 with 7 being the best) and has fallen from 57<sup>th</sup> place in years 2011-2012. A detailed look at GC index in its 2<sup>nd</sup> pillar shows that the quality of Slovenia's infrastructure achieved a score of 5,1 and is ranked on the 34<sup>th</sup> place in year 2014. One interesting part of GCI is also transport infrastructure where Slovenia's ranking was 56<sup>th</sup> place (score of 3,96) in the year 2014. Table 1 below shows the GCI and its derivatives for Slovenia over the past years.

Table 1: Global Competitiveness Index for Slovenia

Year	GCI score	GCI infrastructure score	GCI transport infrastructure score	GCI rank	Ranking in infrastructure	Ranking in transport infrastructure
2011	4,3	5,07	3,97	57	33	56
2012	4,3	5,24	4,01	56	30	53
2013	4,3	5,41	4,04	62	31	54
2014	4,2	5,32	3,96	70	34	56

Source: Data from the World Economic Forum, 2015

A look at the GCI for all of the observed countries in the year 2014 as show in Table 2 shows that the ranking are similar than that of LPI, with the only difference being that Czech Republic is scored better than Poland by GCI, whereas Poland is scored higher by LPI. Additionally, the table shows scores and ranking according to a segment of the GCI that concerns infrastructure and specifically transport infrastructure, since these are the most important elements of the GCI in connection to logistics.

Table 2: Global Competitiveness Index for the observed countries in 2014

	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Slovak Republic	Slovenia
GCI score	4,53	4,28	4,48	4,15	4,22
GCI infra-structure score	5,03	4,99	3,99	4,17	5,07
GCI transport infrastructure score	4,06	3,71	3,41	3,35	3,97
GCI rank	37	60	43	75	70
Ranking in infrastructure	38	41	79	73	34
Ranking in transport infrastructure	53	65	78	83	56

Source: Data from the World Economic Forum, 2015

## CORRELATION BETWEEN SLOVENIA'S AND POLAND'S LOGISTICS PERFORMANCE AND GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

In this section we will compare the Logistics performance index for Slovenia and Poland with the most representative part of Global competitiveness index for the case of logistics, namely transport infrastructure. Slovenia was selected for the comparison since it is the focal country when talking about logistics access for the Visegrad group, and Poland was selected since it is the largest country of the Visegrad four and the highest ranking country of the five observed according to its LPI.

Figure 7 shows the respective ranking weights for Slovenia on a year by year basis for LPI and CGI for transport infrastructure

from the year 2011 on. It has to be noted that the GCI values have only been calculated from 2011 on and that LPI values are only available for years 2012 and 2014, as it was only in these years that the LPI survey was carried out. Hence, the missing LPI scores were estimated by means of linear interpolation, so as to enable the correlation to be calculated and presuming that the values have changed linearly between the measured data points. The estimated points are shown with crosses and the factually measured points are shown with squares. Calculations in this research were done with MS Office Excel tools. We calculated LPI estimations for the year 2011 (3,08) and the year 2013 (3,34). The data points for GCI and LPI from 2011 to 2014 are shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Data for LPI and GCI- Transport infrastructure for Slovenia

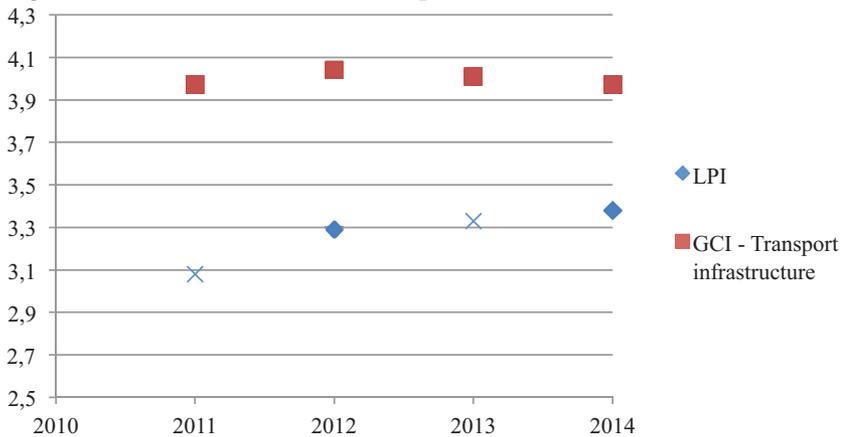
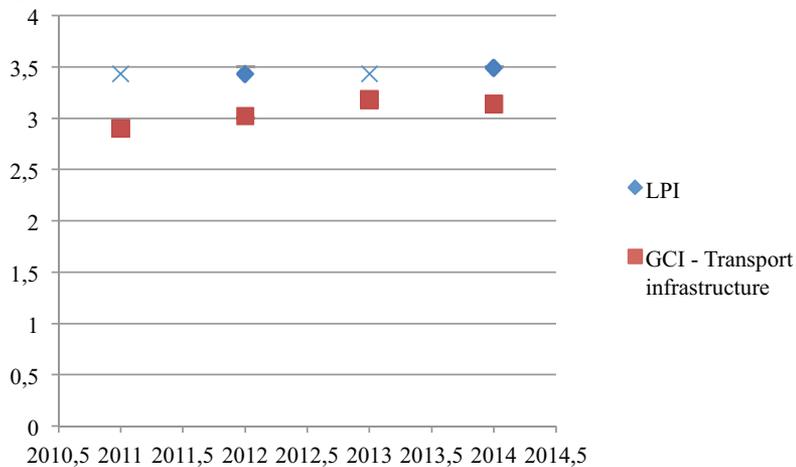


Figure 8: Data for LPI and GCI – Transport infrastructure for Poland



The same procedure was performed for Poland's data. Linear interpolation for Poland's LPI show that estimated LPI for 2011 is 3,43 and for 2013 it is 3,46. Figure 8 shows the comparison between Poland's LPI and GCI in the observed years.

Based on data for LPI and GCI – section transport infrastructure, correlation between two data series was performed. The correlation found between the LPI and GCI – transport infrastructure is 0,28 for Slovenia and 0,42 for Poland, meaning that indeed, there is a close relationship between GCI for the transport infrastructural section and LPI. Thus, what has been introduced as the opinion of the experts in the beginning chapters has also been proven by the result of objective evaluations as well.

## CONCLUSION

The premise that a national economy's competitiveness is affected by the county's logistics development has been claimed by many experts in the past, but has rarely been implemented as a research in the specific environment of Slovenia or the Visegrad Group countries. The research presented here has clearly shown that the same is true for these observed five countries – its rankings in the Global Competitiveness Index scales in the transport infrastructure section and in the Logistics Performance Index scales are correlated. Moreover, further exploration into the state of logistics in Slovenia, Slovak Republic, Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary shows that even though their predispositions are significantly good, the state of today's logistics is not at its optimal level. Taking into account the research findings, this has several important implications for the national, regional and even local policy makers and governmental bodies, mostly pointing to the fact that investing into and encouraging logistics development can be beneficial not only for the logistics sector but potentially much broader. Since the premise of this research has been confirmed for the observed countries, and previous research confirms more general validity of the correlation between logistics performance and national competitiveness, it can be said that this premise is also valid in countries, similar to the observed.

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# Visegrád at a crossroads in Europe: nuclear energy

Patty Zakaria<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

The object of this analysis is twofold. First, it identifies and discusses challenges faced by the Visegrád Group (Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia) in establishing nuclear power plants for energy purposes, and second, it discusses Slovenia's role in Visegrád's nuclear energy plan. Arguably, the 2009 gas crisis and the European Union's emission and renewable target plans have significantly influenced the Visegrád Group to diversify their energy policy to include a mixture of renewable, nuclear, and other sources. This analysis will focus on nuclear energy and the two challenges the Visegrád Group face as they move to expand existing nuclear facilities or establish new ones: (1) proliferation for energy usage can act as a precursor to acquisition of nuclear weapons, which entails a variety of security problems; and (2) rising anti-nuclear sentiments in Europe.

**KEY WORDS:** Nuclear Energy, Nuclear Proliferation, Anti-Nuclear Sentiments, European Union, Visegrád Group

## POVZETEK

Namen analize v članku je dvojen. Prvič, članek prepozna in obravnava izzive višegrajske skupine (Češka, Poljska, Madžarska in Slovaška), s katerimi se soočajo pri določitvi jedrskih elektrarn za energetske namene in drugič, članek obravnava vlogo Slovenije v načrtu jedrske energije višegrajske skupine. Kriza s plinom leta 2009 in cilji glede emisij in obnovljivih virov energije Evropske unije, so močno vplivali na višegrajsko skupino, da je razširila svojo energetske politiko na način, da vključuje mešanico obno-

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vljivih virov, jedrske energije in drugih virov. Članek se osredotoča na jedrsko energijo in dva izziva višegrajske skupine, s katerima se sooča ob širitvi obstoječih jedrskih objektov oz. vzpostavitvi novih: (1) širjenje jedrskega orožja, saj vzpostavitev jedrskih objektov lahko deluje kot predhodnik za pridobitev jedrskega orožja, kar predstavlja vrsto varnostnih problemov in (2) naraščajoče protijedrsko mišljenje v Evropi.

**KJUČNE BESEDE:** jedrska energija, širjenje jedrskega orožja, protijedrsko mišljenje, Evropska unija, višegrajska skupina

## INTRODUCTION: VISEGRÁD GROUP'S NUCLEAR ENERGY POLICY

Due in part to the 2009 gas crisis as well as the European Union's [EU, hereafter] emission and renewable target plans, the Visegrád Group (Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic) is seeking to use new types of energy such as renewable, nuclear, and other sources.<sup>2</sup> This paper will focus on the Visegrád Group's nuclear energy policy and objectives. All four Visegrád Group countries are proponents of energy diversification and are pro-nuclear in order to reduce their energy dependency on Russia as well as reap the benefits from nuclear power's zero emission and high reliability. According to the European Atomic Forum, nuclear energy "is a base-load low-carbon source of energy and can contribute to the fight against climate change" (2014, 4). In addition to environmental benefits, nuclear energy also improves a respective country's energy security. It should be noted that energy security is defined as "the uninterrupted physical availability of energy at a price which is affordable, while respecting environment concerns" (IAEA 2012). According to Rogner and Riahi (2013) nuclear energy "creates energy security benefits in that it provides a reliable base-load power and reduces the share of imported energy" (224).

<sup>2</sup> In 1991, Visegrád Group was established in order to coordinate and support Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia's (succeeded by Czech Republic and Slovakia) economic and political transition as well as accession into the EU and NATO. Moreover, the main objective of Visegrád Group is to advance member countries cooperation in economic, military, and energy policies. With respect to energy, the focus of this article, the 1991 Visegrád Group declaration on cooperation explicitly mentioned the group's cooperation policy regarding energy, whereby it stated the need for developing the infrastructure in the North-South direction in order to further their coordination in energy.

Visegrád Group countries have a mixture of energy sources, which includes renewables, nuclear (for the exception of Poland), natural gas, oil, and solid fuels; nuclear energy is considered a good source of low-carbon energy (Goodfellow et al. 2012; Greenhalgh and Azapagic 2009). Currently, three Visegrád Group countries—Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic—have nuclear power plants and are in the process of expanding their nuclear industry; meanwhile, Poland is planning to construct its first nuclear plant in 2016. The Czech Republic, for example, has six nuclear reactors in electricity production in 2013, whereas both Hungary and Slovakia have four each. Figure 1 illustrates the European countries with and without nuclear power plants.

Figure 1: Mapping of European Nuclear Power Plants



Source: World Nuclear Association (2015)

Poland mainly relied on coal-fired power plants in the past, but as its economy grew and its consumption of electricity increased, coal-fired power plants were no longer ideal, especially given the European Union's aim to reduce CO<sup>2</sup> emissions. As a result, in 2005, the Polish government asserted the need for energy diversification as well as the reduction of CO<sup>2</sup> and sulfur emissions, and so the government decided to establish two nuclear power reactors (Kulczynski 2014). Subsequently, the Polish government moved to establish agreements with American, French, South Korean, and Japanese governments for technology transfers and commercial agreements with firms in those respective countries (Engineer Live 2013). Poland's energy diversification policy aims at moving the country away from its dependency on coal and imported gas, particularly gas imports from Russia, which account for two-thirds of the country's gas supply (World Nuclear Association: Poland, 2015). In 2013, the Economy Ministry commissioned a poll to determine where the public stood on the issue of nuclear energy, and 50% of the respondents stated that they supported plans to build nuclear power plants, whereas 42% of the respondents stated that they did not support this plan (Visegrád Group, December 23, 2013).<sup>3</sup>

In 1982, Hungary's first commercial nuclear energy plant began producing electricity and is scheduled to close in 2032 (World Nuclear Association 2013). As noted above, Hungary has a total of four nuclear reactors, which produce one-third of the country's electricity. Hungary established the Atomic Energy Committee in 1956 to begin the country's nuclear energy program, and in 1966 Hungary and the Soviet Union signed several agreements, which stipulated Soviet assistance in building a nuclear power plant in Budapest. In 2009, the Hungarian parliament overwhelmingly supported a proposal that stipulated increasing the capacity of the country's nuclear power plant by constructing additional nuclear reactors to be completed by 2025.

In 1958, the former Czechoslovak government began construction on the country's first nuclear power plant, which was to be completed by 1972. The first Slovakian nuclear reactor was shut down in 1972 due to an accident at the plant from the refu-

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<sup>3</sup> 8% of the respondents stated that they had no opinion on the issue.

eling process (World Nuclear Association 2013).<sup>4</sup> Slovakia's Bohunice V2-1 and Bohunice V2-2 plants began operating in 1984 and 1985, respectively, and have had significant upgrades over the years, due in part to the country's European Union accession regulations. In 1982, construction began on the Mochovce 1 and 2 nuclear power plants, and each began producing electricity in 1998 and 1999, respectively. Since Slovakia is significantly dependent on Russian oil exports, the Slovak government is moving considerably towards developing additional nuclear power plants. The Czech Republic currently has six nuclear reactors, which generate one-third of the country's electricity. On August 1958, the former Czechoslovakia established its first nuclear power plant in Jaslovské Bohunice, and was in operation between 1972 and 1977, until it was decommissioned (Foratom, 2014). In a 2009 poll by the Prague Security Studies Institute, they found that the majority of citizens in the Czech Republic favored nuclear, renewable, and fossil energy instead of gas, as they felt that the former types of energy were more reliable energy sources (Visegrád.info 2010). The remaining sections of the paper will discuss the two challenges the Visegrád Group faces as they move to establish nuclear power plants.

## CHALLENGES THE VISEGRÁD GROUP FACES

1. Proliferation for energy a precursor to the acquisition of nuclear weapons

The first challenge that the Visegrád Group countries face regarding nuclear energy is the potential risk of nuclear proliferation for non-peaceful means. In all fairness, proliferation concerns for the Visegrád Group countries is nothing new, but as they move to expand their nuclear industry, particularly since this is Poland's first experience with nuclear power plant security, this concern will become a top priority. Having a nuclear power plant and nuclear research poses a possible security risk for a country, in that nuclear technology or material could be stolen from its facilities if security is inadequate. This is especially problematic with the rise of terrorism in the international communi-

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that the Slovak and Czech's early program are linked, due to both countries being part of Czechoslovak.

ty or states seeking nuclear weapons. This situation was clearly evident with the North Korean, Libyan, and Pakistani nuclear programs, especially with AQ Khan's proliferation network and the illicit trade in nuclear related materials that aided both North Korea and Pakistan in acquiring nuclear weapons. During AQ Khan's earlier work in Europe at the Physics Dynamics Research Laboratory and the European Enrichment Consortium, he was able to steal vital centrifuge designs and other nuclear related research information, which helped launch the Pakistani nuclear program and later the North Korean and Libyan programs (Rehman 1999). In order to prevent the proliferation of nuclear technology or material for the purpose of developing nuclear weapons, Visegrád Group countries must ensure compliance and support for the various non-proliferation mechanisms established to prevent the above cases from occurring in Central Europe.

The international community has established a non-proliferation regime. First, the Euratom Treaty of 1957, which established the European Atomic Energy Community, is the foundation for nuclear energy in the European Union. The treaty had two main objectives: first, the treaty seeks to establish Europe's nuclear industry; and second, it deals with issues of nuclear safety, security, and waste management of radioactive materials (Europa 2013). It should be noted that the treaty only covers nuclear programs for the purpose of peaceful means, and perhaps more importantly, includes measures to prevent nuclear proliferation, particularly for military purposes.

Second, in addition to the Euratom Treaty governing nuclear industry, the Non-Proliferation Treaty [NPT, hereafter] of nuclear weapons is a comprehensive international agreement that governs the non-proliferation regime. In 1968, countries began signing the agreement and ratifying, and by 1970 the treaty came into force.<sup>5</sup> The NPT "objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament" (UNODA 2015). All four Visegrád Group countries are party to the NPT; both Poland and Hungary signed the treaty in

<sup>5</sup> The NPT was extended indefinitely in May 1995 (UNODA, 2015).

1968 and ratified it in 1969, while the Czech Republic and Slovakia became party to the NPT in 1993.<sup>6</sup> Thus, as members of the NPT, Visegrád Group countries are obligated by international law to not proliferate nuclear material or knowledge for weaponry purposes, and so this will help reduce the fear that expanding their nuclear energy industry will be a precursor to the acquisition of nuclear weapons by Visegrád Group countries or other countries.

Furthermore, the NPT established the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement, which stipulates that the International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA, hereafter] is responsible for inspecting and verifying that non-nuclear weapons countries' nuclear programs/materials are used strictly for peaceful means—that is, research and energy production. It should be noted that in 1957, the IAEA was developed as a result of deep-rooted fears of nuclear proliferation. The Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements posits that non-nuclear weapons countries must “accept safeguards... on all source or special fissionable material...for the exclusive purpose of verifying that such material is not diverted to nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices” (INFCIRC/153, June 1972). As part of their non-proliferation commitment as stipulated in the NPT, countries must establish safeguard agreements with the IAEA and allow regular inspections of their nuclear power plants and facilities. According to the IAEA Service Series Series (2014, 6–7):

IAEA verification activities may include, among other things, use of IAEA-approved equipment for measurements and monitoring, assuring authenticity of safeguards data, installation of IAEA equipment at facilities, application of seals to IAEA equipment used and stored at facilities, analysis of environmental and nuclear material samples at IAEA laboratories, and verification of the functioning and calibration of equipment using certified reference materials (such as weight standards or enrichment standards).

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<sup>6</sup> Both the Czech Republic and Slovakia were not among the NPT's original signatures and later became party to the NPT in 1993, when Czechoslovakia separated into two independent countries.

The challenge of nuclear proliferation for weapons development is significant for the Visegrád Group, and they must ensure that their expanding nuclear industry is strictly regulated and that meticulous government or third-party oversight is present in order to ensure that theft of nuclear related research or materials, technology leakage, or smuggling does not occur. This is particularly concerning given that corruption is present in varying degrees in the Visegrád Group countries. According to Transparency International's 2014 Corruption Perception Index [CPI, hereafter], Poland is the least corrupt of the four countries with a CPI of 61, and the rest of the group have the following CPI scores: Hungary (48), Slovakia (50), and the Czech Republic (51).<sup>7</sup> Bunn (2009, 124) notes that "corruption was a central enabling factor in all of the nuclear weapons programs of both states and terrorists groups in the past two decades". It is widely documented that Aum Shinrikyo and Al Qaeda both attempted to acquire either stolen nuclear weapons (most likely from the former Soviet Union) or nuclear material to build bombs (Bunn 129). Both Aum Shinrikyo and Al Qaeda have attempted to acquire stolen nuclear weapons or stolen nuclear material by bribing either government officials (most likely in Russia) or individuals working in nuclear facilities with weak measures to ensure security. According to Bunn (2009, 130):

Aum Shinrikyo, for example, reportedly attempted to arrange a meeting in Russia with then-Minister of Atomic Energy Victor Mikhailov, to offer him \$1 million for a nuclear warhead ... Aum Shinrikyo's "Construction Minister," Kiyohide Hayakawa, travelled repeatedly to Russia, buying a wide range of weapons and technologies. (130)

In the case of Iraq, it was able to obtain nuclear knowledge and materials through bribing nuclear experts in Europe and the United States. For example, Iraq gave a \$1 million bribe to German engineer Stemmer to provide "detailed centrifuge design drawings, stolen centrifuge components, and extensive personal assistance to Iraq" (Bunn, 131). Thus, regarding the issue corruption, Visegrád Group countries must ensure that individuals

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<sup>7</sup> The CPI scores range from 0 to 100, where values closer to 0 indicate very corrupt systems and values closer to 100 indicate very clean systems (no corruption).

who are part of nuclear power plant projects or who are technology experts are unable to provide sensitive information to other states or terrorist groups. Furthermore, border security must be improved or strengthened in order to prevent the smuggling of nuclear materials or nuclear related technologies.

Additionally, Visegrád Group countries must ensure adequate security for existing stocks of enriched uranium and separated plutonium, which can be directly used for weapons development. Russia, for example, has inadequate security measures to guard their nuclear weapons and nuclear materials. According to an IAEA report about Russian nuclear materials, there have been “more than a hundred nuclear smuggling incidents since 1993, eighteen of which involved highly enriched uranium, the key ingredient in an atomic bomb and the most dangerous product on the nuclear black market” (Council on Foreign Relations 2006). This situation poses a major security problem for the international community, as terrorist groups and rogue states attempt to proliferate. In that respect, the NPT and the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement are mechanisms to prevent nuclear proliferation for the purpose of developing nuclear weapons. Thus, as long as the Visegrád Group can ensure that they comply with the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and have the IAEA carry out regular inspections of nuclear facilities, this will eliminate the challenge of proliferation for energy as a precursor to the acquisition of nuclear weapons.

## 2. Rising anti-nuclear energy sentiments in Europe

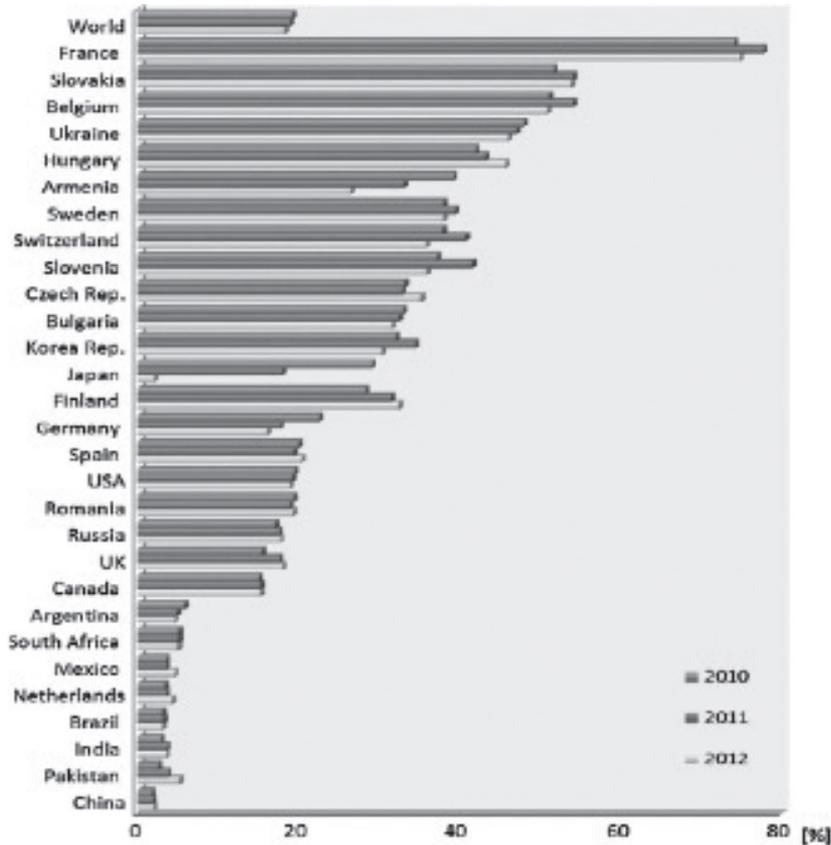
In the aftermath of nuclear disasters such as Three Mile Island in 1979, Chernobyl in 1986, and perhaps most recently Fukushima in 2011, anti-nuclear sentiments in Europe surged. For example, following the 2011 disaster, Germany began phasing out nuclear energy and eventually seeks to shut down all nuclear reactors by 2021. The 2011 Fukushima nuclear power plant disaster has contributed to an increase in anti-nuclear sentiment in Europe, and it is very country-specific, particularly in Germany (Nian and Chou 2014). On March 11, 2011, Japan was hit by a 9.0 magnitude earthquake followed by a tsunami; consequently, eleven nuclear reactors were shut down immediately. Following the earthquake, a 15-meter tsunami emerged, which destroyed

the backup diesel power system used for cooling and eventually led to large explosions and radioactive leakage (IAEA 2015). Preceding the Fukushima nuclear disaster, a nuclear renaissance was taking place as countries moved to deal with inadequacies in energy supply, improve energy security, and deal with climate change (Kiyar and Wittneben 2012). In the case of Central European countries, energy security was a major concern given that they rely heavily on oil and gas exports from Russia, which as times were not completely stable and prone to be disrupted as a result of the political climate, as evident in 2009.

In terms of post-Fukushima sentiments, the present paper will discuss the government-level effect and the individual-level effect of the nuclear disaster. Concerning the government-level effect of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, Bradford (2012) asserted that it changed the political equation for many countries regarding their existing nuclear facilities or proposals to establish new nuclear facilities for the purpose of producing electricity. Thomas (2012) noted that for countries with longstanding anti-nuclear sentiments, the Fukushima nuclear disaster caused them to scale back on their nuclear energy policy. Germany, Switzerland, and Italy, for example, already had strong anti-nuclear sentiments, and post-Fukushima they began to “accelerate the closure of existing plants (Italy’s plants were all closed after a referendum in 1987)” (13). It should be noted that Germany, Italy, and Sweden all had nuclear-phase out plans following the Three Mile Island and Chernobyl nuclear disasters, but gradually shifted towards establishing nuclear power plants as concerns for climate change increased in the 1990s and 2000s (Bradford, 2012). Interestingly, prior to the Fukushima nuclear disaster, Germany (Chancellor Merkel) was allowing its nuclear reactors to operate until the end of their fuel-cycle, instead of the closing date of 2022, which was due to a law passed by the previous government in power (Tindale, 2011). For instance, Chancellor Merkel wanted Germany to continue using nuclear energy until the country is able to become 100% renewable, which is predicted to take several decades. However, the nuclear renaissance in Germany came to an end following the Fukushima nuclear disaster, and the current government has backtracked and moved to support the previous government’s objective of closing all nuclear power plants by 2022.

On the other hand, in some other countries, the Fukushima nuclear disaster had no significant negative impact on their nuclear policy, such as in the United States, France, and India. Thomas (2012) notes that they “seem determined to proceed on the basis that Fukushima has little or no relevance to them” (13). Figure 2 reports the change in nuclear energy in 2010, 2011, and 2012.

Figure 2: Nuclear energy shares between 2010 and 2012



Source: Nian and Chou (2014), p. 839.

Figure 2 shows that both the Czech Republic and Hungary increased their nuclear share between 2011 and 2012, and on the other hand, Slovakia decreased their nuclear energy share between 2011 and 2012, though this was a miniscule change.

On the other hand, at the individual-level, the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster contributed to a considerable rise in anti-nu-

clear energy sentiments in several European countries, which contrasted with previous opinions that supported an increase in nuclear energy. Prior to the Fukushima disaster, public opinion in Europe had supported nuclear energy, where 44% of European Union citizens (27 countries) had supported nuclear energy and 45% were against it (Eurobarometer, 2008). Table 1 presents the Eurobarometer 2008 public opinion poll about nuclear energy.

Table 1: 2008 Public Opinion about energy production by nuclear power plants

Country	Favor	Opposed	Don't Know
Czech Republic	64%	32%	4%
Lithuania	64%	26%	10%
Hungary	63%	32%	5%
Bulgaria	63%	13%	24%
Sweden	62%	35%	3%
Finland	61%	36%	3%
Slovakia	60%	31%	9%
The Netherlands	55%	42%	3%
France	52%	40%	8%
Slovenia	51%	46%	3%
Belgium	50%	47%	3%
United Kingdom	50%	36%	14%
Germany	46%	47%	7%
European Union	44%	45%	11%
Italy	43%	46%	11%
Estonia	41%	53%	6%
Poland	39%	46%	15%
Denmark	36%	62%	2%
Latvia	35%	57%	8%
Romania	35%	38%	27%
Luxemburg	34%	59%	7%
Spain	24%	57%	19%
Ireland	24%	54%	22%
Portugal	23%	55%	22%
Greece	18%	79%	3%
Malta	15%	62%	23%
Austria	14%	83%	3%
Cyprus	7%	80%	13%

Source: Eurobarometer 2008, 111

It should be noted that in 2005, 37% of European Union citizens (27 countries) had supported nuclear energy and 55% were against it (Eurobarometer, 2005). Comparing the results in 2005 and 2008, it is clear that public opinion had shifted towards favoring nuclear energy due to issues of climate change and security of supply issues. According to Kidd (2013), individual-level support for nuclear energy is mainly impacted by nuclear safety, nuclear waste management, the hazard effect on the environment and individuals' health, and finally, the fear of nuclear proliferation (i.e. the spread of nuclear material). The issue of nuclear safety was clearly the main cause associated with the shift in support for nuclear energy following the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

Within Germany and Switzerland, the Fukushima disaster has had a negative impact on political support and public acceptance of nuclear energy. After the Fukushima disaster and following a wave of anti-nuclear energy sentiments among its citizens, Germany moved to shut down 8 of its 17 nuclear reactors, and plans a phase out of the remaining 9 nuclear reactors over the next few years (Thomas 2012). On the other hand, in the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Visegrád Group countries and several Asian countries, nuclear energy is still an important part of their energy mixture (European Atomic Forum 2014). Having become a country with strong anti-nuclear sentiments, Germany, a dominant and powerful country in the European Union, will likely have a considerable influence on states attempting to expand their existing nuclear power plants or establish a nascent program. This situation will create a challenge for the Visegrád Group as they seek to expand nuclear energy facilities, and in the case of Poland, establish their nuclear energy plant, since a dominant actor in the European Union opposes nuclear energy.

## FINAL REMARKS

The Visegrád Group countries' goal to increase their nuclear industry for electricity production for the future requires overcoming the challenges described in the paper: nuclear proliferation and rising anti-nuclear sentiments in Europe. If Visegrád Group countries seek to expand their existing nuclear power facilities or establish new ones, they will likely need to deal with

these two challenges. The first challenge seems much more difficult than the second one, but it is also perhaps more important. Thus, Visegrád Group countries need to ensure that safeguards are fully in place and that security is strengthened for nuclear facilities, particularly for the highest-risk stockpiles of nuclear materials. A possible avenue for Visegrád Group countries and Slovenia is to create a partnership to improve existing security in nuclear power plants as well as ensure that information or expertise does not get into the wrong hands. Increased transparency and cooperation is the key. As the countries move to expand their facilities, this will increase their insecurity with respect to theft of nuclear materials, technology, or information, and so dealing with the first challenge is of utmost importance.

If, however, Visegrád Group decides not to move forward with establishing additional nuclear power plants, they will likely face additional challenges, and which are arguably more cumbersome than the ones they face if they go forward with expanding their nuclear energy supply. Security of energy supply, perhaps the more concerning challenge Visegrád Group faces if they fail to expand their nuclear energy infrastructure. As stated in the previous sections of this article, Visegrád Group are significantly dependent, particularly Hungary, on Russian gas and oil exports. The Russian-Ukrainian militarized dispute, Visegrád Group's energy supply could significantly be affected, as evident in January 2009, where they experienced a shortage of gas as a result of the Russian-Ukrainian gas dispute. Given the current escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian dispute, and a peaceful resolution is not likely to materialize in the near future, and so, Visegrád Group will likely face another potential energy crisis. This situation is especially problematic for Hungary, who is very dependent on Russian gas exports.<sup>8</sup>

Additionally, expanding their nuclear power plants facilities within the Visegrád Group will help them reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases; thereby, fulfilling their Kyoto Agreement criteria to lower greenhouse gases. In terms of carbon dioxide, nuclear power plants “produce only around a tenth of the carbon

<sup>8</sup> Most of the world's uranium supply is either located in Australia or Namibia; therefore, energy security does not pose a problem for Visegrád Group in acquiring the needed uranium to be used to produce nuclear energy supply (Tindale 2011).

dioxide per unit of electricity of coal power stations” (Tindale, 2011; 1). In the case of Poland, it is dependent on coal power plants as an energy source, which is counterproductive to its target goal of reducing emissions. Thus, if Visegrád Group fails to expand their nuclear power supply, particularly as existing nuclear reactors close due to end of fuel cycle, this will pose a challenge for Visegrád Group because they will rely more on solid fuels, thereby posing a challenge for them to fulfill their commitment to the Kyoto Agreement regarding emissions. In summary, nuclear power clearly contributes to improving Visegrád Group’s security of supply as well as cutting greenhouse gas emissions, and thereby getting closer to dealing with climate change.

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# Is Central Europe an Economic Entity? Special Focus on Slovenia

Gorazd Justinek<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

This paper tackles the question of Central Europe (CE) in economic terms, analysing the economic reality and economic power of the region. In this sense, the key trends in the trade of goods among the countries observed are presented, within the scope of which the possible diversification of trade is put forward for Slovenia, the country which is the focus of our research. Since international investment is currently one of the most important economic factors, the key inward investment partners among CE countries are also presented, as well as the main outward investment partners of CE countries. In order to clearly define CE as an economic entity, the final analysis outlines the level of cooperation among the CE countries with regard to transport services, since the majority of today's products are developed or manufactured internationally. On the basis of the analysis performed, the paper draws conclusions as to whether or not the CE region represents an economic entity, and provides some policy recommendations.

**KEY WORDS:** Central Europe, Visegrád Group, European Union, economic indicators, Slovenia

## POVZETEK

Ta članek obravnava vprašanje Srednje Evrope v ekonomskem smislu in sicer skozi analizo gospodarskega stanja in njene ekonomske moči v regiji. V tem okviru so predstavljeni ključni trendi

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v blagovni menjavi med državami, v okviru katerih je v ospredje postavljena Slovenija, ki je tudi v fokusu analize. Ker tuje naložbe še vedno predstavljajo enega izmed najpomembnejših gospodarskih dejavnikov, so predstavljeni tudi ključni vhodni in izhodni investicijski partnerji v državah Srednje Evrope. Za jasno opredelitev Srednje Evrope, kot celovite gospodarske entitete, pa analiza prikazuje tudi raven sodelovanja med državami Srednje Evrope glede na delež menjave v transportnih storitvah, saj je večina današnjih produktov razvitih in proizvedenih v več državah. Na osnovi izvedenih analiz so v članku predstavljeni zaključki o tem ali regija Srednje Evrope predstavlja gospodarsko entiteto ali ne ter ponuja tudi nekaj priporočil.

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** Srednja Evropa, višegrajska supina, Evropska unija, gospodarski kazalci, Slovenija

## INTRODUCTION

This paper will provide an economic analysis of Central Europe (CE) and present some of its key economic indicators, details of its international economic cooperation, as well as the general macro-economic trends in its countries. In order to do so, it is first necessary to clarify what is in fact understood under by the term “CE”.

The term “CE” is defined in many ways. Nič and Swieboda (2014) consider CE to be the four Visegrad Group<sup>2</sup> countries plus Austria. However, the new Declaration on Foreign Policy<sup>3</sup> of the Republic of Slovenia clearly states that Slovenia “is a Central European country”. In the European Commission’s programmes, such as the INTERREG Central Europe Programme,<sup>4</sup> CE is defined as Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, as well as even parts of Germany and Italy

*Cross Currents: A Yearbook of Central European Culture* defines CE “as an abandoned West or a place where East and West collide” (Matejka 2010). George Schöpflin (Cornis-Pope 2006, 3) and others argue that CE is defined as “part of Western Christi-

<sup>2</sup> The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

<sup>3</sup> The Declaration on Foreign Policy of the Republic of Slovenia was adopted by the Slovenian government in July 2015. Available at: [http://www.mzz.gov.si/fileadmin/pageuploads/foto/1507/STRATESKI\\_DOKUMENT\\_-\\_KONCNO\\_-\\_PDF.pdf](http://www.mzz.gov.si/fileadmin/pageuploads/foto/1507/STRATESKI_DOKUMENT_-_KONCNO_-_PDF.pdf), page 14.

<sup>4</sup> More at: <http://www.interreg-central.eu/>

anity”, while Huntington (1996) places the region firmly within Western culture.

Rather than a physical entity, CE seems instead to be a concept of shared history, which contrasts with that of its surrounding regions. The issue of how the CE region should be defined is subject to much debate. The definition chosen often depends on the nationality and historical perspective of the author. In this regard, Jerzy Kłoczowski (2004) sees CE as an area which represents the cultural heritage of the Habsburg Empire (later Austria-Hungary), a concept which is still very popular in regions along the Danube River.

Johnson (1996) asserts that one way to define CE is to assess the frontiers of medieval empires and kingdoms, which largely correspond to the religious frontiers between the Roman Catholic West and the Orthodox East. The pagans of CE were converted to Roman Catholicism, whereas those living in South-Eastern and Eastern Europe were brought into the fold of the Eastern Orthodox Church. He argues that multinational empires were a characteristic of CE, and points out that it is a dynamic historical concept, and not static or spatial in nature. For example, modern-day Eastern Europe includes a fair share of Belarus and western Ukraine, but both regions were part of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth 250 years ago.

To be clear, the Columbia Encyclopaedia (2009) defines CE as Germany, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Austria, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. The CIA World Factbook,<sup>5</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica<sup>6</sup> and the Brockhaus Enzyklopädie<sup>7</sup> define CE in the same way, but also include Slovenia.

As can be seen, a wide variety of countries are sometimes considered to comprise CE. For the purposes of this research, CE will comprise the following: the Visegrad Group countries, Austria and Slovenia.

In this regard, the economic development of these countries will be analysed, with particular focus on the period from 2004,

<sup>5</sup> More at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

<sup>6</sup> More at: <http://www.britannica.com/>

<sup>7</sup> More at: <http://www.brockhaus.de/>

which is when these countries, with the exception of Austria, acceded to the European Union. The incoming and outward trade flows of goods of these countries will then be assessed in order to determine which of their trade partner countries are the most important. These incoming and outgoing investments will be evaluated in order to define which countries invest the most in CE and, conversely, to draw attention to the regions that attract the most investment from CE. Attention will also be devoted to transport and logistic services in order to reveal which CE countries are the best connected logistically. This will assist in defining CE's logistical trends and show the key logistical routes. Slovenia will receive some additional attention in this regard since it is the focus of this special issue of the journal.

On the basis of the analysis performed, which will be carried out by gathering relevant data from the EU, ITC, OECD and the official statistical offices of CE countries, it will be possible to draw some conclusions on economic relations and the interdependence among these countries and some of their neighbours. Ultimately, economic relations are preferable to geographic or cultural definitions in defining economic entities as they describe "real life on the ground". This paper will therefore attempt to answer the main question – is CE an economic entity? In doing so, we will try to add some value to the discussion on defining Central Europe, which in our view is strongly characterised not only by historical facts and religious issues, but primarily by intense economic cooperation (throughout history). Our thesis will be supported with relevant data and figures.

## **THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF CENTRAL EUROPE**

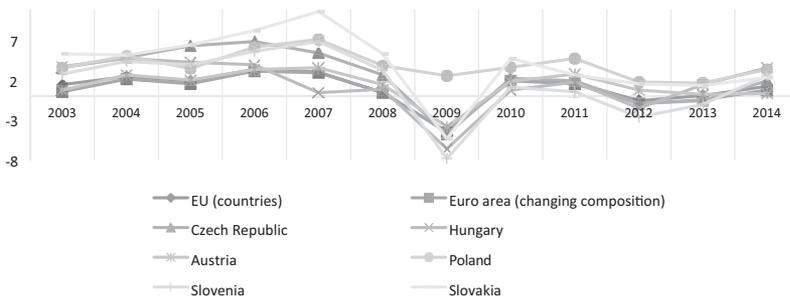
In order to perform an economic analysis of CE, the economic value of these countries must first be assessed. Despite many discussions (OECD 2011; Justinek 2012, 127) on whether GDP is suitable for use as an indicator, there simply is no other more relevant and objective indicator in general use.

In Figure 1 below, we will thus present GDP growth for the selected countries for previous years. As can be seen, almost all the countries rode the "bull" trend in the years preceding the glob-

al financial and economic crisis. This was especially the case for all the V4 countries and Slovenia, all of which joined the EU in 2004, since they had all recorded GDP growth above the EU average. Before the crisis, Slovakia had recorded the highest growth, but during the crisis, Poland was the winner with the lowest GDP fall. By contrast, Slovenia was the hardest hit out of all the Central European countries, recording its biggest fall of GDP in 2009.

To summarise, it could be argued that the countries in CE recorded growth that was above the EU average before the crisis, and that they generally “survived” the crisis with smaller losses than the rest of the EU, with the exception of Slovenia.

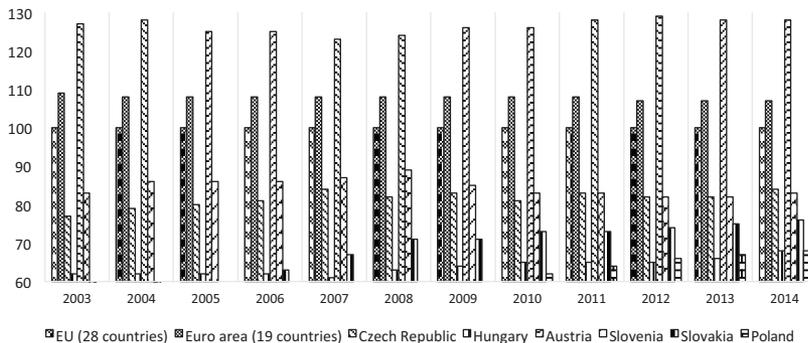
Figure 1: GDP growth in Central European countries



Source: Own presentation on the basis of EUROSTAT data

Nevertheless, GDP growth explains the dynamic, and a common denominator must apply to all the countries in the analysis performed.

Figure 2: GDP per capita in PPS



Source: Own presentation on the basis of EUROSTAT data

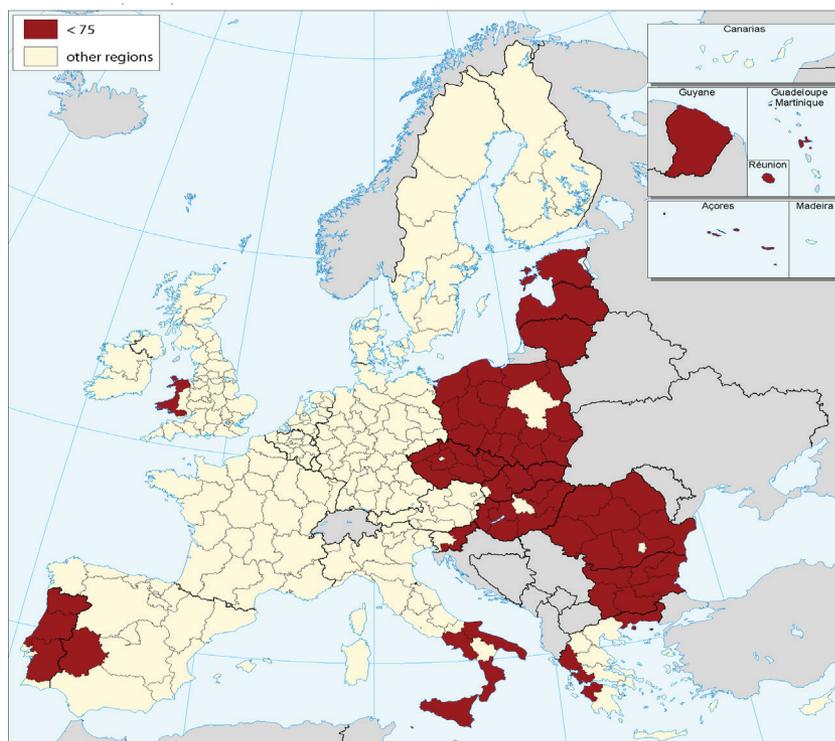
The GDP per capita index in Purchasing Power Standards will therefore be used to measure the economic strength of CE countries. Figure 2 clearly shows that the only country among those observed which was above the EU average was Austria, which reaches almost 130% of the EU average. Among the other countries, it seemed for many years as if Slovenia would be the one to approach the EU average, but the economic crisis put paid to this as performance fell sharply, with the Czech Republic (despite starting far behind in 2003) almost edging ahead in 2014, with Slovakia not far behind.

In summary, CE countries still have a long way to go in terms of reaching the EU average for purchasing power. Nevertheless, some countries (Czech Republic and Slovakia) have demonstrated excellent economic performance, with positive trends in development, and could come very close to the EU average within a decade or so. In this regard, the European cohesion policy for the period 2014–2020 will have an enormous effect, since the majority of these countries will have a relatively high level of funding at their disposal for various development projects. Figure 3 below presents the regions that will be eligible for Cohesion Funds until 2020, and it is clear that Central and Eastern Europe are the two key regions in this regard.

## TRADE FLOWS IN CENTRAL EUROPE

In this section, further attention will be devoted to the import side of trade in goods. Figure 4 represents the rankings between the importing country and the partner country. As can be seen, practically all V4 countries are ranked among the top 10 partners for each other. The Czech Republic ranks 7<sup>th</sup> as an importing partner for Hungary and Poland, whereas Austria and Slovakia are ranked even higher. Slovakia ranks in 13<sup>th</sup> place for Poland but, for others (except Slovenia, which does not feature among the top-ranked countries), the ranking is as high as 4<sup>th</sup> place. Hungary trades least with Poland (16<sup>th</sup> place) and Poland trades least with Austria (13<sup>th</sup> place).

Figure 3: Regions eligible for cohesion funds in EU, 2014–2020



Source: European Commission

Figure 4: Ranking of trade partners (import of goods) among countries of Central Europe, 2014

		Importing country					
		Czech R.	Slovakia	Hungary	Poland	Austria	Slovenia
Partner country	Czech R.	×	3	7	7	4	9
	Slovakia	4	×	4	13	9	23
	Hungary	11	7	×	16	8	8
	Poland	3	6	5	×	13	10
	Austria	9	12	2	15	×	3
	Slovenia	31	26	18	41	14	×

Source: Own presentation on the basis of ITC data

Among the countries observed, Austria stands out due to its development level, and therefore has a slightly different ranking. Austria is a major partner in terms of imports for Hungary and Slovenia, but is not listed among the top ten for the other V4 countries. Almost the same could be said for Slovenia, since Austria is its key partner, while this is not the case for the other V4 countries.

To summarise, it could be argued that from an importing perspective, the V4 countries do tend to represent an economic entity. Austria seems to be partly involved, but Slovenia is certainly not viewed as a major importing player in the region.

Figure 5: Ranking of trade partners (export of goods) among countries of Central Europe, 2014

		Exporting country					
		Czech R.	Slovakia	Hungary	Poland	Austria	Slovenia
Partner country	Czech R.	×	2	8	3	8	11
	Slovakia	2	×	4	10	6	9
	Hungary	9	5	×	9	7	14
	Poland	3	3	7	×	9	8
	Austria	6	4	2	16	×	3
	Slovenia	27	21	21	35	14	×

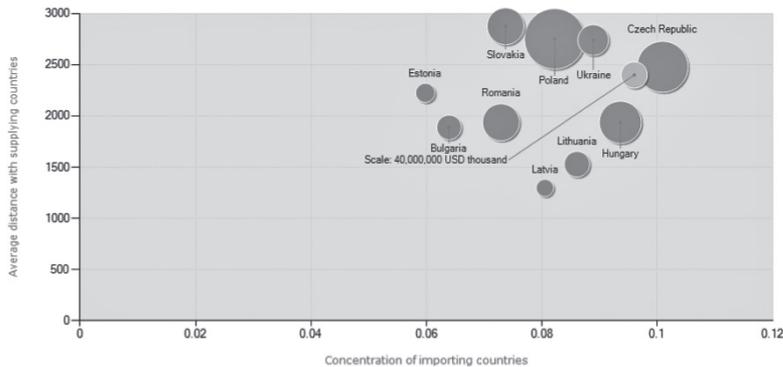
Source: Own presentation on the basis of ITC data

When assessing the export side of trade (Figure 5), it could be argued that “trade” coherence in the Visegrad Group is even greater. CE countries are indeed the biggest partners among themselves in terms of exports. In comparison to the import side, Austria is even more involved with the majority of countries (except Poland). Slovenia still lags far behind in the sense of being a key export partner country.

To summarise, when evaluating the exporting side, it certainly does appear as if the V4 countries and Austria do represent a coherent entity, but it would also seem that Slovenia does not really fit into that group.

Figure 6 below presents some CE countries (and some others<sup>8</sup>) from an interesting perspective, with the size of the bubbles displayed representing the size of the total value of a country's imports. In this sense, Poland is the largest player, followed by the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia. On the horizontal axis the concentration of importing countries is presented, with the largest concentration recorded for the Czech Republic, followed by Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. The vertical axis shows the average distance to supplying countries. It is clear that practically all the countries observed trade the most within a range of 2,000 kilometres, confirming that the region is indeed economically connected.

Figure 6: Concentration of importing countries and average distance to their supplying countries, All products, 2014



Source: Own presentation on the basis of ITC Trademap

The data provided reveals that CE countries do indeed tend to trade mostly within the region. However, our trade analysis showed that V4 countries are slightly more interconnected in terms of trade in goods. In this regard, Slovenia and Austria stand out slightly, since they are both not only important partners for CE countries (especially Austria), but also enjoy strong links with Western European countries, especially Germany, France and Italy.

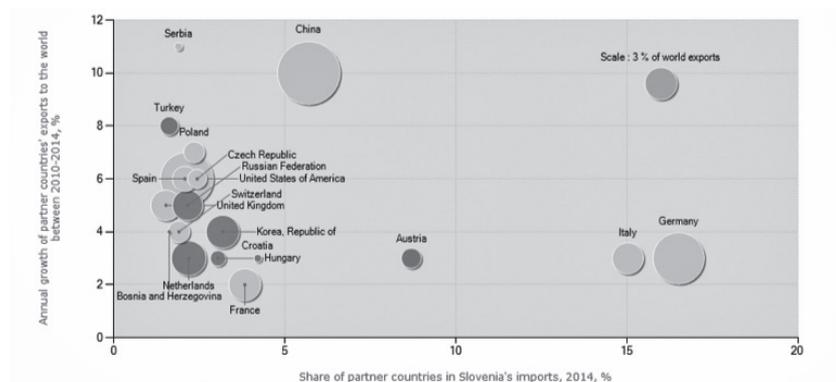
Nevertheless, since it is the specifics of Slovenia's trade indicators that are in focus, Figure 7 presents the diversification pro-

<sup>8</sup> As defined by ITC (The region of Central and Eastern Europe)

pects for Slovenia on the import side of Slovenia's trade balance. The size of the bubble represents the country's share of global exports. It is therefore no surprise that the largest bubbles are for China, Germany and the USA.

Nevertheless, the most interesting information provided in Figure 7 is encapsulated in the dark and light bubbles. The dark bubbles represent those of Slovenia's partner countries where Slovenia's import growth from that country was larger than its partner countries' export growth to the rest of the world. In short, the countries with dark bubbles represent a situation where Slovenia has been more active with these countries on the import side.

Figure 7: Prospects for diversification of suppliers for a product imported to Slovenia in 2014



Source: Own presentation on the basis of ITC Trademap

As can be seen in the diagram provided, only a few countries feature dark-coloured bubbles; among them, there are two CE countries – Austria and Hungary. Poland and the Czech Republic are represented with light bubbles, which indicates that there is potential for Slovenia to exploit in terms of imports from these two countries. Slovakia is not even listed among the key 20 countries observed for Slovenia.

To summarise, the connection between Slovenia and the rest of the CE countries is very strong. This is especially the case with Austria and Hungary, where significant growth has been recorded. However, there remains a great deal of potential for additional

diversification regarding imports with Poland and the Czech Republic, not to mention Slovakia.

## INVESTMENTS IN CENTRAL EUROPE

However, in a globalised world, it is no longer sufficient to analyse only trade flows. We must also take investment flows and investment stock into account. In this regard we will take a closer look at the stock of foreign direct investments (FDIs) in all the CE countries observed.

As can be seen in Figure 8, CE countries (except Austria) are not key investors in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland or Slovenia. Of the countries observed, only Slovakia represents a very interesting location for FDIs from the region. Austria stands out in this analysis since it is a major investment partner for practically all the countries observed (it ranks among the top four investors in each country, except Poland). Moreover, Austria is slightly different compared to the other countries in terms of attracting FDIs from other CE countries, since none of the other CE countries are represented as important investors (Slovakia ranks highest in 32<sup>nd</sup> place).

Figure 8: Ranking of investment partners, inward foreign direct investment stock among the countries of Central Europe, 2012

		Inward country stock					
		Czech R.	Slovakia	Hungary	Poland	Austria	Slovenia
Partner country	Czech R.	×	5	34	27	41	15
	Slovakia	10	×	29	28	32	28
	Hungary	22	6	×	20	34	14
	Poland	13	60	25	×	40	33
	Austria	3	2	4	10	×	1
	Slovenia	29	32	37	41	35	×

Source: Own presentation on the basis of ITC Investment Map

Based on the rankings of the CE countries for inward investment stock, the conclusion can be reached that the region shares

some characteristics. The countries observed do not represent key investment partners among themselves, as was the case when analysing trade. The only country which stands out is Austria, since it plays an important role in practically all the countries observed.

However, in Figure 9, we analyse the outgoing investments in order to define the investing focus of CE countries, with some interesting results emerging.

Figure 9: Ranking of investment partners, outward foreign direct investment stock among the countries of Central Europe, 2012

		Outward country stock					
		Czech R.	Slovakia	Hungary	Poland	Austria	Slovenia
Partner country	Czech R.	×	1	18	7	2	37
	Slovakia	2	×	7	22	11	14
	Hungary	15	11	×	16	6	27
	Poland	11	7	19	×	15	12
	Austria	25	4	23	20	×	11
	Slovenia	28	17	24	48	21	×

Source: Own presentation on the basis of the ITC Investment Map

Czech investments are mainly concentrated on Slovakia. Slovakia is again the only CE country which is very much focused on other CE countries, with the majority of its outward investments made in this region. Although Hungary is focused on Slovakia, other CE countries do not represent a significant part of its outgoing FDIs. Poland is focused on the Czech Republic, while other CE countries again lag far behind. Surprisingly, Austria is not so engaged with CE countries, despite the aforementioned fact that it is a major inward investment partner for the majority of them. However, as can be seen, the outgoing investments from Austria are much more focused on other regions (mainly the Balkans), since only neighbouring Hungary and the Czech Republic are high on Austria's investment agenda.

Similar conclusions could also be drawn for Slovenia, since its outward investments are focused on the Balkan region and not so much on CE countries (Austria in 11<sup>th</sup> place and Poland in 12<sup>th</sup> place rank highest, while all the others lag far behind).

To summarise, after the investment analysis, it is clear that there are some common trends in the region. Austria is a major investor in the region, despite the fact that the majority of its investments are focused on countries outside CE. With regard to incoming FDIs, the V4 countries plus Slovenia could represent an entity with similar characteristics. In terms of outward investments, it was difficult to define any common characteristics among the countries apart from the fact that Slovakia is a target investment country for practically all the countries observed.

## TRANSPORT SERVICES

In terms of international cooperation, the importance of transport and logistics services is also increasingly coming to the fore, because most modern products and services are now being developed and produced internationally. Therefore, the rankings of trade partners for the import of transport services among the observed CE countries are presented in Figure 10 below.

Figure 10: Ranking of trade partners (import of transport services) among countries of Central Europe, 2013

		Importing country					
		Czech R.	Slovakia	Hungary	Poland	Austria	Slovenia
Partner country	Czech R.	×	/	13	6	5	24
	Slovakia	5	×	3	15	4	8
	Hungary	14	/	×	18	2	14
	Poland	12	/	11	×	3	18
	Austria	16	/	2	10	×	1
	Slovenia	33	/	22	37	11	×

Source: Own presentation on the basis of ITC data

Figure 10 shows that Austria imports the majority of its transport services from the V4 countries. All the V4 countries feature among its top five partners, with just Slovenia “lagging behind” in 11<sup>th</sup> place. The Czech Republic imports the most from Slovakia, with all the other countries following behind. Hungary imports the most transport services from Austria and Slovakia, and Poland from the Czech Republic. Slovenia’s main partner in this regard is Austria, and Slovakia ranks among the top ten, while none of the other countries are represented among the key partners. It is also interesting to note that the ITC has no data recorded for Slovakia, preventing us from analysing its transport sector.

We could conclude that Austria imports the majority of transport services from CE countries. However, for the other countries, it is difficult to draw general inferences since it is clear that their import activities are widely dispersed among countries outside the CE region.

Figure 11 below presents the trade activities of CE countries regarding the export of transport services. The Czech Republic exports the most to Slovakia and Poland, whereas Hungary exports the most to Austria and Poland. Austria, on the other hand, is concentrated on Hungary and the Czech Republic. Slovenia exports the most to Austria, but none of the other CE countries are ranked among its main partners. ITC again does not have data for Slovakia, so it was not possible to evaluate its performance.

Figure 11: Ranking of trade partners (export of transport services) among countries of Central Europe, 2013

		Exporting country					
		Czech R.	Slovakia	Hungary	Poland	Austria	Slovenia
Partner country	Czech R.	×	/	18	12	8	17
	Slovakia	4	×	9	17	12	9
	Hungary	12	/	×	15	6	14
	Poland	7	/	7	×	14	19
	Austria	9	/	1	7	×	1
	Slovenia	27	/	25	34	16	×

Source: Own presentation on the basis of ITC data

To summarise, Austria clearly represents one of the main partners for all CE countries, as well as on the import and export sides of transport services, but it would be difficult to draw any other common conclusions or trends with regard to the other countries observed.

## CONCLUSION

In response to the question posed at the outset as to whether CE countries represent an economic entity, it would be difficult to agree unequivocally. In the analysis performed, we demonstrated that the level of trade among the observed countries was high. However, it could hardly be claimed that the majority traded among themselves, since there were very few instances where CE countries were listed among the top five partners for any CE country. There are of course exceptions for some of the countries, but it is difficult to draw general conclusions for the whole region.

There is even less coherence with regard to investment flows. One conclusion which stands out is that Austria is a major partner for practically all the countries observed.

A very similar conclusion could be also reached with regard to transport services, since Austria is heavily involved with practically all the CE countries, but some common characteristics for all the CE countries observed could again be difficult to define.

Therefore, after the analysis performed, it is not possible to confirm that the region is economically coherent. It could be said that this is partially true for the V4 countries although, even with this group, important oscillations are recorded. Austria is often considered an important partner in almost all the segments observed, but has a slightly different position due to its economic performance and development. Slovenia lags behind in this respect and could certainly improve its trade diversification and focus more towards CE countries. It is therefore interesting that there are not more investment activities underway between Slovenia and the V4 countries. The same could be argued for trade in transport services, since Slovenia and its Port of Koper do represent the key maritime entry point for the whole region.

To conclude, the economic analysis performed has not proven that the economic coherence of the region is high; it would therefore be difficult to attribute the status of “economic entity” to CE. There are however some important correlations between some countries, which do stand out, but these are not general trends that could be applied to the majority of CE countries.

In this respect, we could also provide some policy recommendations. The observed countries could in the future boost their cooperation between each other in many areas. This could be achieved in the field of trade of goods through different support programmes carried out by national export promotion agencies and national investment agencies when discussing FDIs. The question of transport services remains open, since CE countries have been historically well connected with established transport routes, even since the Hapsburg Empire; however, the data provided does not show the extent of these transport links between the countries. Some opportunities could be found in relation to the new EU Cohesion Policy until the year 2020 or within the framework of micro-region EU projects, such as the Danube Strategy Programme.

Many questions therefore remain open and much research still needs to be conducted in the context of CE and in order to live the CE in economic terms in reality.

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# review articles

**What is the role of Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?**

*Erhard Busek*

**The concepts of Central Europe in the  
historical consciousness of the Slovenes**

*Andrej Rahten*

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**Slovenia's role in the Visegrad  
Group: a view from Poland**

*Anna Visvizi*



# What is the role of Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

Erhard Busek<sup>1</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

Without any doubt, the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a “European century”, but there are doubts that the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a European century! This depends on Europe itself and the capacity to formulate the role of Europe. Obviously, we are in a new stage of Europe. History knows Europe in different appearances. It makes no sense to define all the periods, but for the influence of the past, you may mention some of these on the Europe of today.

- We had the Europe of aristocracy partly until the World War I., where some families dominated the continent. A lot of left over especially on history and memory.
- We have the Europe of enlightenment, where by French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars the human rights and the nation state, but also the development of the nationalities were very much supported. The downfall of Yugoslavia was the last step of this way in our continent.
- We have the European decolonisation, where until after the World War II. Great Britain and France suffered a lot on the consequences. It is still an open question for the future, if the Russia of today might be understood as a colonial power concerning Siberia, Caucasus and so on.
- We had a Europe of global catastrophes, like the two World Wars with the consequence of the movement to unification or on lower level a better continental cooperation.

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ISSN 1855-7694 ©2015, European Perspectives, UDK: 327 (4)

- We had the Europe of the East-West-Division, where afterwards some ways to integration were gone, but it was not the whole Europe and division lines still exist.

### **ANNUS MIRABILIS 1989**

Since 1989 we have a new chance to build up Europe in a real sense. It is a very positive development, which is sometimes not really seen by everyone. What are the arguments?

1. The improvement of democracies.
  - We have never had such a great number of democracies in Europe.
  - We had a new map, where by the downfall of Yugoslavia and Soviet Union the last step of development of nation states happened, but we have to recognise we have not the same level of development in all the European countries.
2. Europe is still a huge economic power, but more and more we are getting the feeling that politically it is not the case and the Economic crisis is pulling Europe down.
3. It is clear that the job concerning Europe is not yet finished: The enlargement of the European Union is going slower and slower, maybe it is already at the end, we have some failed states, having not yet arrived at the quality we need in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we have also more social imbalances between the different countries and therefore also migration and unrest.
4. We have now the economic crises, but here I am really convinced that crises are always a chance for improvement, maybe it is necessary that we are learning through it our lesson. André Malraux developed a nice form, mentioning that we are living in a “musée imaginaire”, where many different situations in history are existing at the same time and we can go through and choose what we want for our understanding. Any way, the crises is a chance to develop new instruments.

## EUROPE AND THE GLOBAL VILLAGE

The second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was very much influenced by the desire to create a common Europe. For the moment, we are not very close to this and it seems sometimes that we are getting a revival of the nation state and the reducing of the possibilities of the European Institutions. Personally, I am convinced that neo-nationalism is a kind of a new old egoism, because the concept of the nation state does not fit to the development of globalisation. Some voices are asking for stopping globalisation, but this is not very realistic. If we are looking to the development of our information-society, of technology, of the economic situation and mobility we are coming closer and closer nearly everyday. So far, we have to look to the fact, that Europe is only 7% of the global population, but 25% of the economy and still a strong power in brain. The real question actually and in the future is: which role and position will Europe have in the global village. This can only be answered if we know, what is the contend of Europe. After World War II it was the “peace project” of the European integration. It has to be said quite clearly: it is a success story until now. The downfall of huge empires are always creating many wars, if we are looking to the history books. The downfall of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact System did not create this. It happened concerning Yugoslavia, but it was a fail of the strategy of the Europeans to this question.

Therefore, we are in the context of the question: do we want more Europe or less Europe and in which way are we dealing with our neighbours. Here I may say that Middle East and Turkey, but also Russia are one of the open questions, where we have to react. The current crises is creating a situation where we are more looking inwards than outward to the necessary problematic questions. It has to be mentioned that for example the financial and banking crises are solved by more Europe in contrary to proposals that we need less Europe, but the real background of this question is the challenge for more leadership, which is missed in politics nearly everywhere in Europe.

## WHICH KIND OF EUROPE?

What are the open questions of Europe? First of all, we have to register that we have many European Institutions: European Council, European Parliament, European Member States, European Central Bank, Council of Europe, OSCE and so on. Sometimes there is a competition, sometimes a contradiction and sometimes a lack of real political will. So far, we have to solve the problem, who is leading in this process.

There is also a lack of transparency. This is very much supported by populism, because if you offer primitive solutions, than it is easier to have success in politics, but there are no possibilities to solve the problems. We are creating always more institutions and more legislations and the consequence is, that the European citizens are going on distance nearly to everything.

Europe has still a power and it has to be accepted that Euro is a sign of this. The establishment was not done with the necessary consequences concerning European budgeting, taxation, banking and decision-making. The real background is also the fact that we have a very differentiated economic and social landscape, but we need more equality between the different regions, not necessary between the European Citizens. That means that solidarity is one of the big challenges for the future of Europe. If we are speaking about that after the East-West-Division, we will have now a division between North and South. We have the problem of an unemployed young generation in different countries and obviously no European capacity to get common solutions.

In general, we have to say: there is no real discourse on the concept of Europe. We are using some phrases like Europe of the citizens, sometimes it is said that we need “my Europe” to answer the question, where we are at home here.

The condition for all of these are elementary questions or better to say an elementary consensus.

- Concerning geography: how far reaches Europe?
- Concerning history: because we have still no common history writing, not even a very intense discussion between the different perspectives of history in Europe. I am involved in

the Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe (CDRSEE), where we are trying to compare the history books of the Balkans. It is a nightmare! Okay. That is the Balkans, but it is not better in other parts of Europe.

- Instead of this, we need common narratives, which for sure exist by arts and literature but also religions and scientific solutions. We need a common European understanding. Here it has to be said, that the fact, that everything is different in Europe is not the problem. It is in reality a richness. That is the impressive result of culture in Europe.

But what we need is a common understanding on aims. We have peace, but this does not anymore convince the younger generation, because it is understood, that it is naturally in Europe. Hopefully this understanding is right! In this context, we need a role of culture in arts, but we need also an political culture. Do we have the right way to discuss the international problems, the problems between nations, the problems between social groups and so on? In addition: where are the decisions done? On the European level, on the level of the nations and the citizens and how is the legitimation done? Which competencies do we need for Europe, for the nation states, for the region and so on?

### **A NEW EUROPEAN AGENDA?**

Let me mention some points on this:

1. We need a responsibility for leadership on every level: in Europe, in the nation states, in the regions, in the social groups, in the civil society.
2. A new way of transparency has to be found because it is a precondition for a common understanding.
3. We have a development, where the legitimation of democracies has to be done in a new way. We have a European Parliament but no European parties, no democratically elected European Council and so on.
4. The participation of the European citizen is a big problem. To look to the media means, that we have still a very

separated system. To give a primitive example: we have no European talk show! Simultaneous translation is already invented, but at the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) they told me, that making European talk shows they have to divide the advertisement, which is wanted by nobody. So far we have for sure European sport events, we have the Eurovision Song Contest and so on, but not the right way to create a common European political understanding.

### **A EUROPEAN TO DO LIST**

Some American authors compared the USA with Europe, saying that America is Mars and Europe is Venus. Soft power is an equivalence for our continent, it is nice, convenient and challenging, but it has to be shown in the relations in the neighbourhood. What are the challenges?

1. We need strategic concepts for the future: climate change, catastrophes in the nature, infrastructure, and high unemployment rates and so on are pretty well known, but without any answers.
2. The anticipation of problems, which we can provide is necessary. So especially concerning migration, the relations to other parts of the world, the necessity for brain circulation and the common responsibility for education – only to mention some of them.
3. Europe has to be a centre of excellence. We have to look to the conditions, excellencies and what has to be done that it is really possible.
4. Networking: the possibilities of connections by the modern technology is really great. Is it used in the right way or even in the full extend?
5. We need a dialog of the artists, intellectuals, scientists and so on narratives. History has produced a lot of contributions, but what are the contributions of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
6. We need a better knowledge about us Europeans, but also about the others around Europe.

7. What are the dominating values in Europe? Here is a challenge existing for the universities, for churches, for foundations, especially also concerning ethics in Europe. Until now even the discussion about corruption and tax avoidance created not really results.

## **EUROPE FOR THE YOUNG GENERATION**

The creation of the Universities in Europe as a common concept in the outgoing Middle Ages using the same language (Latin), having the same disciplines and creating an impressive mobility of the teachers and students has to be developed also in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is one of the possibilities to overcome the divisions in Europe, which newly erected - concerning Southeast Europe, concerning South Europe and so on. The background is the need for enlargement of the European Union, because we have still some areas, where now strategy can be recognised only to mention Southeast Europe, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus. Also it is necessary to create a new form of macro regions, which is coming up concerning the Baltic Sea and the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). The “Arab Spring” - if it is really a spring creates the necessity to do something in the Mediterranean area. Also the important role of Turkey as a bridge for an Eurasia-concept has to be elaborated.

It is very essential to use more fantasy and trust for possible solutions. It is one European tendency always to know why something is not possible, but it is also a challenge to say that we can do it, because Europe is a gifted continent. It is a scientific and literary tradition to elaborate a lot on possible doomsdays for our world. What we need more are scenarios for the future. Europe will be a laboratory for the future in the context of the global world and the test are for solutions! A lot to do for the Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century!

## **MIGRATION ISSUES IN EUROPE**

The current situation in Europe, especially also in Southeast Europe is very difficult concerning the refugees and asylum question. First of all it has to be said that the European Union

member states are not really prepared to this subject, but it has to be said, that it was clear for a long time, that it might happen, but here you have the situation, that every institution and every country pushed the problem to the other and a basic solution was not really done. Concerning Southeast Europe, I am convinced that they are not able to keep a huge number of refugees and I understand them that they are pushing them through to go to Germany, Austria, Great Britain and so on. I think, there can be done quite more as it is done know, but it is very much connected with internal problems, because every political party and every politician wants to gain something out of this subject, which is a total nonsense. As somebody, who was boring during the Second World War I may say, that we have been more able in the past to handle refugee problems, because we had a lot in 1956 (Hungarian Revolution), in 1968 (Prague Spring) during the time the Polish Crisis in the 80<sup>th</sup> and even in the time of the Balkan Wars! I hope that the member states of the European Union are considering that they are able to manage the problem.

In these countries there was a problem of migrations for a long time, not so impressive as now but with an impact on the countries, migration was happening by especially gifted people to get better conditions for life and for sure also a better education. I have to confess, that for example Austria is living out of this, because we have in every field, from hospital to tourism and so on, a lot of labour force out of the different countries in Europe in East and Southeast. Here we have to be grateful, because it is solving many problems, which we have concerning trained labour force, but this will be overshadowed now by the refugee question.

If it is going on – and I suppose, that it will do – we have to develop a strategy, where we are going to the sources of this development. What does it mean? For example to stop the war in Syria, to get better solution in Iraq and in Libya and so on, because we can expect, that also especially from Black Africa, there will come a lot of people also in the same way. We have to prepare ourselves for this, because Europe is not an island and we are very much connected with other parts in the world. This is also the real sense of globalisation, not only to find additional markets and so on. It is a key challenge for our common future. One

additional remark: Europe is only 7 % of the global population and for the moment around 25 % of the economic power. I think, both is an obligation. On the one side to get additional people, on the other side to use our economic power for a good common future.

### **A FEW FINAL WORDS ON CENTRAL EUROPE**

A discussion about Central Europe did not exist for 1989, because it was divided between East and West. Since that time, it came back, but it was not used politically. I think by arts, by transport and so on we have feelings for Central Europe, not so by politics. They have for sure a Central European Initiative (CEI), but it is now an organisation with no power, although with 18 member states. Another example are the Visegrád Countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary), which are cooperating in a certain way not too intensive, but they have some results. A real cooperation of the Central European countries, not even within the European Union does not exist, which is for sure a mistake. In the majority in Central Europe, we have smaller states (Poland is an exception) and they shall look to articulate their common interests also within the European Union. I hope that they are learning on this subject, because until now there was a certain arrogance within the European Union towards especially the newcomers in the EU. It lasted very long until the first Central Europeans got a real responsibility within the Institutions of the European Union. There is an improvement and they are pushed forward also to consider a certain strategy, because the Ukrainian crisis is showing that here are necessities of a closer cooperation to stabilize also the neighbourhood of Central Europe.



# The concepts of Central Europe in the historical consciousness of the Slovenes

Andrej Rahten<sup>1</sup>

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What does the Central European idea symbolize today, 100 years after the outbreak of World War I, in which the fate of the three great empires in Central and Eastern Europe was sealed? Perhaps even more important might be the following question: Is there a chance for Central Europe a decade after the successful EU enlargement to the East? Only a few years ago one could namely read an article in the famous British magazine *The Economist*, asking: Does Central Europe exist?<sup>2</sup>

Historical experiences are still playing a big role in answering this question. It would be going too far to explain all the different geographical, cultural and geopolitical definitions of Central Europe that developed in the last century. Literature concerning this subject is very extensive and diverse or quite many-coloured. I say many-coloured, as there were always many attempts in history to define Central Europe in colour combinations. Personally I tend towards the thoughts of the Hungarian historian Péter Hanák who said that the Central European idea had the quality of a fluorescent colour: It fades during the daytime, but shines when it is dark in the heart of Europe. It shone brightest in the era of totalitarian systems: fascism, Nazism and the Soviet communism.<sup>3</sup> Twenty years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, the former Austrian Vice-Chancellor Erhard Busek wrote in an anniversary issue of the journal *Der Donauraum* that it was still impressive how the common history in the Habsburg Monarchy

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ISSN 1855-7694 ©2015, European Perspectives, UDK: 327 (4)

<sup>2</sup> "Central Questions", *The Economist*, 6 March 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Péter Hanák, "Razmatranje ideje Srednje Europe", in: Jaques Le Rider, *Mitteuropa* (Barbat: Zagreb 1998), 261–272, here 261.

was more firmly anchored in the memory and consciousness of the Austrian neighbouring countries than in the Austrians themselves.<sup>4</sup> It would be interesting to know if this theory could be applied to Slovenia to the present day.<sup>5</sup>

In the last years of Yugoslavia and in the early years of independent Slovenia, the Slovene historiography explored Central European concepts of the Slovene politicians in the late Habsburg Monarchy. The speeches and essays of the last governor of Carniola Ivan Šusteršič, who had been demonised for many decades in the Yugoslav period for his apodictic Austrian dynastic orientation, had been re-read. Shortly before the Umsturz in October 1918, Šusteršič presented in a series of articles an interesting plan for the transformation of Austria-Hungary to a Danube Confederation of equal nation states. According to his idea, “the United Danube States” should include “all those nation states that would evolve from the current Habsburg Monarchy”.<sup>6</sup> Thereby he meant Yugoslavia, German-Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Ukraine and Romania. Each member state would have its own government and “for the protection of vital common interests” they would integrate to form “a big, although loose confederation”. The Danube Confederation would form a single economic, customs and monetary area. The Confederation would have common diplomatic missions. At the same time, Confederation members could have their own representations abroad. Common affairs would be under the jurisdiction of the Federal Council, the presidency and “joint representation as legal successor of which would be in the jurisdiction of the Habsburg Dynasty”. The chairperson of the Confederation would have similar rights to those of the Swiss federal president or the British king. Šusteršič believed that the Danube Confederation should not be a vanguard of the Greater German imperialism, but rather a guarantee for a free development of young nations in Central Europe.<sup>7</sup> Šusteršič’s Central European concept corresponds both in time and content to the famous plan of the Hungarian politician and journalist Os-

<sup>4</sup> Erhard Busek, „20 Jahre Fall des Eisernen Vorhangs“, *Der Donauraum* 49 (2009), 273–284, here 273.

<sup>5</sup> This article is based on the author’s lecture at the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, 14 December 2013.

<sup>6</sup> *Novice*, 24 October 1918.

<sup>7</sup> *Novice*, 26 October 1918.

car Jászi who was also in favour of “the United Danube States”, comprising Austria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Illyria.<sup>8</sup>

It is interesting that almost at the same time one of the leading Slovene Social Democrats Henrik Tuma also stood up for the preservation of an “Adriatic, Danube, Sudetes and Carpathian country group”. He was convinced that such a state group would be strong enough to protect Central Europe against the imperialist ambitions of Germany, Russia and Italy. In Tuma’s eyes, such a structure would be the heart of a future European confederation that should be based on international labour solidarity.<sup>9</sup> But neither Šusteršič nor Tuma were able to succeed with their own concepts of the Danube Confederation in the autumn of 1918. Their common, main adversary was Anton Korošec who was leader of the South Slav members of the parliament of Vienna. He said goodbye to the last Habsburg Emperor Charles with these words: “It is too late, Your Majesty!” Most of the Slovene and Croatian politicians fled from the ruins of World War I under the sceptre of the Karađorđević dynasty, as they believed to have caught the right historic moment for it. This was soon followed by disappointment, both in the domestic as well as in the foreign policy.

No wonder that the “fascination with Central Europe” in the Yugoslav period still remained part of the Slovene political thought. It was initially mentioned by some Slovene Social Democrats, e. g. Dragotin Gustinčič, as a kind of a Danube alliance (“Sudoba”), however it was never fully forgotten even in the Catholic camp. A member of the latter was among others Šusteršič’s most faithful supporter Matija Škerbec. A representative of the Christian personalism Edvard Kocbek published an article in the magazine *Dejanje* in 1940, when much of Europe was already under the Nazi rule. In the article he campaigned for a Central European Federation.<sup>10</sup> A year later Lambert Ehrlich, who had a great moral authority in the Slovene political Cathol-

<sup>8</sup> Hanák, *Razmatranje*, 268.

<sup>9</sup> Henrik Tuma, „Zur südslawischen Frage“, *Der Kampf*, Vienna, XI/1918, 87 and 90; „X. zbor Jugoslovanske socialno demokratične stranke, 25. in 26. decembra 1917 v Ljubljani“, *Zgodovinski arhiv Komunistične partije Jugoslavije, Tom V., Socialistično gibanje v Sloveniji 1869–1920*, Belgrade, 1951, 311 and 315.

<sup>10</sup> Edvard Kocbek, „Srednja Evropa“, *Dejanje*, Ljubljana, III/1940, 89–92.

icism, developed a plan for a “middle-eastern European Union”, which should range from the North and the Baltic Seas to the Adriatic and the Aegean Seas. This concept was redesigned in 1946 by the chairman of the Slovene People’s Party Miha Krek. He was in favour of the project Intermarium that was strongly supported by the Polish and Baltic politicians.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, the mentioned plans were put aside by the anti-communist emigration due to the strengthening of the Soviet Union.

Only after the collapse of the bipolar world order, the Central European idea became again an important part of political talks in almost all succession states of the Habsburg Monarchy. Leszek Żyliński described this as “an amazing renaissance”.<sup>12</sup> Simultaneously, the return to Central Europe was viewed as a kind of a way out of totalitarianism. On a symbolic level, it was an attempt to compensate for multiple injustices that were inflicted upon the nations of Central and Eastern Europe which had to experience the darkest sides of the totalitarian regimes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The same applied to the Slovenes. After World War I divisions of the Slovene ethnic territory took place. Slovenes from the coastal region suffered the most, as they were, together with South Tyroleans, exposed to the terror of the fascist regime. After so much suffering in World War II, the Slovenes were confronted with another totalitarian regime, the communism. Afterwards, at the beginning of the nineties, the Slovenes had to defend their national independence against the centralist ambitions of Slobodan Milošević. In this atmosphere, Central European debates in Slovenia experienced a revival.

It is almost impossible to talk about the Central European idea without mentioning the famous Radetzky March by Joseph Roth. The story about the Hero of Solferino and his two successors is well known even today. Nevertheless, it is less known that the three members of the Trotta family were actually Slovenes. The first edition of this family saga appeared in 1932. It was translated into Slovene almost 50 years later. After the establishment of

<sup>11</sup> Ciril Žebot, *Neminljiva Slovenija. Spomini in spoznanja iz razdobja sedemdesetih let od Majniške deklaracije*, Ljubljana, 1990, 222–223 and 333–335.

<sup>12</sup> Leszek Żyliński, „Deutsches Mitteleuropa und polnisches Intermarium: Mytisches Gedächtnis – politisches Kalkül“, in: *Zwischeneuropa/Mitteleuropa. Sprache und Literatur in interkultureller Konstellation. Akten des Gründungskongresses des Mitteleuropäischen Germanistenverbandes*, editors: Walter Schmitz, Jürgen Joachimsthaler (Thelem: Dresden 2007).

Yugoslavia, works that described multinational experience of the Habsburg Monarchy from a positive perspective were suspicious in the eyes of the ruling political elites – not only Serbian, but also Slovene and Croatian. It was not until the eighties that the Central European idea – together with the Habsburg myth – saw a revival as a theme in Slovenia, thanks to the contribution of critical intellectuals. The same applied also to Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland.<sup>13</sup> It was no coincidence that both editors of the Slovene translation of Radetzky March from 1982, Peter Vodopivec and Drago Jančar, were among those who reintroduced the Central European idea to the public political debate in Slovenia.<sup>14</sup> Drago Jančar exposed himself against Peter Handke, for whom the Central European idea was merely a “meteorological term”. Jančar claimed that Central Europe was a historical and cultural reality. The nations in Central Europe could refer to their rich experience, gained in the Habsburg Monarchy, in the accession negotiations with the EU. According to Jančar, something should be learned about the future European models from the Central European idea. Those who were aware of the value of the Central European cultural experience from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century knew what to expect in the European Union.<sup>15</sup>

The fluctuation between the identities of Central Europe and of the Balkans was also a theme of a novel in 1987 by Marjan Rožanc, one of the most famous post-war dissidents among Slovene writers. He regretted the separation of Europe into the economic imperialism in the West and the Soviet totalitarianism in the East. In his opinion, Central Europe represented the only remaining Europe: “In this homeland the tradition of the Christian Middle Ages was received, and the rationalist perspective remained untouched without the degeneration of the activist and totalitarian intentions”. Despite many humiliations that he had to experience on the part of the socialist Yugoslav authorities, Rožanc still regarded Yugoslavia in 1987 as “our only political op-

<sup>13</sup> Marjan Rožanc, „Nekaj iracionalnih razsežnosti“, *Nova revija* VI/1987, 201–210; Viktor Blažič, „Srednja Evropa“, *Celovski zvon* V/1988, no. 18, 21–31.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Vodopivec, „Srednja Evropa: mit ali (tudi) stvarnost?“, *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino*, Ljubljana, XLIII/2003, 10–11.

<sup>15</sup> Drago Jančar, *Konec tisočletja, račun tisočletja*, Ljubljana, 1999, 32–37 and 137–138.

portunity”. At the same time, he was not ready to give up the pursuit of the “nation state as inviolable Central European legacy”.<sup>16</sup>

With the rise of Milošević and his plans of a Greater Serbia in the 1980s, the awareness to find a way out of the Balkans became stronger in the consciousness of the democratic Slovene and Croatian intellectuals. The perspective of being part of the European integration process was seen by the Slovene Democrats as an opportunity to preserve the Slovene national identity and democratic values. 1 May 2004 was therefore marked as “a return to Central Europe” by some Slovene intellectuals.

Despite this, Central European discussions in the Slovene media remained mostly reduced to the Habsburg myth. Let us see just one example. In 2001, the then Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs Benita Ferrero-Waldner invited Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland to join a so-called Strategic Partnership. Many concerns were caused by this initiative in Slovenia. In the leading Slovene newspaper *Delo*, the idea was labelled even as an attempt to revive “the Habsburg universe”.<sup>17</sup> Today we all know that the initiative was not an expression of the Habsburg Monarchy nostalgia of the Austrian diplomats, who at that time still worked in the Ballhausplatz, but was an attempt to win over candidate countries from Central Europe to pursue common goals even before the EU accession.

After Slovenia’s EU accession, the number of Central Europe discussants among Slovene intellectuals gradually became smaller. One of the few was Peter Jambreč, the then President of the Assembly for the Republic that formed the intellectual core of the Slovene party coalition within the European People’s Party. In his opinion, “a modern, historical and cultural community of sovereign nations, which have emerged from former countries of the Habsburg Monarchy, could form a natural alliance”. The “Danube-Alps-Adriatic Coalition of States” would comprise Slovenia, Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and eventually also Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as

<sup>16</sup> Marjan Rožanc, *Markov evangelij* 1/8, Ljubljana, 1987, 170–173.

<sup>17</sup> Boris Jež, „Habsburški mrtvaški prt“, *Delo*, Ljubljana, 17 February 2001.

Montenegro. As such, it could be an equal player in relation to the most influential EU countries.<sup>18</sup>

From the economic perspective, both the South-East European and Central European states are very important foreign partners of Slovenia today. However, the Slovene business circles still prefer South-East to Central Europe, with the Yugoslav historical experience and language skills contributing significantly.

In recent years, a certain nostalgia regarding Yugoslavia under Tito's rule can be noticed in Slovenia. The famous British historian Alan John Percival Taylor described Tito as "the last Habsburg". Although I appreciate Taylor as a scholar very highly, I must conclude that this is an unfortunate comparison. In my opinion, the only similarity between Tito and Franz Joseph was their affection for beautiful uniforms, everything else is not comparable. Alone the length of their "reign" differs significantly: the Habsburg Monarchy lasted about 700 years; Tito's rule only 55 years.

Ambassador Leon Marc, who is currently representing Slovenia in Prague, deals critically with the question of the Yugoslav nostalgia (called "Titostalgia" by some) in his new publication *The Country of Opportunities*. According to him, both the nostalgia for Yugoslavia and the Balkan dimension of the Slovene foreign policy have indeed a legitimate identification framework, but are not the only ones. Slovenia should focus on its identity of a country between the Alps and the Adriatic, whereby regionalisation still appears as an unfulfilled task of the Slovene politics. Slovenia with the Port of Koper is the harbour of Central Europe in any case. Marc notes that Slovenia would move faster if it were part of Central Europe.<sup>19</sup>

In 1985, when the Central European debate experienced one of its highlights, the following thought was presented by the Hungarian writer György Konrád: "To feel as a supporter of Central Europe is not a question of nationality, but of the

<sup>18</sup> Peter Jambreč, „Sproščenost naroda za samoodločbo in za mednarodno odprtost. Izvori, korenine, zgodovina: nastajanje slovenske samoodločbe“, in: *Ibid.* and Dimitrij Rupel (ed.), *Slovinci v lastni državi enakih možnosti. Novi prispevki za slovenski nacionalni program. Zbor za republiko*, Ljubljana, 2004, 40–41.

<sup>19</sup> Leon Marc, "Kaj so alternative nostalgiji po Jugoslaviji?", *Časnik*, 28 July 2013.

worldview.”<sup>20</sup> Two years later his Slovene contemporary Marjan Rožanc claimed that especially the nations of Central Europe remained the strongest defenders of the fundamental values of the enlightenment. No wonder that it was the Central Europeans with their historical experiences who were most decisive for the European integration after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Rožanc wrote: “Their vision is the vision of a united Europe, in which nations should respect each other and maintain their own independence with all their cultural and religious differences, therefore a Europe of cross-enrichment rather than oppression and domination of one nation over another.”<sup>21</sup> This vision in many ways soon became a reality. In summary, it can be said that Central European concepts certainly played a significant role in the lives of the Slovenes who have always joined the quest for political independence and equality of other nations of Europe. From this perspective, Central Europe remains until this day the best inspiration and – to quote Erhard Busek again – “a concept of hope”.

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<sup>20</sup> Peter Vodopivec, “Srednja Evropa je, Srednje Evrope ni”, in: Ibid. (ed.), *Srednja Evropa*, Ljubljana, 1991, 5–13, here 10.

<sup>21</sup> Rožanc, *Markov evangelij*, 171.

# Visegrad 4 Slovenia?

Daniel Bartha<sup>1</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

Slovenia could have been the perfect and the best candidate to the V4 club, but while in the first meaningful decade of the V4 cooperation (1998-2008) there was limited pressure from the Slovenian side to join the Central European club, in the second decade rather the Visegrad countries became reluctant to widening their cooperation. The key questions are: Is there enough interest for changing current status quo? Can the Russian aggression in Ukraine and the migration crises create new logic for cooperation? Which are those fields where deepening the cooperation would make sense? Is there a broader, European perspective that has an impact on enlarging the V4? Finally which are those projects where we could start the cooperation?

## HISTORY OF COOPERATION AND THE “EROSION” OF THE VISEGRAD + FORMAT

The Visegrad cooperation’s modern history is dated back to 1991, when the prime ministers of the then three countries, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland decided to cooperate in order to support each other on the path of democratic transformation and jointly manage the process and the impacts of the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. This goal was soon extended by supporting each other in the shared aspiration of joining Euro-Atlantic structures.

Unfortunately the first decade of the cooperation resulted limited results, mainly due to the internationally isolated Meciar government. The idea to restart the cooperation was decided at the tri-lateral summit of the Presidents of the Czech Republic,

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ISSN 1855-7694 ©2015, European Perspectives, UDK: 327 (4)

Poland and Hungary took place in Budapest in 1998, and following the fall of the Meciar-government it was fully relaunched at the Prime Ministers' Summit in Bratislava on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1999, where participants signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the Contents of Visegrad Cooperation. An important goal was to jointly support Slovakia's integration to the NATO and each other, also by harmonizing positions on the way of the European Integration.

The more ambitious goals, also re-opened grounds for discussions on thinking on the ideal format and size of the Central European cooperation, but the quick developments in the V4 cooperation soon closed the discussion.

In the year 2000, V4 countries decided in Štířín, Czech Republic to set up the International Visegrad Fund (IVF), the only formal institution of the Visegrad Cooperation<sup>2</sup>. The very existence of this institution required that operation methods set up earlier at the prime minister's Summit work smoothly and continuously. Obviously the core operative institution of the V4 remained the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where the designated Visegrad coordinators work. Besides their regular meetings, the meetings of Ambassadors, the meetings of State Secretaries of Foreign Affairs at least twice a year, the meetings of government members (with a more flexible frequency) and the summit of Prime Ministers at least once annually created a broader group of Visegrad administrators, experts and coordinators at almost all Ministries and key governmental agencies of the Member states.

This sequence of operation set the tone for deepening the cooperation of the four countries and although ministries opened the ground in numerous cases for broader formats depending on the topic, the ad hoc nature of these gatherings prevented any country to develop considerable knowledge within their line ministries on the methods and core topics of the cooperation, while also prevented them to participate in long-term projects.

The first joint meetings with top-level officials from Austria and Slovenia<sup>3</sup> dates back to 2000 already. Between 2001 and 2015

<sup>2</sup> Visegrad Fund: <http://visegradfund.org/about/>

<sup>3</sup> Consultations of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the V4 Countries and Slovenia, Warsaw or Meeting of the Interior Ministers of the V4 Countries (plus Austria) in Bratislava

there were more than ten occasions when different line ministers or top level government members of Slovenia were invited to these V4 meetings. That number is only comparable with the number of meetings with representatives from Vienna, although in Austria's case 3 out of 4 Visegrad state members share borders with the country. Unfortunately we can state that none of these meetings brought long-term meaningful cooperation between Slovenia and the Member States.

Partially the reason behind that was that the inability of making a breakthrough in deepening cooperation with Slovenia, Croatia and Austria as one single group and the accession to the Euro-Atlantic structures motivated V4 countries to strengthen ties with other potential allies. For obvious geographical reasons Poland, the strongest country of the Visegrad Group had less interests on strengthening the Southern dimension of the cooperation, but rather focusing on an Eastern one. By opening a strong Eastern Partnership chapter in the V4 cooperation the importance of the traditional V4+ partners have been reduced.

Following the Euro-Atlantic integration several years have passed until Visegrad was capable to set up a meaningful agenda. From 2010-2012 the most important dimensions of cooperation became economy, security and defence and foreign policy. Visegrad as a region could have been presented as a meaningful size partner to important economic players such as China, South Korea or Japan. In this new reality within the European Union priority for cooperation was given to projects that can increase the voice of the Visegrad countries in Brussels or that could have had direct economic benefits. Slovenia unfortunately in the middle of its economic crises didn't fall into any of these categories. In the coming years, the continuous political crises of the country didn't raise its attractiveness as well.

In 2014 the Slovak Presidency declared that while the Visegrad + will remain an important format, its priority will be reduced. Meanwhile the different positions regarding the Russian aggression against Ukraine created disputes within Visegrad, clearly damaging relations. Poland's priorities started to fall outside the Visegrad format, and its cooperation with its Nordic and Baltic partners intensified. This crises further reshaped priorities

that are currently falling to mainly economic questions. That was clearly echoed in the Program of the Czech Presidency of Visegrad, which has started in July 2015.

The latest shock of migration and asylum seekers created high hopes for the revival of the Visegrad format. The close cooperation of the V4 to form a bloc within the European Union against the quota system was widely echoed in Europe. Nevertheless, Poland recognizing its great power interests within the European Union, broke its commitments to its partners, potentially deepening the crises of the Visegrad Group.

These recent developments, many analysts<sup>4</sup> interpret these recent developments as proof of a moribund cooperation framework, however they provide a unique chance for deepening cooperation with Slovenia. The strong focus on economic projects created an emphasis on infrastructural developments, with a special priority on improving North-South corridors. Therefore the attempts of the Slovenian government to advertise the merits of the Koper port and improve transport infrastructural links with Central Europe fall on to a fertile ground of the V4, but to understand the chances of a long-term alliance we have to examine the economic and geopolitical interests of the parties.

### **IN SEARCH FOR THE MOST ATTRACTIVE MATCH: SLOVENIA, AUSTRIA AND CROATIA AND THE V4**

When analysts discussed the option of an expanded V4 cooperation, they often refer to other cooperation formats such as the Central European Initiative or the countries of the EU strategy of the Danube Region. Although an enlarged Visegrad cooperation would show similarities with these cooperation formats, it would remain a cooperation consisting only EU Members that were once part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. By now it became quite obvious, that a permanent and structured version of an enlarged Visegrad will not be on the agenda, and therefore it makes sense to evaluate these countries individually.

<sup>4</sup> For example Łukasz Kołtuniak: Can Visegrad Survive the Ukrainian Crisis? (New Eastern Europe, October 2014), <http://www.neweasterneurope.eu/interviews/1344-can-visegrad-survive-the-ukrainian-crisis> or Edward Lucas on V4: Grappling Irrelevance <http://www.cepolicy.org/publications/grappling-irrelevance-v4-after-its-split-ukraine>

The question of who to cooperate with first was never a real question from a political perspective in Visegrad. For economic connections, shared history, political power or geographical reasons Austria seemed to be always the ideal partner for expanding the V4, for the leading politicians.

However when we had a closer look to a possible cooperation with Vienna, it had much less potential merits in the field of security and defence (due to the fact that Austria is not a NATO member country), in the common approach of social challenges linked to the shared communist past of the Visegrad countries, in reforming the underdeveloped education system, in improving research and innovation, in cooperating based on the shared high level of industrialism, in energy security, or representing common interests related to the EU's cohesion policy or a number of other issues that are currently in the core of the Visegrad cooperation.<sup>5</sup>

Austria being more developed in almost all fields including competitiveness showed also little interests towards the V4 up until the current crises, when the Slavkov meeting of the prime ministers of Austria, Czech Republic and Slovakia took place. However experts suggest, that this format can be translated as a regional caucus of Socialist prime ministers, therefore it will probably remain irrelevant and it will mainly focus on improving infrastructure and economic ties between the neighboring regions of the participating countries.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand Slavkov can be also translated as a strong signal that Austria is still not interested in the Visegrad format.

Croatia joining the V4 was not on the agenda until the EU accession of the country. Following July 2013 Croatians were emphasizing that by joining EU, and earlier in 2009 the NATO, their country left the Western Balkan region. As a consequence of this statement it seemed to be logical that Zagreb will try to tie relations with Central European countries stronger. Its traditional disputes with Slovenia and the changes in the decision-making

<sup>5</sup> See further points at Central European Policy Institute- demosEUROPA high level working group: Central Europe fit for the future, Bratislava and Warsaw, 2014

<sup>6</sup> Jiri Schneider: Was Visegrad defeated in Slavkov, Visegrad Insight 2015/1, <http://visegradinsight.eu/was-visegrad-defeated-in-slavkov11022015/>

in the EU following the Lisbon Treaty suggested that Croatia will make a serious effort to strengthen ties with Visegrad countries to secure allies in Brussels.

A further reason for establishing closer co-operation with Croatia came with the gas crisis in 2009, when Central and South-Eastern European countries had to face cuts in gas supplies as a consequence of the Russian-Ukrainian dispute. Croatia joined the consultations concerning regional energy security, which were initiated by the Visegrad Group. The Hungarian presidency of the V4 in 2009-2010 further involved Croatia to a number of Visegrad Group meetings by usually inviting them to the meeting of the V4+Slovenia format. Croatia joined the so-called Friends of Cohesion Policy group, which was co-formed by the Visegrad countries<sup>7</sup>, but by that time chances for closer co-operation were basically gone.

Energy, which once was among the main reasons for closer cooperation, became the main obstacle, though developments started with the so called MOL-INA dispute that poisoned relations between Zagreb and Budapest. The conflict that once seemed to be a corporate governance case, become highly political especially in Croatia, and led to a situation where Zagreb was blocking LNG port developments, and seriously threatened the improvement of energy security. Hungary, which was once one of the main brokers of the Croatian accession to the EU, seen these steps as hostile ones, and therefore was not seeking closer cooperation with Zagreb. The current refugee crises further pushed bilateral relations to historical depths. Although for years Visegrad countries connected Croatian and Slovenian relations, this might be over, as Hungary will most probably block any further cooperation in the upcoming years.

Out of the three countries Slovenia has the longest history and strongest willingness for cooperation.

Slovenia indicated its willingness to join the reshaped Visegrad Group by Prime Minister Janez Drnovsek as early as 1999. The country was the first non-Visegrad CEFTA member, a

<sup>7</sup> Andrzej Sadecki: The prospects for Croatia's co-operation with the Visegrad Group, OSW 2013, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2013-10-03/prospects-croatias-co-operation-visegrad-group>

NATO and EU membership candidate, with a more developed and healthy economy than any of the Visegrad countries. Unfortunately this initiative, which most probably was historically the best moment was refused. Slovak Prime minister Dzurinda and Polish Prime Minister Buzek explained this decision by stating that although Visegrad is not a closed entity but is more productive in its current format.<sup>8</sup>

While relations were less intense in the following years, the cooperation finally started to intensify after the V4 + Slovenia Prime Ministers' Meeting in Ostrava in December 9–10, 2007.<sup>9</sup> In the next years Slovenia was involved in numerous policy discussions, although it could have the strongest influence on the Western Balkan policy of the Visegrad Group. One of the most important related meetings was held in Prague in 2011, where Visegrad Group and Slovenia issued a joint statement on the Western Balkans.<sup>10</sup>

The close cooperation once again raised the question of enlargement, and while Presidents of the V4 countries, led by Czech President Zeman supported closer cooperation already in 2013, Foreign Minister Schwarzenberg declared that the admission of a new member country would impair the productivity and competitiveness of V4. "We have discussed it and shared the opinion that it would not be efficient. We are cooperating very well exactly because we are such a small group. If it is enlarged, then a secretariat and some other institutions will possibly have to be established, which we do not want," Schwarzenberg said. He explained that in the last twenty years, several suggestions have been presented. However with the current operations, a new member would not be appropriate. "We (V4 countries) have our own interests that are very identical," Czech's Foreign Minister noted.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Dr. Andrew H. Dawson and Rick Fawn: *The Changing Geopolitics of Eastern Europe*, Routledge Studies in Geopolitics, October 2001

<sup>9</sup> Joint Statement, V4 + Slovenia Prime Ministers' Meeting, Ostrava (CZ), December 9–10, 2007 <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/2007/joint-statement-v4>

<sup>10</sup> Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group and Slovenia on the Western Balkans (Prague, November 4, 2011) [https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=16&ved=0CEAQFjAFOApqFQoTCLHZzcL4-8cCFWmWcgodpwUNug&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.mzz.gov.si%2Ffileadmin%2Fpageuploads%2Ffoto%2F1111%2FJoint\\_Statement\\_V4\\_WB\\_-\\_final.doc&usq=AFQjCNGf-BYYPeJpmQiWKS0zilqxLJedKw&sig2=TOOGtqtF2MFa0e\\_3x2jCQ&cad=rja](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=16&ved=0CEAQFjAFOApqFQoTCLHZzcL4-8cCFWmWcgodpwUNug&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.mzz.gov.si%2Ffileadmin%2Fpageuploads%2Ffoto%2F1111%2FJoint_Statement_V4_WB_-_final.doc&usq=AFQjCNGf-BYYPeJpmQiWKS0zilqxLJedKw&sig2=TOOGtqtF2MFa0e_3x2jCQ&cad=rja)

<sup>11</sup> Schwarzenberg: „Slovenia Joining V4 Would Not Be Efficient“: <http://www.friedlnews.com/article/schwarzenberg-slovenia-joining-v4-would-not-be-efficient>

Despite of the unified no, President Zeman once again signaled to Ljubljana its willingness to support their accession to the V4 in 2014.<sup>12</sup> The reason of re-emerging this question to the political agenda might have more logic, than the usual stubbornness of the Czech President, as the political landscape changed in the V4. Three of the key players of the traditional Visegrad foreign policy János Martonyi, Karol Schwarzenberg and Radoslaw Sikorski were replaced, and value and tradition based foreign policy thinking was largely changed to trade based thinking, not only in Hungary. There was a clear shift in ownership of the V4 agenda that was shifted towards the Prime Ministers.

Meanwhile power dynamics within the V4 has changed. The crises in Ukraine divided members, and that is reflected in Poland's limited Visegrad policy. Slovenia was always more attractive to Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, who had stronger interests in the Western Balkans. The country can also offer an alternative access for Hungary to the Mediterranean Sea through the Koper port, therefore Budapest become the advocate of strengthening ties.

## A WAY TO GO FORWARD

While recent developments suggest that currently Slovenia has the strongest chances to intensify cooperation with the Visegrad Group, if Ljubljana would like to have a more institutionalized partnership they will have to sign up for further policy processes. Based on the current developments in the Southern neighborhood, tackling the migrant crises and joining V4 defence and security initiatives stands out. Slovenia, through its NATO membership not only shares the same values, but often participated in the same missions as the V4 countries, while the country largely shares the similar threat perceptions as Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Furthermore Hungary has a long history of defence cooperation with Slovenia that can help to involve Slovenian forces to joint Visegrad initiatives, including trainings and exercises.

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<sup>12</sup> President Pahor visits Prague: <http://www.up-rs.si/up-rs/uprs-eng.nsf/pages/3C917B1A1212790BC1257DB10034C6B1?OpenDocument>

Another obvious way to strengthen ties is through further support of the policies of the V4 towards the Western Balkans. A serious deepening of this cooperation could be channeled through the Visegrad Fund, which has a long-term problem to balance the size of Eastern Partnership programs with Western Balkan programs, due to the lack of external funding. By joining thematic IVF programs, also financially, Slovenia could not only secure to be part of the policy processes vis-à-vis the Western Balkans, but they could strengthen institutional ties, cooperation culture, and relationship with the civil society, by ensuring that Slovenian NGOs can join Visegrad projects.

Finally as I mentioned previously, Visegrad countries largely became trading states. Implementing the previously agreed infrastructural developments, and opening access to the Koper port as much as it is possible, can significantly raise the attractiveness of the country.

Obviously all these steps are not leading to a membership, especially as the government never announced such an aspiration, but by joining key initiatives Slovenia can easily target a special status, which could have exactly the same merits as a full-fledge membership.



# Scholars in Central and Eastern Europe – building a community through the Central and East European International Studies Association

Zlatko Šabič<sup>1</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

Until very recently, it seemed that Eastern Europe, especially Central Europe, had successfully internalised European norms and values. Recent events in Greece, Ukraine and the influx of people escaping from failed states has cast serious doubts about the ‘Europeaness’ of Europeans, not only from Central/Eastern Europe, but also from the West. Intellectuals are the first ones called upon to reflect on issues, which more often than not emerge unexpectedly. International Relations scholars are no exception in this regard. Among other things, they meet periodically in professional organisations, which serve as a forum for reflection on present and past developments in the world, and as a place to galvanise support for certain actions.<sup>2</sup> The Central and East European Studies Association (CEEISA) is such an organisation; the article will look at its history, evaluate its present role and provide some thoughts regarding its future.

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ISSN 1855-7694 ©2015, European Perspectives, UDK: 327 (4)

<sup>2</sup> For example, in response to tragedies of displaced people in their effort to reach Western Europe, the European International Studies Association has, following an initiative of its members, organised at its conference in Sicily (<http://www.paneuropeanconference.org/2015/>), literally just a few days before the conference began (23 September 2015), a special roundtable entitled “Speak up as an academic community against walls, killings and bodies washed ashore? An open debate about responsibilities and constraints”.

## HISTORY

The ideological division in the Cold War period has painfully affected the International Relations scholarship.<sup>3</sup> Apart from a very narrow circle of scholars from former socialist countries (who more often than not belonged to the then political elites and have therefore been able to travel to international conferences more extensively if not exclusively) and those who lived in the West and wrote about the region they had come from, there was very little connection between the 'Eastern' and the 'Western' literature dealing with international affairs. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the 'East' had initially been dormant – in most part because of the lack of resources. Then, as often times in the European history, it was 'the Americans' who helped to put the more or less destroyed scholarship in the region back to its feet. In the early 1990s, the International Affairs Network (IAN) came to Eastern Europe. The IAN was launched in 1994. It was coordinated by the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs from the University of Pittsburgh, and supported financially mostly by the Pew Charitable Trusts. Initially, the goal had been what one might call the export of Western norms and values into the Central and Eastern European area. In this particular case, the discussion was about introducing 'new' curricula and 'new' teaching methods in the field of International Relations. Such a transfer of knowledge was less well received than it might have been originally anticipated by the coordinators. Looking from a historical distance, one can argue that this was because money meant for that purpose 'ended up in wrong hands'. Some scholars from the East did not show much enthusiasm (to say the least) to invest their time into setting a new scholarly agenda, focusing on the literature they did not have an opportunity to read before. Also, many saw the IAN funding as an opportunity for (free) travelling. These 'deviations' were in a minority, however, and it is fair to say that 'the Americans' had some concrete impact through the programme offer by the IAN. The network has organised many seminars and workshops on various topics in places such as St. Petersburg, Prague, and Warsaw. It has done a

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<sup>3</sup> The following text is mainly based on personal experience of the author. This contribution also profits from his earlier observations in various printed and electronic media about the International Relations scholarship in Central and Eastern Europe.

great effort in trying to link all the research and higher education institutions in Central and Eastern Europe of which focus was on international relations in the broadest sense of the term. But this initial push had one important drawback: it never had a clear vision about how should Central and Eastern European region become a region with a sustainable, ever-developing hub for International Relations scholars from both the region or outside it. A ‘belief’ in Central and Eastern European scholarly network would last only as long as the money would be there to support was strong. And everyone knew that the money would not be there forever.

What happened next had a significant impact on the future of networking among scholars from Central and Eastern Europe. In the brain-storming as to how to assure the follow-up to the IAN once the resources have been exhausted, an idea came up that the network should have its own professional association, modelled after the International Studies Association (ISA). Although the idea was conceived of in 1996, the CEEISA de facto started in 1998 in St. Petersburg, where its first president was elected. In 1999, the CEEISA had its first conference, which was held in Prague. By that time, however, the money from the IAN was running thin, and eventually the IAN disintegrated. Had it not been for a handful of senior scholars and their junior colleagues as well as graduate students, who joined forces and kept the organisation alive, there would not have been any follow-up. The institutional life support to the organisation has been provided mainly by scholars from Ljubljana and Prague, the only ones who believed in the potential of regional co-operation in the field of International Relations. Their common effort paid dividends after 2000, when CEEISA became strong enough to begin with the organisation of regular conferences, the most recent one having been organised in Cluj, Romania. In 2016, the conference will be held in Ljubljana, Slovenia. CEEISA conferences have been previously held also in Prague, Warsaw, Wroclaw, Tartu, St Petersburg, Moscow, and Istanbul. At the meeting of the World International Studies Committee (WISC), which was held in San Diego in 2006, the CEEISA was entrusted to organise the Second WISC Global International Studies Conference.<sup>4</sup> The conference, which

<sup>4</sup> The WISC is a network which brings together over twenty professional associations in the

took place in 2008, was a great success: over 1,100 attendees from 70 countries took part. The CEEISA itself has been put firmly on the map of the academic community, interested in the field of International Relations.<sup>5</sup> The Association's official journal, the *Journal of International Relations and Development*,<sup>6</sup> has become one of the most influential IR journals in Europe. In 2013, the CEEISA established its own Book Series, called *Central and Eastern European Perspectives on International Relations*.<sup>7</sup>

## PRESENT TIMES

It can be argued with great confidence that these institutional developments, alongside developments elsewhere, such as the launch of the Central European University in Budapest, as well as universities and research institutions all around the region have helped to the development of the discipline in Eastern Europe in general, and Central Europe in particular. Influential study programmes and research institutes make their presence visible. Prague, Warsaw, Wrocław, Bratislava, Ljubljana are arguably known for their contribution to the IR community, in many ways. Besides their domestic institutions, Central and East European scholars have become more confident in attending CEEISA conferences and publish in widely indexed journals. The region is full of young, aspiring scholars, and those who have careers in the region or elsewhere in the world but are willing to come home or visit often.

The success of the growth and development of the Central (and East) European region in terms of International Relations scholarship is visible, but one should not stop here, content with

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field of international relations from all over the world. Its mission is similar to that of the CEEISA. It aims to provide emerging younger scholars from Africa, Asia, and Latin America with an opportunity to meet with established international relations teachers, researchers, and practitioners, to make it possible for them to get direct access to the contemporary literature in the field, and to facilitate networking with colleagues from the region with a view to establishing closer cooperation. On the other hand, it also gives to scholars from the developed world a unique chance to gain the first-hand experience from local experts and to explore possibilities for further cooperation and research in the areas of mutual interest. For more information about the organisation, visit <http://www.wiscnetwork.org/>.

<sup>5</sup> More information about the CEEISA can be found at <http://www.ceeisa.org/>.

<sup>6</sup> For details about the journal see <http://www.palgrave-journals.com/jird/index.html>.

<sup>7</sup> More details at <https://www.palgrave.com/series/Central-and-Eastern-European-Perspectives-on-International-Relations/CEEPIR/>.

the success of the project. In terms of mutual co-operation, networking, creating joint projects, there is still a lot of ground to cover. The Western Balkans, in spite of several attempts to change the situation, is not very much involved in CEEISA activities in spite of efforts in that direction. The Balkan region as such is better covered: the CEEISA has organised its conferences in Romania and Turkey, plans are to bring conferences to other countries in the region, too. Austria, although geographically and historically very much part of Central Europe, practically does not exist in the CEEISA; on the other hand, the organisation has made a successful attempt to bring free and critical scholarship to the Russian Federation: two conferences have been organised there, one in Moscow and one in Saint Petersburg. Disappointingly, the CEEISA finds it extremely difficult to establish a firm and lasting link in Hungary. There are plans to reach out to the Eastern Neighbourhood, to countries such as Ukraine and Moldova; and to Central Asia and Caucasus where minor successes have already been accomplished (scholars from these two regions participated in the 2008 CEEISA/WISC conference in Ljubljana). All in all, crossing these 'geographic boundaries' remains a major task, although in the light of recent political developments, in particular in Ukraine, it becomes increasingly difficult to meet.

Generally speaking, recent political developments in Europe represent a challenge for the CEEISA as well. Not only Ukraine, the ongoing financial crisis and the refugee crisis, on both of which Europe simply has not been prepared well enough, bears consequences on the scholarly part of the region. On the one hand, we must be positive: compared to the 1990s, studying International Relations in Central and Eastern Europe has made huge steps forward. However, one also needs to be critical about the state of the discipline, its teaching and research. For example, doing studies only within our own borders, i.e. producing case studies of our own countries, is much more present than it should be. In terms of education, it seems that students are all too often subjected to descriptiveness at the expense of analytical thinking. The state of the discipline is also affected by the fact that in most universities in CEE students still rely on western literature. This is not in itself bad – quite to the contrary, provided that students are systematically encouraged to read original texts. But to have

some quality textbook in a local language seems almost a must, for two reasons: first, because of the need to develop an own terminology and in this way enrich the local language. Second, because a textbook written in a local language brings the discipline closer not only to those who wish to pursue their careers as scholars, but also to a wider audience, which arguably needs better understanding of the impact that developments abroad may have on their own lives. Foreign policy and international affairs, unfortunately, are not exactly the most popular topics among the public, but good textbooks, alongside good foreign affairs programmes in electronic media can help a lot to provide both comprehensive and 'user-friendly' knowledge to the public about issues such as the recent move of refugees from war-torn states like Syria, Iraq, or Afghanistan to EU member states.

## CONCLUSION

Arguably, the CEEISA has been pivotal to the growth of the International Relations scholarship. It generated young scholars from the region, to gain experience with conferencing, publishing in professional journals, and meeting their colleagues from different parts of the world. Indeed, the times we live in are not pleasant, neither for younger generations, who find it increasingly difficult to start off with their careers, nor for senior generations, many of whom still remember the difficulties Europe has faced in the (not so recent) past. It is clear now more than ever that the transition period from socialism to contemporary capitalism is still an ongoing process. What better way to demonstrate this if not in the period of last seven or so years, when values such as solidarity seem to be forgotten? Yet, to understand and create policies based on strategic thinking and not on instincts requires a deeper knowledge of oneself, of the state he lives, and of the region he/she belongs to. Better understanding of international studies is an essential part of this knowledge. Scholars from the Central and East European region are responsible to share the knowledge with the public, whereas professional institutions such as the CEEISA should continue to provide a forum in which this knowledge would be constantly challenged and ultimately improved.

# Slovenia's role in the Visegrad Group: a view from Poland

Anna Visvizi<sup>1</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

The tragic developments in Ukraine and the refugee crisis in Europe brought a revival of interest in the functioning of the Visegrad Group (V4), rendering many observers argue that the V4 has become obsolete, that it lacks relevance, as well as coherence of interests. Against this backdrop the question of Slovenia's role in the V4 seems to be redundant. The objective of this paper is to challenge that assumption. It is argued that the informal nature of the V4, including the flexible modes of functioning cooperation and a certain set of values and principles that have defined the V4 since its inception in 1991, not only make the V4 resilient to challenges like the Ukrainian and migration crises but also create a great number of opportunities to be exploited in a diverse fora of collaboration that overlap in the V4 group. The dynamics thus inherent in the V4 and the undefined yet implicitly open-ended nature of the V4 render Slovenia a very much welcome partner of the V4 community. It remains a matter of time, commitment and circumstances how that partnership will evolve. The argument in this paper is structured as follows. In the first section, some comments on the nature and the relevance of the V4 are made. In what follows the curious web of interactions among the V4 member-states is highlighted and the prospects and potential of enhancing the V4's collaboration with Slovenia are discussed. In the third move, the argument turns to some very specific opportunities that Slovenia's greater involvement with the V4 might create for Poland. By changing the perspective, in the next step, the question is raised in which way Poland

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ISSN 1855-7694 ©2015, European Perspectives, UDK: 327 (4)

might be useful to Slovenia and its aspirations to deepen its collaboration with the V4. Conclusions follow.

## **ON THE NATURE AND THE RELEVANCE OF THE V4**

In the heated discussion on the V4's relevance that the developments in Ukraine and the refugee crisis have triggered, the notions of the origins of the grouping as well as of the factors that have enabled the V4's establishment and functioning since 1991 tend to be neglected. Specifically, the role of ideas and ideals common to the V4 countries as well as the specific formula of cooperation upon which the V4 is built remain under-estimated and under-explored in that debate.

Arguably, the fact that the V4 countries launched their collaboration following the collapse of communism suggests that a form of an "ideational togetherness" existed among the V4 in the early 1990s. The assumed here "ideational togetherness" can be explained as a shared, yet not identical, stance to such fundamental values and principles as freedom, liberty, respect for private property, democracy, the role of the state in the economy and hence the preferred economic model to be implemented. Entrenched in similar and frequently shared historical experiences, ingrained in the same culture, drawing from it and contributing to it, influencing each other over the centuries, the V4 countries have been linked by an invisible web of connections. These connections have always spread across the borders and beyond the individual politicians' views and opinions about issues termed as contentious in high politics. The writers, composers, painters and the world-views that they had expressed through their work over the centuries serve as a good point in case here. Their work remains inexplicably close to citizens inhabiting Central Europe today touching upon common to them sentiments, dreams, expectations and regrets. Following the collapse of communism – a process that in itself serves as a manifestation of the V4's strive to freedom, liberty and democracy – the V4 followed similar, yet not identical, paths to democracy and market economy, accompanied by a common to all of them aspiration to join (or return to) the Euro-Atlantic community. In this view it is not an overstatement that – even if variability is immanent in the V4 –

an “ideational togetherness” existed among the V4 in the early 1990s. Certainly it has evolved following the V4's entry into the EU. The V4 had to adjust to the new political, social, and economic circumstances of the EU membership as well as altered interests and preferences. Therefore, it is not surprising that today, depending on the issue-area, a degree of divergence/convergence among the V4 countries exists. Nevertheless, even if the nature of the “ideational togetherness” may have evolved over the last 25 years, it still constitutes the thrust that renders it possible for the V4 to cooperate.

From a different angle, given the fact that the EU regulatory framework does not permit the formation of official groupings within the framework of the EU, the V4 will retain its informal character, with a very low degree of institutionalization, essentially a ‘light’ and hybrid form of international cooperation. Taking into consideration that the V4 members belong to several fora of international and/or regional cooperation, including the EU, NATO, OSCE, WTO, the Danube Initiative etc. the V4 serves the role of a hub where the overlapping memberships, affiliations, and commitments are organized and prioritized in the process of coordinating some aspects of the economic and foreign policy of the V4 countries. Judging against the expectations that some observers and politicians have invested in the V4, it may not have been the most successful hub recently. Imagine however, that it was not there, that it did not exist. A huge political void would have been created in one of the most politically and economically dynamic parts of the EU and Europe. In this view, the V4, regardless of its successes and failures, creates incentives for cooperative behaviours across issue-areas and policy-fields. Certainly, whether these incentives will be picked up by the V4 members depends on the political will of the specific V4 members. This is a function of respective developments on the domestic political scenes of the V4 members and their specific foreign policy goals and objectives. In this sense, the V4 and the dynamics behind its functioning is influenced by domestic-policy developments in the V4 countries, their bilateral relations, their role and involvement in other international fora, including especially the EU.

Against this background, arguments suggesting the demise of the V4 seem to be neglecting the fundamental factors that made it possible for the V4 to be established and function for the past 25 years. The voices of criticism ignore the fact that a certain, yet evolving, community of values and interests exists among the V4 countries, whereby the V4 itself does not have claims to acquire the status of an international organization. The V4 is a flexible, hybrid form of coordination of cooperation, a hub that prioritizes the overlapping and potentially conflicting affiliations and memberships of the V4 countries. It is a platform of cooperation that draws its strength from its flexibility, whereby its resilience rests in its ability to adapt to the domestic, regional and international circumstances. It is in this context that one should consider Slovenia's role on the V4 forum. Accordingly, the objective of this paper is to employ this conceptual perspective to examine to examine Slovenia's role on the V4 forum as seen from Warsaw.

#### **THE DYNAMICS OF COLLABORATION AND CONFLICT IN THE V4: IMPLICATIONS FOR SLOVENIA**

The unease with which certain V4 countries approached the imposition of sanctions on Russia in 2014 as well as the apparent split with regard to the quota system implemented as a way of addressing the refugee crisis in the EU, have brought to the surface of the discussion the question of the dynamics behind the functioning of the V4. Definitely alliances are formed on the V4 forum, while specific policy goals and objectives are not shared by all V4 members. It would be an overstatement however to claim, as some observers do, that both the Ukraine-crisis and the refugee drama manifest a split in the V4 revealing that the V4 operates as a V3+1 rather than anything else. In that case, Poland is pointed out as the country that stands apart. Indeed, bilateral relations still matter in the V4. For instance, what brings together Slovakia and the Czech Republic is the common defence of the air-space; the Czech Republic and Hungary: the ethnic minorities; the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia: the Roma population; Hungary and Slovakia: the developments and stabilization in the Western Balkans. However, Poland, being the most populous country on the V4 forum, with the biggest and the most dy-

dynamic market and a certain position on the EU forum, has a specific role to play in the V4 group. In other words, although some V4 members share specific political interests in specific fields of cooperation and enhanced bilateral and trilateral collaboration is fostered, Poland remains a valuable and much-sought-after partner. Poland's involvement is in high demand. This is especially true in view of the V4's countries strategic interests in the Balkan region.

From a different perspective, an important factor that adds to the dynamics of cooperation at the V4 forum is related to their membership in the EU. That is, the EU defines the basic environment in which the V4 countries pursue their policy goals and objectives, while at the same time offering an institutional setting that outlines certain norms of behaviour and encourages/discourages particular courses of action. The V4's EU membership and entanglement on the EU forum have become particularly interesting now, i.e. in the aftermath of the global financial crisis and the Eurozone crisis that have led to the emergence of a multidimensional centre-periphery cleavage in the EU. In the Eurozone itself the sovereign debt crisis created a divide between a core group of creditor countries (spearheaded by Germany) and a predominantly Southern (with the exception of Ireland) periphery of debtor countries. In terms of the post-crisis policy framework, the division runs along the lines of the Eurozone as the core group of the Single Market with deepening levels of policy coordination, an affiliated semi-periphery group of countries in the Euro Plus Group and a detached outer periphery (Schweiger, 2013: 33-35). In other words, the V4 may be regarded as a microcosm of the cleavages and tensions that define the landscape of cooperation in the EU today. This is because all four V4 countries have found themselves located in different dimensions/levels of the intensifying multidimensional centre-periphery chasm in the EU.

Specifically, Slovakia remains the only V4 country that is in the Eurozone. Poland postpones the introduction of the euro (Visvizi and Tokarski, 2014). However, it is firmly placed in the semi-periphery group of countries that are closely associated with the Eurozone policy mechanisms. The Czech Republic is

in the process of moving from the EU's outer periphery towards the semi-periphery by preparing to sign up to the Fiscal Compact. Hungary has recently adopted an increasingly Eurosceptic attitude. Essentially it positions itself next to the UK on the outer fringe of the EU. Arguably, this situation may give rise to centrifugal dynamics in the V4 group, with none of them strong enough or entrenched firmly enough in any of the differentiated circles of integration that have emerged in the EU. From a different angle this situation may also give rise to a great number of opportunities related to the policy and decision-making process in the EU that the V4 might exploit. The case of Slovakia, i.e. the only V4 country that is in the Eurozone, is particularly telling in this respect. Slovenia serves as a very similar case in point, particularly as seen from the Polish perspective. The following section offers an insight into that issue.

### **SLOVAKIA AND THE CASE OF THE EUROZONE IN CONTEXT OF THE CENTRE-PERIPHERY DIVIDE IN THE EU**

As the Eurozone crisis placed the EU economic governance reforms high on the agenda, considerable revival in the quality and density of debates on various levels of the policy-making process in the EU was observed. Interestingly, the Eurogroup has gradually turned into the focal point of the policy-making process in the EU. In this sense, membership in the Eurozone seems to offer access to an important forum of decision-making and hence a degree of influence in the EU. The practice of managing and addressing the Eurozone crisis suggests that, due to an “integration paradox” that has emerged in the EMU<sup>2</sup>, “more co-operative intergovernmentalism” was promoted. That is methods of cooperation that rely on “deliberative processes of policy co-ordination” proliferated. As a result the Eurogroup has come to play a fundamental role in fostering the processes of deliberation and consensus-building among the Eurozone member-states (Puetter, 2012: 165-166). Inasmuch as cooperative behaviours and deliberation are welcome, in the case of the Eurogroup's engagement

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<sup>2</sup> A concept introduced and defined by Puetter (2012) as consistent with the member-states, on the one hand, willing to make the EMU success and, on the other hand, resistant to cede more competences to the community level.

with managing the Eurozone crisis, a new twist is added to the deliberation process.

That is, the *modus operandi* of the Eurogroup is based on informal meetings (during which no minutes are taken) and much shorter formal sessions during which decisions are made. Taking into account the fact that some Eurozone members dominate over others as the practice of addressing the Eurozone crisis plainly reveals, this informal environment may be conducive to the emergence of quite unwelcome practices at the EU forum. These practices suggest that the dominating countries may silence the weaker ones. For instance, Greece, subdued to notorious fiscal surveillance and dependent on successive disbursements of financial assistance, has been effectively blocked on the Eurogroup forum over the past few years. Should Poland become a member of the Eurozone, it would acquire a seat at the Eurogroup's table as well as full access to the euro area summits. In this way, it would be actively engaged with the process of shaping economic governance in the EU. However, given how the practice of the Eurogroup's functioning has evolved during the Eurozone crisis, it is uncertain if membership in the Eurozone will actually translate in an increased influence on the decision-making process in the EU/Eurozone.

Of course, as over the last decade Poland succeeded in establishing very good relations with Germany, Poland may not turn into a pariah in the euro area after all. It does not mean, however, that it will be able to reclaim a status comparable to that of Holland. This suggests that Poland needs good friends and trusted allies that would support Poland's stance in the Eurogroup and would enable it, in line with the principle of reciprocity, to secure its policy goals and objectives. Slovakia is such a hypothetical, yet underutilized ally. Slovenia would be an equally important one.

Slovakia's and Slovenia's membership in the Eurozone offers a very much needed Central European component to the EU policy-making process today. It may offer an equally valuable support to Poland in the future, i.e. following the prospective adoption of the euro by Poland. Today, and this is something that needs to be considered, both Slovenia and Slovakia may serve as a bridge between Poland – located in the semi-periphery group of countries

that are closely associated with the Eurozone policy mechanisms – and the Eurogroup. Slovenia's closer involvement with the V4 would add validity to the above claim. Specifically, in that case, the V4 forum would serve as a convenient platform of deliberation and consultation for Poland, Slovenia, and Slovakia. As a result, the V4's limited involvement in the EU's core would be thus rebalanced thus promising an increased influence of the V4 on the policy-making process in the EU. In turn the relevance of the V4+1 for would be upheld. Consequently, the V4+1 cooperation in other policy-fields would be fostered.

### **GEOPOLITICS, ENLARGEMENT AND SECURITY: SLOVENIA, POLAND, AND THE BALKANS**

In a similar manner as Poland and the remaining countries of the V4 might benefit from Slovenia's closer engagement with the V4, also Slovenia's V4 aspirations are based on a sober cost-benefit analysis. This is particularly relevant in the field of foreign policy objectives that the V4 countries seek to secure. As the discussion in the previous section suggests, alliances are and will be formed at the V4 forum, while a great variety of not necessarily convergent interests are followed by the V4 members at the EU forum and elsewhere. Therefore, for instance, it would be myopic to expect that the Czech Republic would prioritize Ukraine in its foreign policy strategy. It would be equally unrealistic to expect that Western Balkans become a priority for Poland. However, it is necessary that the specific policy concerns of the V4 countries and the strategic implications of those concerns are recognized at the V4 forum and cooperative behaviours are fostered in those fields of policy-making.

The refugee crisis, the enlargement malaise and the Eurozone crisis, have obscured the debate and the momentum regarding the next round of the EU enlargement. The accession of Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro has turned into a matter of a distant future. In these circumstances, Slovenia – previously actively involved in supporting Croatia's EU membership bid – is in need to attach itself to a valid centre of gravity and to build an alliance that would effectively promote stability in the Balkans. From this perspective, Poland -- the 'new EU

member state, a success story of the EU's enlargement policy, a country with an established positions and a certain (though in some fields, e.g. monetary policy, limited) influence on the EU policy-making process -- seems like a natural ally for Slovenia.

Indeed, the current practice of the EU foreign policy suggests that the strategic implications and opportunities of a deeper involvement in the Balkans have remained under-appreciated in the Polish foreign-policy orientation. Poland is vitally interested in the development of the Eastern Dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), i.e. Eastern Partnership (EaP). The conflict in Ukraine and the hybrid-warfare constitute the thrust of Poland's foreign policy concerns today. The Balkans and the relevance of the region via-a-vis the Russia-Ukraine conflict remain a rather neglected nexus.

For instance, in the height of the conflict in Ukraine and the debate on sanctions that the EU imposed on Russia, sizable one-day Russian-Serbian military exercises were held in Serbia on November 14, 2014. Although this event had passed largely unnoticed by the media, it signalled that the South-Western flank of NATO and the Southern frontier of the EU remain fragile and that stability in the region is by no means to be taken for granted. Experts directly involved with the day-to-day functioning of NATO, understand all too well the tactics, means and methods that Russia employs as a means of provoking nervousness and in effect a potential response on the part of the Alliance. To be clear, these measures are characteristic to both NATO's north-eastern and south-western flanks, i.e. including the Balkans. In this view, although Poland's concerns and political involvement in Eastern Europe are well-justified, it is necessary that the connections and spill-overs that exist between the EU's North and South are recognized and explored. In that scenario, the Balkans could be endowed with a significant role in Poland's foreign policy. As a result, Poland would be inclined to support the strategic interests of not only Slovenia but also of Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. This is where Slovenia's vital interests are located and Poland, similarly as the remaining V4 countries, is in the position to support those interests either via the V4's direct involvement in the Balkans or via coordinated action at the EU forum aimed at reinvigorating the enlargement effort.

## CONCLUSIONS

Contrary to the expectations and negative scenarios triggered by the Ukraine crisis and the refugee crisis in the EU, the V4 is not in demise; rather it has turned into a hub where conflicting positions are negotiated and attempts to build consensus are encouraged. Even if in some circles the pessimism as to the V4's future continues, bold initiatives have been launched among the V4 countries over the past few years and high energy-levels are discernible during the variety of meetings that are held in the framework of the V4. The demand for functional cooperation among the V4 is on the rise, thus suggesting that the V4 is not devoid of its relevance. The nature of the V4, i.e. low level of institutionalization; an implicit open-ended character of the V4; focus on sectoral, rather than high-level cooperation; flexibility and resilience. The V4 have established itself as a regional centre of gravity that proves attractive enough for other countries to seek closer cooperation with it. The case of Slovenia proves it. From a different angle, the V4 countries have the potential to make a marked contribution towards raising the overall profile of East-Central Europe in the EU. By fostering closer collaboration with Slovenia that potential could be more effectively exploited. It would be overly enthusiastic to expect that relations between Warsaw and Ljubljana would turn into a romantic love affair. It is nevertheless reasonable to argue that strategic considerations and pragmatism will eventually drive Poland and Slovenia closer together at the V4 forum and beyond.

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# book reviews

## **Democracy, peace, and security**

edited by Heinz Gärtner, Jan Willem  
Honig, and Hakan Akbulut

*Andreja Kerševan*

## **Geopolitics: Europe of Sarajevo 100 year later and other foreign policy esseys**

Anis Bajrektarević

*Sara Jud*



Andreja Kerševan

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*edited by* Heinz Gärtner, Jan Willem Honig, and Hakan Akbulut  
**DEMOCRACY, PEACE, AND SECURITY**

Lexington Books, Lanham, 2015, 190 pages  
ISBN 978-1-4985-0772-1

**T**he question of how to achieve and maintain a peaceful and secure world order has always been the key question in international relations and politics and the quest for the answer has resulted in many different views and intellectual concepts. One of the more popular and widely debated concepts is a concept of democratic peace which main proposition is quite simple but still overwhelmingly empirically supported – democratic states are extremely unlikely to fight each other, if at all.

The book *Democracy, Peace, and Security* is a result of an initiative of the Austrian Parliament, trying to find a proper way to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the First World War. The book aims at exploring and discussing mainly three intellectual concepts – democratic peace, security communities and a concert of powers, hoping to contribute to an ongoing debate not only on democratic peace, but on security issues in its

wider sense. ‘Does the democratic peace offer a solution to today’s security challenges?’ is the key question this book tries to answer.

The book consists of 10 chapters written by experts from different parts of the world, debating on factors that contribute to international peace and stability, discussing the relationship between democracy and peace in relation to other factors, such as international institutions, economic interdependence, security communities and cooperative arrangements among major powers as well.

The *first chapter*, written by Heinz Gärtner and Hakan Akbulut offers an introduction into the concept of democratic peace by briefly explaining its propositions and the challenges it faces, setting ground to the following chapters that explore the topic in greater depth.

While in the *second chapter* Bruce Russett discusses the democratic peace and its not absolute but probabilistic nature, reflects on the topic of preventive war and

the nature of the relationship between democracy, economic interdependence and international institutions (the elements of Kantian peace), in *Chapter 3* Adrian Hyde-Price focuses on the concept of security communities, delineating it from democratic peace and a concert of powers. Hyde-Price highlights the significance of the so called 'transnational intermingling' which combined with political leadership may lead to formation of a community with not only shared institutions and practices but with a sense of belonging together. The writer nevertheless points out that while the war is inconceivable within such a community that is not the case for exchanges with those outside the community, arguing that a community may develop a shared sense of superiority, leading to 'moralistic crusades' against community' outsiders.

As Harald Müller is not convinced by the arguments that explain the correlation between democracy and peace, he introduces an alternative explanation (developed by him and Jonas Wolff) in *Chapter 4*. Müller's main challenge is to find ways of peaceful governance between democracies and non-democracies as he argues that democracies, apart from self-defence, can only justify wars against non-democracies, using justifications such as upholding international law, preventing anarchy and massacres and promoting democracy.

*Chapter 5* discusses the evolution of the concept of liberal peace as Andrej Zwitter explores the history of political thought on the matter analysing and comparing the thoughts on peace and peace orders by Saint Augustine, Thomas Hobbes and Immanuel Kant.

*Chapter 6* by P. Terrence Hopmann and *Chapter 7* by Cengiz Günay focus on the role of international institutions in securing peace and stability and promoting democracy. While Hopmann scrutinizes the work of OSCE, which he sees as an ombudsman and advisor and as a great opportunity if placed at the centre of the pan-European security order if only given the necessary support and resources, Günay analyses the policies and strategies of the EU relating to democratization, focusing on MENA region. Günay argues that the EU's efforts towards promoting democracy left little time to engage into a critical reflection on the concept of democracy, a proper consideration of non-European discourses and concepts, ignoring traditional Arab forms of autonomous formations, and lead to the perception of democratization as a technical process of simply exporting the Western liberal model. While Günay notices reluctance of European countries in engaging and assisting with transition to democracy in MENA region since the Arab spring, which he attributes to the Western perception of the developments as potential threats to

Western security, Hopmann sees the reasons for the lack of peace in trans-European region in not truly Kantian democracies, rising nationalism, and the creation of new division lines by NATO and EU through their enlargement policies.

*Chapter 8* sheds light on the triangle of peace, democracy and gender through feminist approach as Simone Wisotzki stresses the significance of gender equality in social, economic, and political terms for peace within a society and its external relations as gender equality results in more peaceful and less conflict society.

In *Chapter 9* Jan Willem Honig reminds us once again that democracies continue to fight wars (for peace) and argues that the definition and conceptualization of war needs to be redefined as he sees the democracies' understanding of war quite narrow and too exclusively associated with violence and destruction of an enemy's means of resistance. The book ends with conclusion by Heinz Gärtner and Hakan Akbulut who in *final chapter* summarize the authors' findings and again try to answer the central question, whether or not democratic peace offers a solution to today's security challenges.

The majority of authors accept the empirical foundation of the democratic peace theory and therefore agree with the theory's

core assumption – democracies are in their opinion indeed extremely unlikely to wage war against other democracies. At the same time there are some limitations and potential adverse implications, as in the end democratic peace is still just a theory with its foundation and explanatory models being debated. Gärtner and Akbulut do nevertheless point out one logical assumption (made by Gochman) that needs to be dealt with caution - if democracies do not fight democracies, a world of democracies would be a peaceful world. Possible misinterpretations and misuse of the concept require therefore continuing debate on the issue as politics and theory are sure distinct but still interrelated and influence each other to some extent.

*Democracy, Peace, and Security* establishes a link between academia, politics, and policies and stands as an important intellectual tool not only for academics, researchers and graduate students of International Relations, but also for persons interested in, and active in politics. As the peace cannot be taken for granted but is fragile and vulnerable, the quest for peace and security needs to be carried on – or as Gärtner and Akbulut end it – if there is indeed a master formula for perpetual, just and comprehensive peace, it is still awaiting discovery.

Sara Jud

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Anis Bajrektarević  
**GEOPOLITICS: EUROPE OF SARAJEVO 100 YEARS  
LATER AND OTHER FOREIGN POLICY ESSAYS**

Dobra knjiga, Sarajevo, 2015, 142 pages  
ISBN: 978-9958-27-227-1

**G***eopolitics: Europe of Sarajevo 100 later and other foreign policy essays* is the latest book published by Anis Bajrektarević, distinguished Bosnian professor of International Law who resides and lectures in Vienna. As already the title indicates the book is a collection of essays which offer reflections and thoughts on one hundred years of developments – from the beginning of the World War I in 1915 which together with the World War II terrified across the old continent and elsewhere and had laid foundations for future, to the nowadays European Union, which the very beginnings and reasoning had emerged from the perpetual peace seeking, and further to the age of the world wide web (www) of 2015. The common denominator of all essays is the question if the perpetual peace we sought for has been eventually reached and how and if all the achievements, technological innovations and newly possessed knowledge are reflected in (European) societies' greater

prosperity. If we borrow from rich author's terminology and metaphors' wealth, it is questioned whether the old classic-Greek mythological story that describes the creation of the world as a final victory of harmony and perfect order (cosmos forces) over confusion, disorder and anarchy (chaos forces) still holds water. To contemplate on those questions the author uses his geopolitical expertise combined with various interdisciplinary approaches and his broad knowledge to create a unique narrative worth reading and further exploring.

Specific writing style and widely covered topics which are reasonably interconnected and carefully included into author's narrative will absolutely attract wide population of interested readers. Rich and elastic wording, filled with emotions, on occasions almost resembles poetry, but leaves reader free place to apply his/her own imagination and develop his/her own interpretation. As expressed by Slovene jurist dr. Petrič on one of the book's

presentations, the collection of essays represents an “eruption of ideas”, some more conventional yet others controversial and shocking and precisely therefore maybe even more attractive. Including many author’s own and interesting coinages (neologisms), which he uses in his lectures to easier and more scenically explain social trends and relations and which have due to wittiness and promptness a great potential to be widely used in the future, the writing style is playful and dynamic. For example, Bajrektarević plays with commonly used abbreviation for climate change (CC), transforming it into CC+CC, what he uses to explain the unfortunate necessity that climate change caused by the exhaustion of limited carbon fuels brings alongside also additional conflicts and confrontations. Eventually he concludes that with “ever perpetuated competition that keeps us in barbaric, reptilian confrontation over scarce resources, with the technology which unstopably emits greenhouse gasses, turning out earth into a planetary gas-chamber” we are “on the way to a self-prepared global holocaust” (Bajrekteravić 2015, p. 80). Another neologism coined and extensively used by Bajrektarević is McFB (the McDonalds-Facebook way of life) which illustrates “the overly consumerist and instant, disheartened egoistic and cyber-autistic modern way of life” regarding which Bajrektorović

expresses great criticism (*ibid.*, p. 131). The author quickly and fluently, without greater effort and doubts passes from one issue to another and masterfully interconnects all together. Therefore it might be from time to time difficult to follow without breaks assuring time for needed contemplation of the read. However, as it is a collection of essays, when read in whole, some parts of different essays are repetitive. The later might be disturbing for an observant and watchful reader, but may also serve for better understanding though. Texts are further enriched and ideas explained with extensive use of footnotes which all prove authors wide erudition and enlivened with dialogs and phrases taken from popular culture movies, such as *The Matrix*, *The Truman Show* and *Wall-e*, as well as from widely recognized literature by Sartre and Dostojevski. Readers’ own imagination, contemplation and attention are all stimulated by author’s constant addressing with mostly rhetorical and sometimes philosophical questions. It is questioned what the end of the Cold War has brought, why the European Union was created and what it eventually is, what it strives for, what should development bring and what does and should the success mean. Thus the essays question the course of history, asking whether is “Greece today lagging twenty years behind the rest of the European Union or is Greece today

well ahead of the rest of the continent, which will face a similar fate two decades from now" (ibid., p. 71). Furthermore, although it ascribes rapid European growth of the prosperity in previous centuries to two factors, technological (economic) advancement and demographic expansion, it adds that it was sustained only by "superiority through efficiency in applying the rationalized violence and organized (legitimized) coercion of peripheral territories and societies" (ibid., p. 57). The reader is thus invited to question his/her own position and understanding of the great picture as well as the existing value system.

Bajrektarević uses interdisciplinary approach to enlighten his points, from biology to explain the influence of brain's structure on the way we perceive world and surroundings as we do and not differently, physics to explain man's unneeded and irrational care for additional energy resources as we literally sit on the kinetically and thermally very active, but unexplored and till now not exhausted, core of the Earth, to more convenient international relations theories, such as constructivist understanding of oil as presenting more than mere energy, but a socio-economic, psychological, cultural, financial, security and politico-military constructs, and mostly realist understanding of states' behaviour what confirms author's obvious and pas-

sionate affiliation to realist school of thought. The later, besides the very nature of essay writing form, is a reason for many generalizations and distant views the author offers in his book, without having a more detailed view into the black box of the state and without providing greater amount of proved facts which are typical for more scientific writing. Thus for example, he explains dissolution of Yugoslavia (Balkans) as well as constant unrest and upheavals in the Middle East and North Africa region with their territorial position, being the only area in the world connecting three different continents, which due to their potential strength and power should not be strong and united as the later might endanger core developed and mainly Western countries. Author arguments that the core, namely the West, does its best to keep this two peripheries, the Balkans and the Middle East, which are both cradles of civilizations, soft and socially unstable, while absence of social cohesion definitely makes any kind of progress unthinkable. But a blind eye is turned on internal causes, such as for example differences in identities, stumbling economic growth and sky-rocketing unemployment rates, while nearly all developments are ascribed to external factors.

However, when analysing European current condition, the author emphasises exactly those pa-

rameters, projecting more or less dark future, while the situation is even more severe in the Eastern Europe. While, according to the author, Europe suffers from general cognitive deficit crisis caused by wrongly placed priorities, where a footballer or any celebrity with few hundred likes on Facebook but without any added value to the society earns more than professors or researchers, it still has (to a certain degree) influence (although harmful), but on the other side Eastern-Rusophone Europe was/is deprived of its own political, military, economic, financial and monetary sovereignty. Thus the “(self-)fragmented, deindustrialized, rapidly aged rarified and depopulated, (and de-Slavicized) Eastern Europe is probably the least influential region of the world – one of the very few underachievers” (ibid., p. 37). The author explains the unpleasant financial situation and enormous dependency of the region by playing with numbers and statistics on region’s gross national product, debts and subsidies it received by the European Union, what eventually helped to deindustrialize the region, spread the influence of the European Union and its strategic depth against Russia at the same time. Here the author applies discursive analysis commenting the euphemisms generally in use to characterized Eastern European states, namely “countries in transition” or “new Europe”. According to the author

the later implies how Europe has been treating its Eastern parts for the last twenty-five years – “as defeated belligerent, as spoils of war which the West won in its war against communist Russia” (ibid.).

In the reference to 2015 anniversary of the World War I and victory over Nazism and Fascism, for what Eastern Europe, based on Russian support, is the most credited, the author warns that what we should be worried over is the lack of in this regard important debates in Eastern Europe as well as elsewhere, namely about the identity, secularism, Slavism and foremost antifascism, which were all silenced for the sake of Atlantic-Central European penetrations into the body and soul of the East. One of the essays draws parallels between nowadays austerity measures and 1920–30s economic situation, which led to the creation of fascist regimes, and the similarities are striking. Yet, we still live in times when ignorance is bliss, forgetting Goethe’s instructional words that “freedom has to be re-made re-earned in every generation”.

# Croquis

Almost any person, who is at least to the small extent engaged with international relations, has heard about the Visegrád Group, or in short: Visegrád Four (V4). It is a political alliance of four Central European states – Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia. The group was established at a summit meeting in the Hungarian castle town of Visegrád in year 1991. The name of the group, however, was inspired by the place of meeting of the Bohemian, Polish and Hungary-Croatian rulers in Visegrád in 1335, at that time with the aim to get easier access to European markets. This, in a way, is also the claim of nowadays “Visegrád”. So V4 vibrates much more than broadly acronym.

Visegrád Group has its own soft power instrument, the *International Visegrád Fund*, which is the only institutionalised form of cooperation. The organisation was founded by the governments of all four countries in Czech Republic in year 2000 and is now based in Bratislava. Interesting, the aim of the organisation is not only to promote mutual cooperation between Visegrád countries, but also to enlarge to the Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership regions. It operates with several grant programs, individual scholarships, fellowships and artist residencies. The annual budget is 8 million EUR (in 2014), from equal contributions of V4 governments.

Every year individuals and corporations nominated by ministers of culture of V4 are awarded by *International Visegrád prize* for their outstanding activities during previous four years.

In December 2014, Presidents of V4 and Austria and Slovenia have met in Prague, giving emphasis on Central European perspective, especially on transport networks and significance of Danube River, but also on energy security.

But in Bosnia and Herzegovina there is a river, which flows through the city with almost the same name, namely Višegrad. The river is called Drina and it is the famous one, which was the main place of the happening in a novel of the Yugoslav writer, Ivo

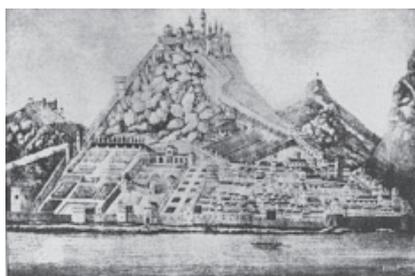
Andrić. He won the Nobel Prize in 1961, mostly for his novel *The Bridge on the Drina* (*Na Drini ćuprija*).

The novel deals with the historical perspectives of multi-ethnic / religious surroundings at that part of the world, which has always been high on political and - sadly enough -also on war agenda. It is about separation and cooperation between orthodox Serbs and Muslim Bosnians. The ties and bonds, the everlasting love-hate relation, the on-going story of hard tensions in that particular part of Europe ...

The situation that is gaining on importance even now, when we witness huge number of newcomers from other parts of the world and cultures. Should we never learn from history?

However, the names of the two cities – Visegrád and Višegrad – have much in common: they are rich in history and full of substance as well as of messages. They radiate history, which is, after all, *magistra vitae*. This should not be forgotten in modern times that we live in. It could inspire the awareness that both regions, namely Central Europe and the Western Balkans, share more than just some historical remembrances. It is the EU integration experience above all that could strive for the emergence of the tale of the two cities.

Anja Fabiani



Visegrád Castle



The bridge on Drina



# General submission guidelines

## ARTICLES

European Perspectives is a scientific journal that publishes original, peer-reviewed manuscripts that provide scientific articles focusing on relevant political, sociological, social, security, economic and legal as well as ethnic, cross-cultural, minority and cross-ethnic issues related to European and Euro-Atlantic integrations and South-Eastern Europe.

Manuscripts should be written in English, normally between 6.000 and 9.000 words in length (including footnotes) and submitted in electronic version via e-mail to [info@europeanperspectives.si](mailto:info@europeanperspectives.si) in the .doc format.

The journal reviews received manuscripts on the assumption of an exclusive submission: by submitting a manuscript for consideration, the author(s) warrant(s) that it is not simultaneously being considered by any other publication and that it shall not be sent to another publication until a response is received from the journal.

All texts submitted to the journal must be original works of the author(s). By submitting a manuscript, the author(s) warrant(s) to the journal that it does not infringe the copyright or any other rights of third parties.

When submitting the manuscript, please also attach:

- an abstract of 150 - 200 words, in English, stating precisely the topic under consideration, the method of argument used in addressing the topic, and the conclusions reached
- a list of up to six keywords suitable for indexing and abstracting purposes
- a brief biographical note about each author, including previous and current institutional affiliation
- a full postal and e-mail address, as well as telephone and fax numbers of the author. If the manuscript is co-authored,

then please provide the requested information about all the authors.

While writing the article, please take into account the following format & style guidelines:

The contents of the article should be divided with titles (introduction, additional titles in the body, conclusion).

Format of the titles in the text: letters only, caps lock & bold.

## **PEER REVIEW**

All manuscripts are checked by referees by means of a double-blind peer review. Two external referees review each manuscript. European Perspectives reserves the right to reject any manuscript as being unsuitable in topic, style or form without requesting an external review.

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Below are some guidelines for in-text citations, notes, and references, which authors may find useful when preparing manuscripts for submission.

All submissions should follow the Harvard style of in-text parenthetical citations followed by a complete list of works cited at the end. Should you find yourself in a dilemma on how to cite, please visit: <http://libweb.anglia.ac.uk/referencing/harvard.htm>

In the text, refer to the name(s) of the author(s) (without initials, unless there are two authors with the same name) and year of publication. Unpublished data and personal communications (interviews etc.) should include initials and year. Publications which have not yet appeared are given a probable year of publication and should be checked at the proofing stage on an author query sheet. For example: Since Bull (1977) has shown that ... This is in results attained later (Buzan - Jones - Little 1993: 117). As contemporary research shows (Wendt 1992), states are the ...

Publications by the same author(s) in the same year should be identified with a, b, c (2005a, 2005b) closed up to the year and separated by commas. Publications in references that include dif-

ferent authors should be separated by a semicolon: (Miller 1994a: 32, 1994b; Gordon 1976). If the year of first publication by a particular author is important, use the form: (e.g. Bull 1977/2002: 34). If there are two authors of a publication, separate the names by ' - ' (not ' and ' or ' & '). If there are more than two authors, put the name of the first author followed by ' et al. ', or write all names separated with ' - ' (four authors maximum).

References to unauthorized data from periodicals may be given in brackets in the text together with the exact page(s). For example: '(quoted in International Security (Summer 1990): 5)'. If such a reference is included in the reference list, the title of the contribution referred to must be provided, and a short title without inverted commas and a year of publication is used for in-text-referencing (e.g. short title year). As a general rule, an exact web address of a particular article can be substituted for its exact page(s).

You should also include a full reference list in alphabetical order of authors. Below you can find some examples of correct forms of references for alphabetical style, for more information please see Harvard style guidelines:

Diehl, Paul F. (1994): *International Peacekeeping*. With a new epilogue on Somalia, Bosnia, and Cambodia, The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Degnbol-Martinussen, John, Engberg-Pedersen, Poul (1999): *Aid. Understanding International Development Cooperation*, Zed Books, Mellempfolkeligt Samvirke, Danish Association for International Cooperation, Copenhagen.

Rittberger, Volker, ed. (1993): *Regime Theory and International Relations*, Clarendon Press.

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European Perspectives welcomes reviews of recently published books (i.e. those published in the year in which the current issue of European Perspectives was published or in the previous year). Authors should submit reviews of works relating to political science and other social sciences with the themes focused on (East) Central European issues.

European Perspectives encourages authors to submit either of two types of reviews: a book review or a review essay.

When submitting a book review, authors should abide by the following requirements:

- A book review should not exceed 1,500 words.
- State clearly the name of the author(s), the title of the book (the subtitle, if any, should also be included), the place of publication, the publishing house, the year of publication and the number of pages.
- If the reviewed book is the result of a particular event (a conference, workshop, etc.), then this should be mentioned in the introductory part of the review.
- Review authors should describe the topic of the book under consideration, but not at the expense of providing an evaluation of the book and its potential contribution to the relevant field of research. In other words, the review should provide a balance between description and critical evaluation. The potential audience of the reviewed work should also be identified.
- An exact page reference should be provided for all direct quotations used in reviewing the book.

# Studia Diplomatica

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ces, the research describes the policy of the »Big Five« - the United States, France, Great Britain, Italy and Japan – towards the establishment of the Yugoslav state.

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2009 / 420 pages

ISBN 978-961-92173-8-2

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book was published as part of the *Personae* series of the *Studia diplomatica Slovenica* collection.

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## Franc Rozman

### Baron Josef Schwegel – spomini in pisma (Baron Josef Schwegel – Memories and Letters)



2007 / 376 pages

ISBN 978-961-92173-0-6

Price: € 34

The book *Baron Josef Schwegel – Memories and Letters* contains an autobiography of Baron Josef Schwegel and his notes from the Congress of Berlin. The book sheds light on Schwegel's work in diplomacy and foreign affairs based on his memoirs and the letters

he wrote his wife when he was a member of the Austro-Hungarian delegation at the Congress of Berlin. The book was published as part of the *Personae* series of the *Studia diplomatica Slovenica* collection.

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## Ernest Petrič (Chief Editor)

### Slovinci v očeh Imperija - Priročniki britanskih diplomatov na Pariški mirovni konferenci leta 1919 (Slovenes in the Eyes of an Empire – Handbooks of the British Diplomats Attending the Paris Peace Conference of 1919)



2007 / 524 pages

ISBN 978-961-92173-1-3

Price: € 35

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litical analyses, texts containing historical and general information (Slovenes, the Yugoslav movement, the Austrian Primorska (Littoral) and Kansan (Carniola) regions, Koroška (Carinthia), Štajerska (Styria)) that were intended to help shape British policy on Central and Southern Europe following World War I. The book was published as part of the *Fontes* series of the *Studia diplomatica Slovenica* collection.