

# New Security Challenges from a Visegrad 4 Perspective



#EuropeanVisegrad

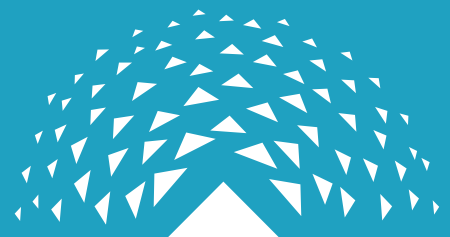


**V4 CONNECTS**  
HUNGARIAN PRESIDENCY 2017/2018 OF THE  
VISEGRAD GROUP

#GlobalVisegrad

#DigitalVisegrad

#RegionalVisegrad



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# MILITARY SECURITY

*Martin Macq – Martin Michelot*

## INTRODUCTION

The V4 aspires to set itself as an example for other EU Member States in the field of security, as former Hungarian defense minister István Simicskó alluded to when saying that “thanks partly to the defense and law enforcement organs and the measures they have taken, the V4 are among the most secure countries in the world.”<sup>1</sup> The current stable security situation of the region relies mostly on cooperative measures, which need to be permanently strengthened, either from the inside but also with key partners. Although at times divided about different issues such as the question of Europe’s cross-border labor rules, the level of EU integration and harmonization or the Russian relationship, the V4 group maintains a relatively strong unity on security and defense issues. The four countries agree on the vision that their security will mostly be achieved through the EU and NATO frameworks. In this regard, upcoming security challenges for the V4 certainly include the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the next rotation of the V4 EU Battlegroup in 2019. Both challenges represent potential interesting tension points, as the four countries are increasingly facing different security challenges and their interests regarding the battlegroup do not completely converge. A similar division is apparent in their approach to the usefulness of political capital being injected into PESCO projects that may distract from collective security in the NATO framework. Furthermore, the Central European Defense Cooperation (CEDC), in which V4 countries (except for Poland) are strongly involved, also deserves reconsideration, as its primary role might prove outdated in favor of the control of borders and the general necessity to check potential future migration flows.

Seen as “the future of Europe” by some experts,<sup>2</sup> the Central European (and the V4’s) willingness to be a central motor of the EU’s future has become more and more obvious in recent years, especially regarding security issues. However, the lackluster relationship between V4 Member States and the EU has complicated this process. Globally, the security challenges the V4 group will have to face remain consistent throughout the years, as mass immigration, Russia and strategic cooperation with(in) NATO / the EU remain the key concerns. However, the four partners do not have the same approach to these three issues, particularly on the relationship between the EU and Russia.

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1 V4 Connects, 2018.

2 Vytiska, 2018.



## THE PERMANENT STRUCTURED COOPERATION (PESCO): WHAT ARE THE AMBITIONS OF THE V4 COUNTRIES?

The Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), established on 11 December 2017 and agreed upon by 25 European countries, is considered a great success by the V4 group. Indeed, PESCO represents a unique occasion for its members as well as for V4 countries to “increase their effectiveness in addressing security challenges.”<sup>3</sup> As part of the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), “the cooperation is expected to ensure more protection to European citizens and to increase the efficiency of Member States on defense by combining security and defense resources and knowledges.”<sup>4</sup> These reasons partly explain why Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic are willing to participate in the PESCO project. However, the V4, with Poland at the forefront, consider it essential that the initiative does not create an unnecessary duplication with NATO; PESCO must be a tool at the service of the Alliance to ensure the security within the V4 region, and the better joint training and modernization of the V4 countries' armed forces.

Among the 17 planned projects, only one from a V4 country succeeded in PESCO: Slovakia's Indirect Fire Support (EuroArtillery). The project will seek to develop a Mobile Long-Range Precision Artillery Platform and has already generated the interest of the Czech Republic and Hungary (as observers).<sup>5</sup> Slovakia is surely the most active country among the V4 regarding the PESCO project thanks to its initiative proposal and could certainly play the ombudsman role between the V4 and Western EU countries, as the group has so far failed to coordinate any common project or concrete activity – a trend likely to repeat itself in the second phase of projects to be decided upon during the course of 2018. This apparent lack of involvement can on the one hand be explained by the concerns of Hungary and Poland that PESCO could be part of Germany and the West's domination of the EU.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, more realistically, the short timeframe within which the first phase of projects were decided, and even the next ones, means that smaller countries are not necessarily in the best position to propose projects that do not fit a larger, European scope. The general staffs of these countries need to be able to generate interest in projects, whether capability- or training-oriented, that fit a larger group of countries, and which at the same time also fits their defense plans. Yet V4 countries will participate in some projects, particularly because of the added value PESCO could bring to the fight against irregular migration. The launch of PESCO is attributed by some to the European migration crisis that made some EU countries

3 *Council of the European Union*, 2017, p. 1.

4 Fornaciari da Passano, 2018.

5 *Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic*, 2017.

6 Togawa Mercer, 2018.



realize that citizens' security was at stake.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, one of the most effective ways to take part in the initiative would be to participate actively, with financial and/or operational assistance, in the different PESCO projects related to the V4 security environment.

Addressing the irregular migration issue, the V4 could use the PESCO framework and participate in projects aimed at securing their external borders and controlling mass migration. V4 countries asserted that they would rather prefer "to offer financial and operational assistance to confront the refugee crisis in lieu of taking in those fleeing."<sup>8</sup> Indeed, one of the main security challenges for the V4 is mass migration and the group should therefore use all the resources at its disposal to handle this issue, as recalled during the Defense Ministerial Meeting of the Visegrad Countries on 28 March 2018. The V4 common position regarding migration is eroding as Slovakia, willing to move closer to the center of Europe, is finally allowing in refugees. Prior to any participation in a PESCO project linked to border security and irregular migration, unity must be restored on this key issue if the V4 seeks to have effective results.

The Military Mobility Project, introduced by the Netherlands, is the only project in which all the V4 countries are participating. The Dutch-led project globally aims "to simplify and standardize cross-border military transport procedures"<sup>9</sup> across Member States. This could enable the V4 countries to send military personnel beyond their borders to manage the migrant influx from the beginning (from migrants' first steps in Europe), in Hungary and Austria for example; the original aim of the project being to facilitate the swift and efficient movement of troops if urgent deployment is needed. Back to 2015 and the peak of the migrant crisis, "Austria, Hungary and Slovenia mobilized altogether 7,000 troops and a large number of military vehicles and equipment to provide support to their respective police forces in controlling borders"<sup>10</sup> while "the Czech and Slovak armed forces prepared through exercises for the possible escalation of the refugee crisis and provided support to Hungary and Slovenia."<sup>11</sup> The military mobilization was only intra-state and responsive. The Military Mobility Project could offer the possibility to enhance cooperation between the V4 countries, Austria, Croatia and Slovenia to swiftly and pre-emptively position military personnel and vehicles at the Western Balkans borders to manage any influx. Indeed, thanks to the Dutch-led project, the troops' mobility could be substantially accelerated as it "entails avoiding long bureaucratic procedures to move through or over EU Member States."<sup>12</sup> The worst of the migrant crisis is now over, and the military mobilization is said to be a part of that, but it is clear that V4 countries and its close neighborhood rely heavily on their military forces to counter the migration pressure at the domestic level. Therefore, active V4 participation in the Military Mobility Project is essential to meet future security challenges.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Karnitschnig, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> *European Council, Council of the European Union*, n. d.

<sup>10</sup> Németh, 2018, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> *European Council, Council of the European Union*, n. d.

It is definitely through financial and operational participation in some of the 17 PESCO projects that the V4 could efficiently keep the region secured from irregular migration and hostile states. The group should also proactively think of how to create cooperative mechanisms between its defense industries in order to draw benefits from the European Defense Fund (EDF), which could certainly participate in maintaining security within the four countries and their direct neighborhood, by modernizing its armed forces and increasing their interoperability.

### **THE V4 EU BATTLEGROUP: DIVERGING INTERESTS**

The V4 EU Battlegroup was finally agreed upon in 2011, and its first deployment was conducted during the first semester of 2016. It was initially composed of about 3,700 troops (1,800 troops from Poland, 728 troops from the Czech Republic, 640 troops from Hungary and 560 troops from Slovakia)<sup>13</sup> under Polish command. The battlegroup is considered a great success and proved the V4's readiness and ability to contribute to multinational military formations. It was an occasion for the V4 countries to increase their cooperation in defense, to share expertise and to re-energize the whole V4 project. It could even have gone down in history by being the first battlegroup to be used in operations, following the request of France to deploy components of the battlegroup in the Central African Republic as a part of the solidarity measures following the November 2015 attacks; logistical arrangements and the legal mandate eventually precluded deployment.

The renewal of the battlegroup for the second half of 2019 has already been decided by the V4 countries, but the involvement could be different than before as the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia have diverging security agendas compared to Poland and do not feel as threatened by Russia as Poland. Nevertheless, the V4 Battlegroup is undoubtedly an important opportunity to showcase the regional ambition for increasing its footprint in European defense.<sup>14</sup> With diverging interests, the V4 countries will have to harmonize their priorities if they want the battlegroup to be as successful as in 2016, but will especially have to ensure that their troops are committed (physically) to the effort, and trained for eventual contingencies on the African continent.

The V4 EU Battlegroup was initially a Polish initiative, explaining why the country has mobilized many more troops than its three partners. And with good reason, Poland considers that its main security challenge is countering the Russian threat as pointed out by the "Defense Concept of the Republic of Poland" for the 2017-2032 period. The leading role of Poland in the V4 EU Battlegroup and the V4 security environment in general is also explained by its key NATO status alongside with the United States, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and France.

<sup>13</sup> Németh, 2018, p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Brudzińska *et al.*, 2018, p. 20.



The importance of the battlegroup for Poland can be understood as the country considers that its territorial security is mostly ensured through NATO's framework. Poland has understood that the V4 EU Battlegroup may serve as a tool to influence the European defense landscape and serve its interests by increasing its domestic security. Therefore, heavy involvement of Polish troops in the 2019 battlegroup is all but certain, which could also lead to uncertainties on the side of the partner nations.

The technical details of the 2019 V4 EU Battlegroup are still under discussion between the four partners, but it is obvious that each of the V4 countries does not have the same priorities regarding their security challenges. For example, "Hungary and Slovakia, and partly the Czech Republic are much more concerned with mass irregular migration,"<sup>15</sup> not to mention that some consider Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán as well as Czech President Miloš Zeman as being friendly to Russia. Furthermore, the Czech Republic asserts that a direct military attack from Russia is unlikely and that stability and security have deteriorated in recent years, due mostly to instability in South and Southeast Europe.<sup>16</sup> Hungary and Slovakia, acknowledging an increasing migratory pressure and feeling affected by this phenomenon, would rather mobilize their armed forces within their borders against this specific threat than deploy troops in foreign missions. The biggest foreign deployment for Slovakia and Hungary is in the Western Balkans (542 Hungarian troops through EU, OSCE and NATO mandates and 41 Slovaks troops through an EU mandate),<sup>17</sup> showing the importance of the illegal migration issue for both countries.

The V4 cooperation, not only within the battlegroup, is undermined by unilateral initiatives and bilateral cooperation within V4 countries or between one V4 country and another actor. Certainly, this is the result of diverging interests in each of the four countries' security agendas. The domestic situations in Poland and Hungary have raised some concerns among the two other V4 countries and have encouraged them to establish, or reinforce, partnerships outside the V4. For example, the Czech Republic is deepening its defense cooperation rather with Germany than with Poland, for example through the affiliation of "the 4<sup>th</sup> Czech Rapid Deployment Brigade with the 10<sup>th</sup> German Armored Division under NATO's Framework Nations Concept"<sup>18</sup> since February 2017. Common training and exercise activities are set to follow. The Czech Republic also has bilateral agreements within the V4, with Slovakia for example. In summer 2017, the Czech and Slovak Parliaments signed a Joint Sky Agreement to facilitate air policing and closer cooperation of air defense capabilities. "The agreement means the two would help protect each other's air space beyond the standard air defense cooperation within NATO."<sup>19</sup> With regards to Hungary, its territorial defense being one of the main priorities, the Hungarian defense modernization program mainly aims to reorganize reserve forces on a territorial

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15 Németh, 2018, p. 3.

16 International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2018, p. 94.

17 *Ibid.* pp. 115, 116, 146.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 94.

19 *Reuters*, 2018.



basis with units in each district,<sup>20</sup> showing how important domestic security is for the country. Poland also maintains concerns about domestic security as in 2017 it launched the Territorial Defense Force to serve the local community and create an extra layer of deterrence.<sup>21</sup>

It is obvious that the V4 countries build their security environment either on their own or with only one other partner, be it inside or outside the V4 cooperation. Common initiatives in the field of security and defense do exist but remain secondary compared to the national interest of each of the four countries. Therefore, the real security challenge for the V4 cooperation and for the 2019 V4 EU Battlegroup would be to harmonize their security agendas so that overall security in the region could be increased. By acting independently, there is a fragmentation of regional security that risks being detrimental to the whole group. This attitude could also make the 2019 V4 EU Battlegroup lack efficiency compared to 2016 one. The multiplication of unilateral and isolated initiatives strongly undermines the management of V4's security challenges. There is a necessity to harmonize all national and bi-national initiatives at the V4 level to maximize efficiency gains. A solution to go further in mutual security could be found through the Central European Defense Cooperation (CEDC) which proved to be efficient during the 2015-2016 migration crisis, even with the silent understanding of Poland. Possibly, the key to building a common security policy, at least on illegal migration and border control, and to gain in efficiency could be to involve countries from outside the V4.

## THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN DEFENSE COOPERATION (CEDC)

Originally established in 2010–2011 by Austria, Croatia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia (Poland maintains an observer status), the Central European Defense Cooperation (CEDC) was created to support NATO and EU capability development projects via defense cooperation, but since 2016 it has become the major Central European forum for police and military cooperation against irregular mass migration.<sup>22</sup> This turnaround can be explained by the lack of coordination between CEDC countries during the migration crisis because of the preference for national solutions instead of multinational ones – or the rejection of the latter. The security challenge posed by mass migration has acted as an incentive to strengthen cooperation between CEDC countries and any other country affected by the crisis, as external partners are on an ad-hoc basis invited to cooperate as well. Gradually, the CEDC shifted its initial goals to “the protection of the external borders of

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20 International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2018, p. 114.

21 *Radio Poland*, 2017.

22 Németh, 2018, p. 1.



the EU and the elimination of the root causes of migration in the sending countries."<sup>23</sup> Hand in hand with the evolution of the CEDC, the militarization of the management of mass migration and border control, especially in Austria and Hungary, has "not only changed the role of the armed forces but has also had a significant impact on the dynamics of Central European defense collaborations."<sup>24</sup> The CEDC is now considered by its member states and some observers as a successful cooperative initiative against illegal immigration thanks to the strongly efficient operating manner the group has. The communication, cooperation and coordination between defense ministers and interior ministers in the CEDC framework has been a relative success in the management of illegal migration. Indeed, the "CEDC defense ministers agreed on enhanced intelligence-sharing on irregular migration flows, providing material assistance to each other, developing shared situational awareness and effective coordination mechanisms."<sup>25</sup> As a result of this fruitful initiative, CEDC countries set themselves as an example and an inspiring model for the EU regarding the illegal migration issue, terrorism and securing the Western Balkans. Even Germany is "dependent on Hungary and the CEDC to secure their border. While Merkel called the Balkan effort "not her Europe," Germany has been one of the biggest beneficiaries of the CEDC's preventive actions."<sup>26</sup>

The CEDC is an example of a successful joint initiative between countries with diverging security agendas, "a cooperation by which security challenges are collectively met, for example Cross-Border Disaster Relief, the CEDC enables a regional military partnership in the sense of Pooling and Sharing, which promotes armed forces modernization through shared experience and synergies."<sup>27</sup> Therefore, it appears that a common security policy for the V4 can be achieved by including the group's direct neighbors concerned by the same main security challenges, namely the illegal migration, terrorism and the security of the Western Balkans. The common security of the V4 must register in a wider dynamic to be truly efficient when it is about the three security challenges mentioned above. Furthermore, some observers argue that the V4, through its cooperation with Austria within the CEDC, is becoming the counterweight to the Franco-German axis traditionally leading Europe. This emphasizes the importance of the CEDC for the V4 in its willingness to have a bigger footprint in EU policy-making, especially regarding the migration issue. That is why the V4 countries and its three CEDC members should push this successful security policy coordination forum forward and take the CEDC to another level of institutionalization, as the initiative could be qualified as the most promising one (at least within the V4) in terms of securing benefits.

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23 *V Post*, 2017 a.

24 Németh, n. d.

25 *Ibid.*

26 Ravotti, 2017.

27 Hauser, 2017, p. 98.

## RUSSIA AS A DIFFERENTIATED SECURITY CHALLENGE WITHIN THE V4

Firstly, it is important to stress that there is no united perspective on Russia among Visegrad countries. Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic have at times been considered closer to Russia since they do not focus on the threat posed by Russia as strongly and exclusively as Poland tends to do. Warsaw articulates its national security mostly to counter Russia, as the country is extremely suspicious and critical regarding Russian activities. Slovakia does not perceive a direct threat coming from Russia. Globally, the Czech, Slovak and Hungarian position towards Russia has long been ambiguous. Nonetheless, since the annexation of Crimea in 2014, it is clear for each of the four Visegrad countries that Russia should be seen more as an adversary than a potential partner. However, it still remains complex for the V4 to establish a common policy and even a common position regarding Moscow. It is extremely important to not act unilaterally regarding the Russian issue, as the Russian logic is very clear: it wants the V4 and the EU to be as much divided as possible because “the weaker the European Union, the stronger Russia will become.”<sup>28</sup> Maciej Szymanowski, Polish historian and diplomat, asserted that Russian V4 strategy aims to divide the group as much as possible.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the Russian influence within the V4 is a quite divisive subject, and the re-election of Vladimir Putin will certainly maintain this situation as the Russian influence in the region will doubtless remain strong and could even be exacerbated because of recent international events.

More specifically, according to the 2017 GLOBSEC Central European Vulnerability Index,<sup>30</sup> Poland is the only country among V4 that has consistently held concerned views of Russia’s foreign policy and is at the forefront of European efforts to respond to Moscow’s multiple aggressions. The Czech Republic shifted its national strategy to Russia after the 2014 annexation of Crimea, in light of Russia’s aggressive behavior in Europe. Hungary and Slovakia are the two countries weakest in their response to Russia, as they use their bilateral relations with Moscow to their advantage in domestic politics and to counterbalance EU policies.<sup>31</sup> Clearly, there are two sub-groups within the V4 regarding the Russian issue. Poland and the Czech Republic on the one hand, cooperating actively with NATO and the EU in order to ensure their national security against the threat Russia poses, and Hungary and Slovakia on the other hand, who are less actively engaged alongside NATO and the EU in countering Russia and being reluctant to join any defense-related activities that could be seen as a provocation by Russia following the decisions of the NATO Wales Summit in 2014.

28 Čížik (ed.), 2017, p. 15.

29 *V Post*, 2017 b.

30 Milo and Klingová, 2017.

31 Janda *et al.*, 2017, p. 6.



"Russia as the main regional actor operating outside of the EU–NATO framework is projecting its power in the Central European region by means of diplomatic activities, energy and economic policy, information warfare and support to domestic political forces (both mainstream and fringe) sympathetic to the Russian narrative, with the overall aim of restoring its influence in the region and weakening the EU and NATO," write two Slovak analysts.<sup>32</sup> Within the V4, the vulnerability of each country to Russian influence varies considerably, which partly explains the positive or negative vision of Russia in each of the four countries. The GLOBSEC Vulnerability Index of Central European countries, "measures vulnerability of a given country on a scale of 0 to 100, where the higher score represents the higher vulnerability to subversive foreign influence."<sup>33</sup> It shows that Hungary is the most vulnerable country in the Visegrad group (57 out of 100), followed by Slovakia (51 out of 100), then the Czech Republic (38 out of 100) and finally Poland (30 out of 100). These results highlight that there are two groups within the V4, which can explain how difficult it is to build a common position regarding Moscow. Nevertheless, while some political elites in countries like Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic are more attracted by Russia, the majority of public opinion in the four Visegrad countries presents a pro-Western orientation while being more critical regarding NATO and the EU. However, the Czech, Slovak, and Hungarian societies appear to be quite divided regarding relations between the EU, NATO and Russia and this has an influence on the perception of Russia as a security challenge, leading to unilateral initiatives that appear to be less effective than a common V4 one. For example, the Czech Republic launched the Centre Against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats (CTHH) in January 2017. The CTHH aims to identify "threats from political radicalization and terrorism and from foreign disinformation campaigns targeting the public"<sup>34</sup> and was inaugurated at the time when the Czech counter-intelligence services warned that Russia was trying to undermine Czechs' opinion about NATO through the spread of fake news. However, the CTHH is subject to dispute within the Czech political elites, which undermines its legitimacy and by extension the effectiveness of its work. Common initiatives should ideally be directly oriented towards the V4 population, as it is the first target of Russian influence. Through forums or existing cooperative structures, V4 leaders should "craft a new narrative seeking to explain to skeptical populations why liberalism and European values are worth fighting for in the first place,"<sup>35</sup> rather than creating an environment of quasi-constant defiance towards the EU (and NATO, to a lesser extent).

Czech analysts have written that "the most important dividing lines on attitudes to the Russian Federation among the V4 countries are the different perceptions of security risks, economic interests, assessment of the consequences of sanctions and Czech, Slovak and Hungarian unwillingness to increase military spending." These are precisely the areas where the V4 should work to build a consensus and

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32 Milo and Klingová, 2017, p. 4.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

34 *Reuters*, 2017.

35 Tamkin, 2017 b.

shape a common policy on Russia, as the divergences over the Russian issue may undermine the multilateral relations within the V4 and weaken the Visegrad global cooperation in the future. Existing structures at the EU or NATO level (EEAS East STRATCOM Task Force and NATO STRATCOM COE) mainly focus on countering the Russian disinformation campaigns. Poland is the only one of the V4 involved in the NATO STRATCOM COE (it is one of the sponsoring nations), the Czech Republic has one seconded national expert working at the EEAS East STRATCOM, and Hungary and Slovakia do not participate in any of these two initiatives.<sup>36</sup> In the image of the disparate participation of the V4 countries in EU/NATO initiatives to counter Russian propaganda/influence, it is quite hard to imagine that the Visegrad countries could articulate a common policy towards Russia in the short term. Indeed, each of the four countries continues to act unilaterally and build national policies, which vary in their effectiveness, on this key issue. However, common ground between the four Visegrad countries regarding the Russian question is their unanimous commitment to their NATO membership and to the duties originating from it. Pending a common V4 Russian policy, the group should continue building common ground and cooperative security within the NATO framework by participating together in NATO battlegroups or other security and defense-related initiatives. Russia is doubtless the biggest security challenge for the V4, as the persistent failure to present a united position on this issue is eroding the international image of the group and makes the Visegrad cooperation lose in credibility and interest.

Actions undertaken in the V4 have been insufficient and ineffective. Visegrad countries must remain acutely aware of the necessity to build a common policy and position towards Russia, as it is only through a joint V4 policy that effective actions regarding Russian propaganda and influence could be undertaken, but also a policy on which V4 leadership is desirable from a European standpoint. A new approach should be initiated by developing "sustainable (not occasional) national and multinational cooperation, with the inclusion of people from European institutions."<sup>37</sup> Again, as Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic appear to be unable to agree on the Russian issue, a wider approach should be promoted, through discussions within the CEDC forum, for example. As stated by the CEDC defense ministers during the last general meeting on June 17, 2017, the seven partners are committed to "explor[ing] other possible areas of enhancing mutual security and defense cooperation, particularly in the sharing of information, coordinating common positions on an EU level."<sup>38</sup> Therefore, the CEDC framework could be used to build a consensus between V4 countries. Finally, it appears that V4 countries do not feel the necessity for developing a clear and shared position on Russia and follow the soft EU consensus. The Visegrad group gives the impression of feeling invulnerable to Russian influence thanks to its EU membership without feeling the need to fight for it. However, "joining the European Union is not by itself enough of a guarantee of a pro-Western tilt, or enough to inoculate those countries

36 Janda *et al.*, 2017.

37 Wenerski, 2017, p. 11.

38 Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces of the Czech Republic, 2017, p. 2.





against future Russian mischief,"<sup>39</sup> and specific multilateral cooperation within V4 must be established if the group wants to prevail against Russia's aggressive behavior. This passive behavior is not sustainable in the medium and long term and represents the foremost challenge for V4 collective security.

## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Given the above-mentioned overall situation regarding V4 security, five recommendations could be presented:

1. Introduce a multilateral dialogue within the Visegrad cooperation on PESCO to discuss an active V4 engagement in projects related to the group's common security challenges such as illegal migration. The announced participation of the four countries in the Military Mobility Project must be a first step and not the only one.
2. The V4 EU Battlegroup is certainly one of the greatest V4 successes in the field of security and defense cooperation. The battlegroup reflects the image of a reliable and committed partner within NATO and the EU and must therefore be strengthened in 2019. Czech, Slovak, and Hungarian engagement must at least be maintained at the 2016 level.
3. The Central European Defense Cooperation (CEDC) has proven itself to be very efficient during the 2015–2016 migration crisis. Therefore, the CEDC should serve in the future as a proactive tool to prevent any escalation in case of a new migration wave. The V4, together with Austria, Croatia and Slovenia should take the CEDC to another level and deepen the fruitful cooperation in other common security and defense issues.
4. The V4 remaining divided on the crucial issue of the Russian relationship and showing no sign of a possible consensus on a common position towards Russia in the short/medium term, the four countries should consider discussing the question outside the Visegrad cooperation framework. The CEDC forum could serve that purpose, as Austria could play the role of a mediator between the V4 countries.
5. Asserting their strong and unbreakable ties with NATO, and to a lesser extent with the EU, the V4 countries must participate more actively together in efforts to counter Russian information influence. The split with the Czech Republic and Poland on one side (actively involved at the EU–NATO level) and Hungary and Slovakia on the other side (not actively involved at the EU–NATO level) must end. The four countries should initiate a dialogue and appoint at least one V4 expert in the EEAS East STRATCOM Team and the NATO STRATCOM COE Team as a first step. These experts would inform all the V4 countries about the best practices on a regular basis, for instance with regard to Russian propaganda.

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<sup>39</sup> Tamkin, 2017 a.

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# CYBER SECURITY

Marta Przywała

## INTRODUCTION

The paper aims to present what cyber space is, what it is composed of, and to explain the nature of challenges and threats originating from it. Different threats are presented and analyzed, giving an insight into their possible consequences. Special attention is dedicated to the informational component of cyber space, which is also a strategic element of modern society, both as a steering mechanism for the infrastructure of cyber systems and the part of communication for individuals and societies impacting their behavior. Therefore, it may be turned into a tool for conducting information warfare in the technological and psychological sense. The article analyzes how this warfare can be conducted and the way the V4 countries are exposed to it. Their vulnerability to the problem is touched on more deeply, which may serve as a starting point for further work on countermeasures.

## CYBER SPACE AND ALL IT MEANS

Analyzing challenges originating from cyber space should start with understanding what cyber space actually is and what its basic components are. The term was coined and described by William Gibson in the 1980s. Although the novelist was creating a fantasy virtual world, however distant from what we know today, the actual description he offered reflects the phenomenon of the great interconnection of human beings without regard to their physical location, which also characterizes our contemporary cyber space: "A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts... A graphical representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the non-space of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding."<sup>1</sup> A variant of less poetic definition of the term was adopted by the U.S. Joint Staff in the *National Military Strategy for Cyberspace Operations*, according to which cyber space is "an operational domain whose distinctive and unique character is framed by the use of electronics and the electromagnetic spectrum to create, store, modify, exchange, and exploit information via interconnected and internetted information systems and their associated infrastructures."<sup>2</sup> As found in scientific literature and governmental sources, cyber

1 Gibson, 1989, p. 128.

2 *National Military Strategy for Cyberspace Operations*, 2006.



space can be defined in many ways. Already a decade ago, 28 different definitions were counted and none has been fully officially agreed upon.<sup>3</sup>

In the context of this article, *cyber space* is used as a concept of multiple layers with technical, informational and human elements, each of which constitutes an equally important part in the whole cyber environment:

- Technical component: a set of physical platforms and infrastructures that connect information systems, networks and human users globally; the technical element is the foundation, the basic framework of how we enter and use cyber space;
- Informational component: massive amounts of informational content that can be digitally and electronically sent anywhere, anytime, to anyone connected to the Internet – which has been enormously affected and augmented by the convergence of numerous informational technologies;
- Human component: people who use the connectivity and the content; human cognition results from greatly increased access to information that can impact behavior and decision-making in the cyber realm and beyond it.

Already in the 1970s, Alvin Toffler predicted the trajectory technology and society would take and called this new era *the "Information Age."* Networks linking networks, connections emerging between suppliers and customers to make electronic pathways form the essential infrastructure of the new wave ("the Third Wave") economy.<sup>4</sup> Technological innovations gave rise to what we describe as *information society*. The application of information technologies (IT) in nearly all corners of human activity is a phenomenon that comes from breakthroughs in information processing, storage, and transmission. Cheap or completely free-of-charge solutions are extensively distributed. Thanks to new technologies we are able to communicate, work, study, shop, and entertain ourselves. One of the major areas impacted most is telecommunications "which, in being computerized, in effect, merge with the general development of computing and impel still more dramatic improvements of information management and distribution."<sup>5</sup> Disseminated devices require connection. The computerization of telecommunications led to the prospect of myriad links between terminals within and between offices, ministries, banks, homes, schools, shops, factories, power grids, and lots more. In a real sense, cyber space is where we create and use the digital information – what people's daily life is essentially inseparable from.

If the information is "created, stored, modified, exchanged, or exploited" only by the use of "electronics and electromagnetic spectrum", operating in cyber space is specific and unique as all action is undertaken *within* a different physical space, a new domain for second life.<sup>6</sup> Digital information has two functions in the

3 Kramer, 2009, p. 3.

4 Toffler and Toffler, 1995, p. 71.

5 Webster, 2003, p. 1338.

6 The argument that cyberspace is a manmade environment because it requires manmade technology to enter and use it is only half-true. In the four other operational domains, in sea, air and space, as well as on land, manmade technologies are also needed to enter and exploit



movement that takes place here: it is an order-giving, steering mechanism for cyber infrastructures but also a portion of communication that can be a behavior-altering factor for individuals or social communities.<sup>7</sup> Each level of the cyber system – physical infrastructure and operational software on the one hand, as well as people on the other – is susceptible to security breakdown caused by a sort of information disruption. As a result, there are at least two facets of cyber threats according to their target: cyber attacks/incidents and disinformation activities. Joanna Świątkowska asserts that *information warfare* can be understood as actions aimed at either devices or people.<sup>8</sup> However, as she also correctly points out, the term is closely linked to psychological warfare<sup>9</sup> and it will also be used as such in the present article.

## WAYS TO HARM THE OPPONENT

New forms of warfare spring from a particular way of making wealth and each civilization gives rise to its own way of waging war.<sup>10</sup> It is not surprising that cyber space, being the environment in which information, the engine of modern society, is processed, is used as a tool of warfare. Therefore, *cyber warfare* – politically motivated hacking for the purpose of causing damage or disruption – has become an integral part of the entire cyber ecology. “Evolution of violence”<sup>11</sup> and new trends in both the technical and human spheres create opportunities for all kind of attacks, such as more present, efficient and professional cross-border criminality, using cyber space in the context of political struggle, and cyber terrorism, to name just a few.

### *Cyber Attacks*

Cyber attacks against digital assets are closest to the ‘conventional’, ‘technical’ thinking about cyber security. Denial-of-service (DoS) or distributed denial-of-service (DDoS), which make a machine or network resource unavailable to its intended users, are examples of such an action.

Attacks on psychical infrastructure are more elaborated than simply disrupting data, and, as the experience shows, can have huge impacts. Access to the information on a computer system can be obtained only if there is physical access to this computer system. Sabotage is an example of malicious interception or

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these domains. Cyberspace is an entirely designed environment and this clear distinction from the other physical environments may be crucial to further developments within national and international security. Daniel T. Kuehl argues that making the unique characteristics of cyber space the pivotal part of its definition is an added value to conceptual clarity (Kuehl, 2009, p.7).

7 Świątkowska, 2017 a, p. 31.

8 See Świątkowska, 2018.

9 Conyers and Kiyuna, 2015, p. 183.

10 Toffler and Toffler, 1995, p. 95.

11 Ghernaouti-Helie, 2016.

replacement of order and communications components. It can lead to serious, physical damage or total destruction of the system, which may impact people's everyday lives, especially if they target ICT systems are supposed to coordinate the functioning of the most exposed equipment: e.g. power, water, fuel, transportation, or others critical infrastructures. In 2015, Ukrainian energy companies were hacked, resulting in thousands of citizens being cut off from the electricity supply for several hours.<sup>12</sup> As *The New York Times* reports, "the first such attack on critical industrial infrastructure that sits at the foundation of modern economies"<sup>13</sup> was launching Stuxnet in 2010. The malware was created to attack and destroy an Iranian industrial facility. It had infiltrated factory computers to reach that goal, and then had spread to plants around the world, luckily, without having caused damage to them.

Sabotage or stealing technology can antecede and complement cyber espionage which is "the act or practice of obtaining secrets (sensitive, proprietary or classified information) from individuals, competitors, rivals, groups, governments and enemies also for military, political, or economic advantage using illegal exploitation methods on Internet, networks, software and/or computers."<sup>14</sup> According to the research of the *Wall Street Journal* from 2015, 60 nation-states "have or are developing tools for computer espionage and attacks."<sup>15</sup> Cyber space enables criminals to intercept huge amounts of data at once when it is not handled securely. What is even more problematic about cyber espionage is that victims do not often know that they are under constant threat for a long time. The median number of days attackers are present on a victim network before detection is 229.<sup>16</sup>

Cyber attacks may not only be limited to computer-based methods but also imply strategic physical attacks against infrastructure, i.e. cutting undersea communication cables may effectively disable entire regions or countries.<sup>17</sup>

The unique characteristics of cyber space make the attribution of an attack difficult, and often even impossible to determine whether the act was carried out in the service of a government or was an independent operation. Disrupting ICT systems or stealing information can be commissioned by nation-states, while executed by hired criminals, "hacker patriots."<sup>18</sup> After Estonia was a victim of a series of attacks, mostly DDoS, in 2007, in the middle of a diplomatic conflict with Russia,<sup>19</sup> although the allegations against the Russian government have never been proved unambiguously, there is still a public conviction that the attacks were Kremlin-backed.

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12 Świątkowska, 2017 a, p. 36.

13 Richmond, 2010.

14 Conyers and Kiyuna, 2015, p. 1.

15 Thuy Vo, Valentino-DeVries, and Yadron, 2015.

16 *FireEye*, 2014 b, p. 8.

17 *BBC News*, 2017 a.

18 Klimburg and Tirmaa-Klaar, 2011, p. 16.

19 *BBC News*, 2007.



## Information Warfare

Cyber espionage may be a way to collect tactical information, and, after assuring that it is valid, manipulate it, spread the propaganda or disinformation to demoralize the enemy and the public, while “undermining the quality of opposing force information and denial of information-collection opportunities.”<sup>20</sup> Such an action enables a mass attack on entire societies, and more specifically, on human minds. “Information warfare can be defined through its three main functions: gaining, protecting and disturbing information. By knowing more about our competitor, we can defeat him more easily. By protecting information about ourselves, our entity can be safer. By manipulating information, one can effectively influence a rival and change its behavior.”<sup>21</sup> In this context, Joseph Nye’s conception of “soft power” may be invoked. However, it can be applied as the idea of information warfare using “soft” tools only with one essential amendment – in Nye’s case, persuasion is defined as activities aiming to steer someone’s behavior through the power of the attractive positive influence, and soft power is built primarily on trust. In this sense, it has positive connotations, while information warfare consists of actions with hostile purposes, such as trickery, manipulation, and biased interpretation of facts aiming to influence the actions of the target within the desirable scenario.<sup>22</sup> The benefits of using cyber space to this aim can include cost reduction, the possibility to anonymize actions or falsify identity, extensive outreach, and asymmetry enhancement between rivals of different leverage and capabilities.<sup>23</sup>

The way we create information content, the way we share that content through new forms of connectivity, and the way human interaction and communication are affected, are three dimensions of the information environment that have been changed in cyber space so that they provide more opportunities to actors willing to influence the opponent. On the one hand, any user that has the knowledge to create a website or an application, and also wishes to create one, can legally do so. Moreover, anybody can become a broadcaster and upload their own content. The number of blogs and vlogs by which people get a chance to comment and voice their different concerns to the viewer is growing.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, rapid adoption of mobile technology is gradually replacing other sources that are also used for communication, e.g. land lines. The use of mobile technology is associated with an increasing amount of information at the users’ disposal as a portable device equipped with Internet connection makes it easy for them to gain information wherever they are. Combined with the fact that technology can generate information much faster

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20 Conyers and Kiyuna, 2015, p. 183.

21 Świątkowska, 2017 a, p. 33.

22 Świątkowska, 2018.

23 Świątkowska, 2017 a, pp. 34–35.

24 The blogosphere is a very sensitive area of propaganda influence. Given that freedom of speech and expression are among the basic, legally sanctioned values in Western society, as well as the level of anonymity that the blogosphere enables, it is easier to distinguish and track down a public broadcaster distributing propaganda information than to point out a blogger doing so.

than people can process it, this means that people often find themselves unable to cope with an increasing amount of information. "Information overload is referred to in a variety of ways in the literature – data smog, data delirium and information fatigue syndrome. However one terms it, it is seen as a problem that can manifest itself in a number of ways. Uncontrolled and unorganized information can hinder learning and decision-making, reduce productivity and can have negative effects on health and well-being."<sup>25</sup> This brings us to the problem of the culture of digesting information that is frequently limited to headlines, titles and images and can be easily used by the opponent. "They take an article similar to the original but lace it with suggestive undertones. Sometimes they change a title, but not always. This manipulation technique is no longer propaganda or disinformation – it's a typical information operation. It involves manipulating contents of articles written by regular people or by journalists."<sup>26</sup>

Several methods of informational influence can be distinguished. When the content is produced at a certain angle, whether the article is narrated suggestively or includes any hidden messages in its rhetoric or visuals, it is propaganda. When it comes to disinformation, it may come out in a form of a completely untrue piece of information or be distributed as false information content mixed with real one; such information falls into the definition of hybrid material – a message that in substance is based on facts but its content has been changed.<sup>27</sup> Each kind of content may be manipulated, including audio and visual materials. As researchers from the University of Washington have proven, there already exists artificial intelligence that is able to study and manipulate more advanced content, such as video and footage, so accurately that its fake copy has all the features of the original,<sup>28</sup> therefore, the content may be completely *reproduced* into a fake one without awaking any distrust in the viewer.

The perfect source of information about the target are all sorts of applications and websites that gather and process vast amount of users' data. Social media, however, plays the most significant role in information gathering, which has been shown by the Facebook data crisis caused by Cambridge Analytica.<sup>29</sup> According to studies, the youngest generations (denoted as generations Y and Z) are online most of the time; actively use technology and digital media; live in the "global village;" and get in touch with others through the Internet. Moreover, generation Z starts to differ from the previous one since it gains knowledge from apps, blogs and social media; receives content mostly in the form of visuals; and needs to connect with others

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25 Allen and Shoard, 2005.

26 Żemła, 2017.

27 The High Level Group on fake news and online disinformation rightfully makes a distinction between *fake news* and *disinformation*, which is defined as "all forms of false, inaccurate, or misleading information designed, presented and promoted to intentionally cause public harm or for profit." European Commission, 2018, p. 5.

28 BBC News, 2017 b.

29 I.e. in Poland, over 90% of the Internet users are connected to social media. *Newspoint*, 2018. See: *The Guardian*, 2018.





but primarily does so online.<sup>30</sup> Given these facts, it is important to add that social media users conform with offers by these platforms' functionalities that allow for a selective choice of information sources and the creation of profiles strongly adjusted to the users' preferences. As a result, it impacts the cognitive process, which is thus based on limited sources of information. This information environment is narrowed down not only by the users themselves but also by algorithms that assort content according to the created profile. Individual cognitive models selected on one's own in social media impose ideas and views being formed in line with specific preferences which, as a consequence, increases the vulnerability to being manipulated.<sup>31</sup> Taste and preference-loaded social media profiles can be easily (and have already been) used to categorize individuals and groups, understand their emotions and reactions, in order to tailor the language of the message and project it more effectively than in the case of massive communication. The right pieces of information presented in the right way at the right moment, aimed at carefully selected people, could always become a weapon.

In the most extreme cases, such methods of profiling users and adjusting information are used by terrorist groups to communicate: recruit, radicalize, gain financial resources and give instructions.<sup>32</sup>

## **V4 COUNTRIES IN THE SHADOW OF RUSSIAN CYBER POWER**

**T**he geopolitical situation of the entire East Central European region is still to a large extent determined by the greatest power in the neighborhood, namely the Russian Federation. Messages sent by the Kremlin signal quite clearly that Moscow is trying to dismantle the system that was established after 1991 in order to build new power relations that are more favorable to Russia. While executing its cyber power, Moscow makes attempts to change "the constructivist global order" established by the United States and to make Americans act more in accordance with Russian expectations.<sup>33</sup> The radically redefined position of the countries in the region through joining the Western sphere of influence, understood as membership in NATO and the EU, is a source of many tensions with Russia, which perceives the area as its "close abroad."<sup>34</sup> These tensions emerge especially in light of perceiving "the power potential of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and vesting NATO with global functions carried out in violation of the rules of international law, bringing the military infrastructure of NATO member countries near the borders of the Russian Federation, including by further expansion of the alliance" as one of the

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30 *Newspoint*, 2018.

31 Basaj, 2018 a.

32 Kristanadjaja, 2014.

33 *Jagiellonia.org*, 2017.

34 Świątkowska, 2017 b.

"main external military risks" for the Russian Federation.<sup>35</sup> The CEE countries are important from NATO's perspective because of their location on the Eastern flank of the Alliance, and, although it is out of the question to launch a military attack against them, using hybrid tools may be disruptive enough to achieve the political goals vis-à-vis the United States.

Russia's probing actions are not exclusively limited to conventional operations; it has also been intensifying its activities in cyber space. "Cyber attacks that took place in countries like Estonia in 2008, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan in 2009, and the recent NotPetya attack on Ukraine have proved that this part of Europe often serves as a training ground for politically motivated cyber operations."<sup>36</sup> The current situation in Ukraine, likewise the situation in 2008 when Russian military forces, supported by cyber attacks, rapidly defeated opposing Georgian forces, marks the public incidence of cyber power integrated with traditional kinetic military operations and is proof that Russia is able to effectively conduct hybrid warfare. In such circumstances, the countries that were formerly under Russian influence have every reason to assume the existence of threats, including hybrid risks with information warfare components.

According to the aforementioned *Wall Street Journal* study,<sup>37</sup> Russia is already a top player cyber force in the world. In 2017, it effectively emerged as a top cyber attack originator in the world but also appeared on the top 5 attack destination list; attacks from Russia are aimed mainly at American e-commerce (majority of the attacks), the United Kingdom, Russia itself, Latvia, and Ireland.<sup>38</sup>

The report from 2014 published by FireEye proved that the interest of Russia lies particularly in its former sphere of influence. The report describes activities of "an advanced persistent threat (APT) group"<sup>39</sup> engaged in espionage against political and military targets including the country of Georgia, Eastern European governments and militaries, and European security organizations since at least 2007. They compile malware samples with Russian language settings during working hours consistent with the time zone of Russia's major cities, including Moscow and St. Petersburg.<sup>40</sup> In 2017, other cyber attacks were carried out on the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of both the Republic of Poland and the Czech Republic.<sup>41</sup> Again, there is a strong suspicion that they were held by the same group of Russians as a part of a bigger cyber espionage campaign.<sup>42</sup>

The access to databases of public institutions from Eastern Europe could enable predictions of political intentions of the governments at hand. Compromising the systems of institutions having public trust would also help influence the opinions of their societies. Methods such as spying on and thereby bullying the nation-states

35 *The Embassy of the Russian Federation...*, 2015.

36 Świątkowska, 2017 b.

37 Thuy Vo, Valentino-DeVries, and Yadron, 2015.

38 *ThreatMetrix*, 2017, p. 15.

39 The group has been named APT28. It is known also under the names of Sofacy or Fancy Bear.

40 *FireEye*, 2014 a, p. 3.

41 Haertle, 2017.

42 Ferfecki, 2017.



are focused on sowing chaos, on destabilizing their political, military or economic situation. They are conducted by various state and non-state actors. They take advantage of the weakest points of the opponent – vulnerabilities in the public ICT systems in this case. Moreover, they are conducted below the threshold of war. All these elements provide the characteristics of hybrid conflict.<sup>43</sup>

However, there is also another layer in the Russian case. The concept of Psychological Warfare (PSYWAR) is crucial here. "Russian strategic thought sees PSYWAR as a conflict-winning paradigm, one that can directly undermine Russian security not only using *Information-Technical* means (e.g. cyber attack), but also *Information-Psychological* attacks. The latter can be constructed, in some cases, to include 'harmful' criticism of the government."<sup>44</sup> Expanding Russian cyber power, therefore, is driven by a will to diminish the perceived influence and hegemony of the United States that is perceived as a threat by Russians. The information sphere constitutes an extremely important element in the Russian strategy under PSYWAR and was defined officially in the *Doctrine of Information Security of the Russian Federation*. According to the document, national interests in this sphere include "ensuring and protecting constitutional human and civil rights and freedoms with regard to the receipt and use of information; privacy in the use of information technologies, providing information support to democratic institutions and mechanisms of interaction between the State and civil society; as well as applying information technologies for the preservation of cultural, historical, spiritual and moral values of the multi-ethnic people of the Russian Federation."<sup>45</sup> Most important is the notion that "intelligence services of certain States are increasingly using information and psychological tools with a view to destabilizing the internal political and social situation in various regions across the world, undermining sovereignty and violating the territorial integrity of other States."<sup>46</sup> Joanna Świątkowska draws attention to the fact that if we compile these two fragments, it is clear that Russia takes an approach according to which the sphere that allows to control the regime is in danger, under a constant information attack (in other words – in a constant conflict),<sup>47</sup> and may apply not only defensive measures but also use the same mechanisms to take offensive actions to protect its interests.<sup>48</sup>

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43 Świątkowska, 2017 a, pp. 35–36.

44 Klimburg and Tirmaa-Klaar, 2011, p. 16.

45 *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, 2016.

46 *Ibid.*

47 Świątkowska, 2017 b.

48 The blurring boundary between *war* and the *peace* results from the difference in understanding by the West and the East of what hostile actions in cyberspace are. "The difference between the Western and Eastern approaches is that the first one understands the information warfare as limited, tactical operations carried out during hostilities. Meanwhile, for countries like for example Russia, it is not restricted to the time of war and is conducted permanently, also in the peacetime." Świątkowska, 2017 b.

### *Case Study: Cyber Crime in CEE*

Interestingly, "countries in the Central and Eastern Europe region are quickly following" Moscow in launching cyber operations.<sup>49</sup> Even though these operations are mostly cyber crime, which is different from a state-backed activity, Europol communicates that the "majority of threats affecting the EU were identified by EU law enforcement as coming from within Europe,"<sup>50</sup> meaning that the Visegrad nation-states are also the targets; especially taking into account that the countries most present in international law enforcement and media reports are in the closest neighborhood of the V4: Bulgaria together with Bosnia-Herzegovina,<sup>51</sup> but also Belarus<sup>52</sup> and Romania.<sup>53</sup>

The reason why cyber crime is flourishing in the former Soviet Union is simple: in this region, jobs, especially legitimate high-tech jobs, are hardly available, while law enforcement and legal systems are ill-equipped to fight against the criminals.<sup>54</sup> Then, software engineers turn into them in order to make fast and relatively easy money. "In Russia and other former Soviet Union and Eastern European economies, top university graduates are reportedly paid by organized crimes up to 10 times more than from legitimate jobs. ... Additionally, ... there is not a culture to consider these guys as criminals, as robbers, as killers. They are considered professionals as others."<sup>55</sup> Another factor is that e-commerce continues to expand, also in the region, and has triggered many financial crimes, primarily skimming, cyber extortion and Bitcoin hacking. Eastern Europe is reported as a major source of ATM malware.<sup>56</sup>

According to officials from Interpol, cyber crime originating not only from Russia, but also from Eastern Europe is increasing in scale and sophistication.<sup>57</sup> Europol mentions the existence of "travelling Eastern European groups controlled by Russian cyber crime gangs."<sup>58</sup> These criminal groups are organizing very efficient global teams and supply chain management. Members are assigned specialized roles, such as creating malware, cracking into networks, handling security credentials, and laundering the proceeds of the crimes.

As mentioned, Russia's cyber attacks are targeted mostly at the United States, however, its disinformation campaigns are common in East Central Europe. It was also already stated that information warfare is effective only if well-customized; accordingly, Russian propaganda channels exploit and address communications differently in various countries. However, some features and schemes are repetitive and can be identified in the case of all the four countries.

49 *ThreatMetrix*, 2018.

50 Europol, 2017, p. 69.

51 *Ibid.*

52 *Gulf Times*, 2017.

53 Martin, 2015; Kumar, 2016.

54 Gertz, 2015.

55 *Ibid.*

56 Europol, 2017, p. 69.

57 Gertz, 2015.

58 Europol, 2017, p. 45.



First of all, with minor exceptions, the channels used to conduct information warfare are similar. They are mainly conspiracy websites, alternative media, so-called “bridge media” (established in media mainstream and operating as an environment of hardcore conspiracy), social media pages (mainly Facebook for the Czechs and the Hungarians), and YouTube channels.<sup>59</sup>

Secondly, the manipulation techniques vary more between the nations, but mostly they include:<sup>60</sup>

- playing on target audience emotions to strengthen the psychological aspect of communication which stimulates the recipient’s awareness level and makes it easier to absorb information; it can be done through expressive language, and manipulative titles or visuals;
- using unclear or unverifiable sources;
- making general conclusions about specific groups based on individual examples;
- making statements or evoking content that is faked or strongly misinterpreted;
- giving one-sided interpretations of facts;
- mixing opinions and facts.

Thirdly, there are narratives. The main subject matters recur in all the V4 countries. The narratives that are heavily exploited in all Visegrad countries are based on perpetual negative images of the EU, NATO, the United States’ foreign policy, the internal situation in Ukraine, or on immigration and refugees.<sup>61</sup> However, the themes of these information campaigns have been changing with time, adapting to current events and adjusting to the realities in the particular country. The same information will not be met with the same reaction in all these societies, therefore, the same problem cannot be tackled from the same angle in each case. This is also because each of these nation-states has a different kind of vulnerability to subversive foreign influence.<sup>62</sup> The more divided a society, the more vulnerable and prone it is to manipulation.<sup>63</sup>

Among the Visegrad countries, Hungary is specific as the only non-Slavic nation of the four. Therefore, Russian efforts cannot exploit the Slavic brotherhood and need to find different means to conjure up feelings of affinity. It could be the political level, given that Hungary and Russia share some political interests. Hungary’s main political parties promote cooperation with Russia, and this is reflected in the government’s policy of Eastern Opening<sup>64</sup> or criticism of the sanctions imposed on Russia by the EU.<sup>65</sup> Taking also into account that the Russian Federation’s role is not portrayed in publicly available counter-intelligence documents in Hungary, and almost no government policy is in effect to counteract Kremlin disinformation and

59 Wierzejski, 2017.

60 *Ibid.*

61 *Ibid.*

62 Milo and Klingová, 2017.

63 *Prague Security Studies Institute*, 2017 b.

64 *The Orange Files*, 2016.

65 *BBC News*, 2014.



influence,<sup>66</sup> the vulnerability of the Hungarian society to pro-Russian disinformation is growing. It is already reported that the Kremlin's disinformation narrative appears in the mainstream media more often than in the three other countries.<sup>67</sup>

One surprising fact is that there is few disinformation manufactured under Russian influence that in its subject would be tailored specifically for Hungary, i.e. anti-Romanian attitudes present in the Hungarian society.<sup>68</sup> Anti-immigration content was the only exception. However, this case cannot be considered as Hungary-specific, since the disinformation and conspiracies that shifted their focus to terrorism and immigration were actively spread also in other countries. One of the proposed explanations includes an assumption that the Hungarian environment would be already Russian-friendly enough, the objective of decreasing trust in the allied partners would have been achieved here (e.g. in the immigration crisis case in which Hungary actively opposed introducing the solutions proposed by Brussels),<sup>69</sup> and there would be no need to conduct disinformation campaigns. However, "this is in contrast with public opinion in Hungary, which, according to polls, clearly prefers a pro-Western geopolitical orientation and shows a relatively stable support for NATO, the EU and the U.S."<sup>70</sup>

When it comes to Slovak relations with the Russian Federation, they are generally characterized by a "friendly pragmatism" while "a small push could change the course of the country in either direction."<sup>71</sup> On the one hand, Slovaks are still among the most EU-positive V4 nations,<sup>72</sup> and Russian disinformation has a limited access to Slovak mainstream media, which reports Russian activities and influence in the region.<sup>73</sup> There was also the case of the major Slovak press agency TASR that was a step away from establishing a working relation with the pro-Kremlin press agency Sputnik but withdrew from the collaboration after protests from civil society and media organizations.<sup>74</sup> On the other hand, Slovakia's lowest support for NATO and the highest level of anti-American sentiments among the V4 countries<sup>75</sup> is the trap door exploited by Kremlin to confuse Slovak society and erode trust in the United States and NATO-related security matters, while Russian foreign policy is described as good and effective, i.e. in such cases as the interventions in Ukraine or Syria.<sup>76</sup>

In both Slovakia and the Czech Republic, 'bridge media,' trying to exploit grey areas between alternative sources and mainstream media, are effective in imitating the latter and in mixing disinformation into relevant news.<sup>77</sup> Because of similarities

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66 Milo and Klingová, 2017, p. 26.

67 Wierzejski (ed.), 2017, p. 11.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 12

69 *BBC News*, 2015.

70 Milo and Klingová, 2017, p. 5.

71 *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 5.

72 *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 7.

73 Wierzejski (ed.), 2017, p. 19.

74 *NewsNow/TASR*, 2017.

75 Milo and Klingová, 2017, p. 7.

76 Wierzejski (ed.), 2017, p. 20.

77 *Prague Security Studies Institute*, 2017 b.



in languages, articles in Slovakia, if not translated, are simply published in the Czech language, which exposes the two nations to very similar content.

In the Czech Republic, there are two types of pro-Russian influence actors: ones that can be directly linked to Russian government and those that are Kremlin inspired (also in the political sphere), but with no proven ties.<sup>78</sup> However, "being quite euro-sceptic, [the Czech Republic] simultaneously rejects the pro-Russian orientation."<sup>79</sup> Public perception of the EU within the Czech society is the lowest of the V4, therefore, naturally, Russian propaganda in this country concentrates on subjects related to the European politics, giving ideas of conspiracies of globalist elites or the ineffectiveness of European politicians in crises such as the migration case. Although the anti-NATO propaganda is present also here, the Czechs are quite resilient, and support for the Alliance is relatively high.<sup>80</sup>

It is crucial to mention that Poland is notably different from the other Visegrad countries, because of the shared border with the militarily strategic Kaliningrad *oblast* and higher anti-Russian sentiments when compared to other countries in the region. Polish–Russian relations in the past and the very turbulent history made Poles more resilient and very cautious about Russia's geopolitical intentions. Because membership in the Western organizations was a step that was supposed to assure the country's security and territorial integrity, public attitudes towards them are positive; Poland is one of the most euro-optimistic countries in the region, as well as most pro-NATO and pro-American of the V4. Running pro-Kremlin propaganda there is a tough nut to crack and such actions require more elaborate methods.

The majority of the websites spreading Polish propaganda, apart from Russian-government owned *Sputnik*, are home-grown. Even though *Sputnik* serves as a reference for many of them, according to the study, as numbers of quoting and sharing show, the most influential is *dziennik-polityczny.com*.<sup>81</sup> The issue is that the website publishes articles of anonymous authors; this is a very important fact, given that one of the ways to counter pro-Kremlin propaganda is to 'name and shame' the authors of disinformation stories by exposing them and putting in the public spotlight.

In the Polish-tailored narrative, adversaries take advantage of country's difficult history that emerged in the recent diplomatic crises in Poland and was communicated with the particular aim of moving the reader emotionally. It is the case with the Polish–Ukrainian past and the Volhynian massacres to create a negative image of Ukraine and the Ukrainians, and undermine mutual relations. Also, the concept of Polish Russophobia has been weaponized and used to discredit Polish authorities and political elites as emotional and irresponsible in international relations. In these cases, social media and commentaries under articles are employed in the Russian information war toolbox with the use of trolls and bots that put their comments

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78 *Ibid.*

79 Milo and Klingová, 2017, p. 5.

80 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

81 Wierzejski (ed.), 2017, p. 21.

below articles (also on the three biggest and most popular information portals: *Wp.pl*, *Onet.pl*, and *Interia.pl*) expressing controversial opinions.<sup>82</sup>

A very particular method of disinformation was used during the period when NATO-related content publishing was extensive due to the NATO Summit in Warsaw in 2016. Fake interviews with top Polish generals were published where they were supposed to express unfavorable opinions about the allies and the Summit itself.<sup>83</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**D**ue to the dense matrix of interconnections, cyber power plays a vital role in building economic strength, as well as in the development and the execution of national policy through governmental operations; it shapes the way in which authorities connect with citizens to provide them services, it also shapes the way in which governments conduct diplomacy. The disruption of the existing connections may have serious implications, which, depending on the target, could be various in nature. Since cyber disruption does not require the use of force, and the attack in cyber space does not require military tools to be carried out – it can even be limited to the information layer – it is difficult to define unequivocally whether the action at issue amounts to an act of war or not. Cyber campaigns, including disinformation operations, that are conducted below the threshold of war, as traditionally perceived in clear opposition to peace, challenge this boundary and imply we must redefine basic security conceptions and change mindsets in conducting international politics.

Russia is actively exercising its power in cyber space against the V4 countries. The awareness of pro-Kremlin informational campaigns which arise due to a number of successful projects conducted in the V4 region is a positive trend.<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, in order to counteract this trend, concrete action is required at least at the defensive operational spectrum in order to defend one's own use of information in cyber space and take measures to prevent anyone else from interfering.

### *1. Track Russian media and develop analytic methods.*

In order to effectively eliminate Russian disinformation and propaganda, an analytic approach is needed. It is indispensable to understand its changing narrative themes, methods and sources of fake stories.

There are already some bottom-up initiatives that aim to fight this hostile foreign influence. In Hungary, the investigative portal *atlatszo.hu* managed to pinpoint outlets trying to manipulate public opinion, by tracing their servers operating in Russia and comparing the Hungarian and the original Russian version of the same news.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>83</sup> *NEon24.pl*, 2016.

<sup>84</sup> *Prague Security Studies Institute*, 2017 a.

<sup>85</sup> *Atlatszo.hu*, 2014.



## 2. Highlight and “block” Russian propaganda.

It is important to identify mechanisms to block or otherwise tag Russian propaganda in ways that are both fast and specific to the audiences at risk.

When it comes to actions taken by civil society, platforms such as *StopFake* launched by the Czechs, or *Rosyjska V kolumna w Polsce Facebook* page in Poland, identify, debunk and fact-check the Kremlin's propaganda, while raising awareness about existing disinformation at the same time.

Also, some practical public countermeasures are taken, i.e. cancelling the broadcasting license of the Warsaw-based station *Radio Hobby* that rebroadcasted content produced in Polish by *Radio Sputnik*.<sup>86</sup>

## 3. Build the resilience of at-risk populations.

Addressing the problem at the national and international level, launching public information campaigns, and introducing media literacy training in the education system to help identify fake news and other propagandist content is needed.

Polish authorities address relations with Russia in strategic national security documents, such as the National Security Strategy of Poland (2014) and the Strategy for the Development of the System of National Security by 2022 (2013). Also, on the European level, Poland supports the activities on counteracting Russian propaganda – Polish MEP Anna Fotyga was rapporteur of the report on EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties (2016). However, although Russian disinformation operations are considered a major threat in Poland at the national and international level, there is no institutional solution to counteract disinformation in Poland.

For its part, the Czech government launched a process called “National Security Audit” assessing the readiness of the Czech security infrastructure against the top ten threats to internal security.<sup>87</sup> Its two chapters – “Influence of Foreign Powers” and “Hybrid Threats” – are relevant for the issue of Russian influence. Based on the Audit, a group of experts was established in order to monitor the spread of disinformation in the Czech media.

An example of an educational activity is the publishing by Slovak daily *Dennik N* of a manual for teachers and high school students.<sup>88</sup> The publication explains the mechanisms of manipulation used by disinformation media outlets and the risks of conspiracies and fake news being spread on the Internet. The initiative gained huge support via crowd-funding.

Moreover, during the annual Slovak Security Forum, the side event – Forum Against Propaganda – brings together various actors from the public, private and NGO sectors to exchange ideas and coordinate efforts in the fight against the problem.<sup>89</sup>

86 *Wyborcza.pl*, 2015.

87 Nováková, 2016, p. 8.

88 Šnidl, 2017.

89 Milo and Klingová, 2017, p. 38.

### 4. Expand and improve local and original content.

To effectively weaken Russian propaganda, there is a need to compete with it through alternative media channels, stronger social media and the content created by competent and well-trained journalists that can displace the disinformation narrative. Identifying key influencers and then enhancing their potential by an appropriate public exposure is a way to accomplish it.

There was an idea to establish a joint Visegrad TV channel broadcasting in English, however, until now no common agreement on the project has been reached.<sup>90</sup>

### 5. Tell the Western story better.

The Western community should feel obliged to provide compelling arguments for the populations in the region in order to convince them to align with the Western international organizations or individual nation-states in their strategic goals. At the national level, it is crucial to translate high-policy goals into the language of common citizens.

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# MIGRATION

Viktor Marsai – Péter Kövecsi-Oláh

## INTRODUCTION

It is a common fact that migration has been an integral part of human history since the beginning. Therefore, it is misguided to state that migration *per se* is a positive or negative phenomenon, a security challenge or the source of economic potential. Since migration is a complex issue, its nature highly depends on its circumstances (push and pull factors), methods (legal, illegal and irregular) and goals (struggle for physical survival or economic motives). Because of the limits and aims of this general research, this paper will not examine the aforementioned complexity of migration, but in parallel with the goals of project “*New Security Challenges from a V4 Perspective*” it will concentrate on the potential security challenges of the phenomenon. Therefore, while the authors accept that migration can have numerous positive aspects both for sending and receiving societies and countries, it will focus on its potential security challenges with regard to East Central European states, which became obvious during the migration crisis in 2015 and the following years. The paper will briefly analyze the effects and consequences of the flow of migrants three years ago, and will subsequently try to predict the migration dynamics of the two most problematic sending regions, the Middle East and Africa.

## BRIEF CONSIDERATIONS ON THE MIGRATION CRISIS IN 2015–2017

The so-called Arab Spring has dramatically changed the security environment around Europe. The collapse of different regimes from Syria to Libya has destabilized the EU’s direct neighborhood and created an arch of instability in North Africa and the Middle East. Although scholars and some politicians had immediately warned of the direct effects of migration on European security, in the shadow of other challenges (the Ukrainian crisis, the financial crisis) it was initially more or less neglected. Furthermore, as the Deputy Secretary of the Hungarian Ministry of Defense, Péter Siklósi stated in his paper, after almost fifty years of Cold War the Euro-Atlantic institutions – the European Union, NATO – were more or less familiar with the nature of the eastern threat to the continent, but they had more limited knowledge about the new security challenges of the south.<sup>1</sup> The spread of

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1 Siklósi, 2016, p. 322.

radical ideologies,<sup>2</sup> the increasing number of fragile and failed state on the borders of Europe, the more and more devastating effects of climate change, and – as their consequence – the steep rise in the number of illegal migrants who wanted to reach the „greener pastures” of the developed world present lesser known, non-state-centered challenges for EU and NATO countries. Although both organizations have started to develop strategies to deal with these issues, they have only achieved limited results. In this aspect the migration crisis in 2015 painfully highlighted the weaknesses and the unpreparedness of the European nations for such kinds of influxes, which led to heated debates and individual *ad hoc* solutions. In the last three years it seemed that a much broader consensus has been forged, namely that the root causes of migration must be treated in the sending countries and that European borders must be protected – or at least managed.<sup>3</sup> But there are still different views about the way forward and the depth of action both within NATO and the EU, e.g. regarding the topic of “hot spots” or deportation.<sup>4</sup>

In the last two years it seemed that the EU–Turkey agreement on migration, the Italy/EU–Libya deal and the EU–Niger deal, together with bilateral actions (e.g. UK funds for Ethiopia, the Spanish–Moroccan repatriation agreement) mitigated the problems: contrary to 2015, when, according to Frontex, more than 1.8 million irregular border crossings were detected at the EU's external borders,<sup>5</sup> in 2017 only 205,000 people arrived.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, it does not mean that the problem is over: the European countries and the Union have managed to handle some of the symptoms and reduce the number of arrivals, but it is far from a complete resolution. If Turkey decided to scrap the agreement it would open the eastern gate again. It is worth mentioning that from a Turkish point of view the question of national sovereignty has always been much more important than the European–Turkish connections. As this concept has not changed since, the European Union plays an outstanding role in Turkish economy and politics. Meanwhile, Ankara was witness to several political collapses among its neighbors. If we take a closer look at the map, we could hardly miss that only a few states could preserve their independence in the last decades. Iraq, Ukraine, Egypt and Syria suffered direct interventions, while Greece, for example, also suffers from significant political and economic problems that reduce the independence of Athens.

Furthermore, the cooperation with Libya is more fragile, and nobody knows whether the proposed elections in 2018 will contribute to the stabilization of the

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2 It is also worth noting that the concept of “radicalization” is highly contested. Most of the local authors and thinkers agree that the terrorist groups – mainly in contemporary Syria – are often tools in the hands of foreign powers. The meaning of “radical” and “moderate” in terms of Muslim jihadist group is also questionable. Regarding this topic see: *YouTube*, 2018 b. The members of the previously “moderate” Ahrar al-Sham (أحرار الشام) group have claimed themselves as friends of the groups considered “radical.” Regarding this topic, see Dániel Sógor's studies.

3 *European Commission*, 2017.

4 Macé, 2017; Schumacher, 2017; Lewis, 2016.

5 *European Parliament Research Service*, 2018.

6 *Daily Sabah*, 2018.



country or – on the contrary – if they will stoke further tensions between the political parties and militias fuelling a new, wide-scale civil war between the different factions.<sup>7</sup>

Europe is still under pressure from both directions of the great migration flows, Africa – both Northern and Sub-Saharan – and the Middle East region. In addition, Central Asia may provide a new and significant outflux.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the collapse of the agreement with Ankara and/or the negotiations with Libya could mean a new wave of irregular mass migration.

According to the current estimations, there are at least 700,000–1 million foreigners in Libya, and many of them are ready to leave towards Europe.<sup>9</sup> The EU–Libya, the EU–Niger and the Italy–Libya agreements sharply reduced the number of arrivals to the Italian coasts. Nevertheless many of the irregular migrants found new pathways and methods to reach Europe. The backlash affected Spain, which received 21,500 arrivals in 2017, three times more than in the previous year,<sup>10</sup> and Tunisia, where the migrant population has started to sharply increase.<sup>11</sup> Some of the human smugglers invented new instruments to reach Europe, e.g. the use of speedboats.<sup>12</sup>

And this is only the tip of the iceberg. Both Sub-Saharan Africa and the northern part of the continent have huge migration potential: according to the Gallup poll in 2017, almost every third person in the Sub-Saharan region is considering inter-state migration, which represents the highest rate in the world.<sup>13</sup> Although there is an obvious gap between intention and action, and the percentage of African people who decide to migrate shows surprising stability, it is important to underline the fact that the share – and absolute number – of people leaving the continent is constantly increasing. Most of them aim for Europe: according to the 2015 data of UNDESA, 9.2 million of the 16 million people of African origin who left the continent lived in Europe. The second-biggest receiving continent, Asia – including the Middle East, which hosts many citizens from the Maghreb states and Egypt – is home to only 4.2 million.<sup>14</sup>

It must be, of course, emphasized that most of these migrants arrived legally. But the data clearly demonstrates that even after 60 years of decolonization the main destination of intercontinental African migration is Europe, due to geographic, historical, and economic reasons. The same holds true for irregular migration, too.

In addition, calculating with the current demographic trends of Africa, the same percentage of migrants does not mean the same absolute numbers: while the percentage has remained more or less constant, or even declined from 3.2% to 2.9%

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7 El-Gamaty, 2018.

8 NTV, 2018.

9 Interview with an EU diplomat, April 2018.

10 *The Local.es*, 2017.

11 Interview with Libyan and Tunisian officers, November 2017.

12 Tondo, 2017.

13 Esipova, Ray, and Pugliese, 2017.

14 See: Carbone (ed.), 2017.



in 1990–2015, the number of arrivals jumped from 21.6 million to 32.6 million.<sup>15</sup> We also have to consider that even a relatively small number – some thousands – of newly arrived people may cause tremendous challenges for a system which is not ready to cope with – mostly economic – Western African migrants from Nigeria and Gambia because of the lack of bilateral agreements with the home countries or the necessary language skills.<sup>16</sup>

From a European point of view, the political and social changes and challenges of the Middle East played, and still play an outstanding role. This is especially valid after the outbreak of the so-called Arab Spring. However, this process was not orchestrated by the Arabic-speaking nations and not only Arabs participated in it. We have to emphasize that the willingness and the political manifestation of the „democratic changes” in region – and especially in Syria – were partially supported and directed by foreign forces. The Syrian war shows that the main actors of the region and global politics definitely encourage the use of armed force insofar as it can serve their interests. This statement is of course also true for the same groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan. From this aspect, Turkey is not just politically, but geographically significant. On the one hand, Ankara has to deal with more than 3 million migrants from Syria. On the other hand, according to the latest trends, Afghans are arriving in Turkey through Iran.<sup>17</sup> Therefore it is worth focusing on the role of Turkey in the regional conflicts and especially on its involvement in the migration crises.

### **SYRIA – ROADS TO DAMASCUS**

**B**ased on Ahmet Davutoğlu's ideas, Turkish foreign policy after 2008 aims to strengthen its position in the region. Within that framework the historically problematic Turkish–Armenian<sup>18</sup> and Turkish–Syrian<sup>19</sup> relations started to improve and on a bilateral level several meetings were held. 2011 marked a key turning point, when Syria faced its “democratic opposition” and when Turkish foreign policy – in parallel with the Western powers – decided to encourage the forces fighting against the central government of Damascus. In practice, it meant logistical help, as well as sending weapons and ammunition.<sup>20</sup> Regarding the migration outflux, Turkey opened its borders for the people coming from Syria and continues to host approximately 3.5 million Syrians. Approximately 90% of these people live outside the official refugee camps. Syrians started to work, or as we saw in 2015, tried to leave Turkey and start a new life somewhere in Europe. As the European Union reached an agreement with Turkey in the beginning of 2016, the

15 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

16 Interview with an EU diplomat, Hradec Kralove, November 2017.

17 *CNN Türk.com*, 2018.

18 Dougherty, 2009.

19 *Dünya Bülteni*, 2011.

20 *Diken*, 2015; *Dünya*, 2012.



flow of Syrian (and Iraqi) people slowed down substantially. In parallel with these processes, the Turkish–Iranian–Russian coordination – the so-called Astana group – became more active in the field. Turkish military action started in the region of the Euphrates (*Fırat Kalkanı*), Idlib, and Afrin (*Zeytin Dalı*). Ankara also changed the legal status of the Syrian refugees and allowed them to work legally within Turkey.<sup>21</sup>

In addition, some of the Syrians applied for and received Turkish citizenship.<sup>22</sup> These factors together contributed to the result that the majority of Syrians remained in Turkey. In fact, with the beginning of the last military operation, Turkey openly clarified that one of the goals of the operation is to resettle the refugees in the northern regions of Syria where the Turkish troops, the *mehmetçik* stabilized the political situation.<sup>23</sup> From a migration point of view, it means that many people would return to their motherland. If we take the statistics into consideration, the return of these people will be showed by the Turkish and Syrian authorities as well.

Regarding the Visegrad countries, the current threat is how and where the members of the different armed forces of Idlib, Afrin or Manbij/Menbiç could continue their lives. While we may describe this problem as one of terrorism, we should keep in mind that these people and their armed forces generally have influential backgrounds. In practice it could mean that the people who were fighting for years against the official Syrian government and have several connections to official terrorist organizations can get access to our countries or to Europe. For instance, a person called M. H. who was arrested in Edirne, claimed that he was fighting together with American, German, and French citizens on the side of the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) in Syria. M. H. managed to escape from the country and reached Bulgaria. However, in the end, after he crossed the Bulgarian–Turkish border, he had to return to Edirne because of financial problems. This story clearly shows that even though there is an official agreement regarding the refugees, in practice there are several groups of people who could change their places easily.

Salih Muslim, the former co-chair of the Syrian Kurdish party (Democratic Union Party, PYD), was arrested in Prague.<sup>24</sup> In Ankara PYD is considered a terrorist group, which has vital ties to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Muslim has been wanted by Turkey since February 2016, when a bomb killed more than 20 people in the Turkish capital.<sup>25</sup>

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21 Egeresi, 2017.

22 Doğdu Soylu, 2018.

23 *Türkçec eş-Şark el-Avasat*, 2018 a.

24 *Rûdaw*, 2018 b; Later on Salih Muslim was released and gave several interviews where he denied that there is a connection between PYD and PKK. Karaca, 2018; *Deutsche Welle*, 2018 a. Nowadays, Salih Muslim is one of the leaders of the TEV-DEM (*Tevgera Civaka Demokratik*, Movement for Democratic Society). For this topic and for U.S.–Kurdish relations see also Çiviroğlu, 2013.

25 *Deutsche Welle*, 2018 b.

Figure 1  
Civil Activists or Armed Groups?<sup>26</sup>



## THE FUTURE TRENDS OF AFRICAN MIGRATION

Although Africa went through significant development and modernization in the last two decades, the continent is still struggling with serious challenges. These will fuel all forms of migration, including irregular migration. It will also affect V4 countries, which are hosting a small, but growing African diaspora.<sup>27</sup> To support their smooth integration, we should have more knowledge about their homes and cultures.

The main structural challenges of Africa are rooted in the demographic boom, the high number of fragile and weak states, and the effects of climate change. These factors stoke ethnic, religious and inter-state tensions in the continent, which can also reach the level of armed conflicts. It is important to underline that most civil wars and insurgencies in Africa are more the symptoms rather than the roots of the troubles.

Africa is going through an almost unprecedented demographic boom. According to the latest UN estimates the current size of the population will double by 2050 (from 1.2 billion to 2.5 billion), and will likely reach 4.4 billion by 2100.<sup>28</sup> Even if nothing changes in the continent's migration dynamics, it will mean more than 36 million intercontinental migrants in 2050 and almost 66 million in 2100. Most of them will be economic migrants: according to the reports of the IMF, Africa needs 450 million new workplaces between 2010–2035. If current policies

<sup>26</sup> *Ensonhaber*, n. d.

<sup>27</sup> *Tarrósy*, 2017.

<sup>28</sup> *United Nations*, 2015, p. 1.



and trends remain unchanged, fewer than one-quarter of the necessary new jobs will be created,<sup>29</sup> which will significantly contribute to migration out of the continent. Population growth and the lack of economic opportunities will also fuel struggles for resources and assets.

In addition, the effects of climate change worsen the general situation. Africa is perhaps the continent most affected by global warming because there are no reserves in the system due to the population boom.<sup>30</sup> The adaptive capacity of the region is low, and even small anomalies can cause huge troubles. For example, as John Donnelly Fage states, the Sahel region was regularly hit by droughts, but its people had learned how to survive these periods. However, overpopulation jeopardized old traditions and methods. Furthermore, it increased soil degradation and desertification. Therefore, currently the lack of one or more rainy seasons causes major havoc.<sup>31</sup> Almost all estimates suggest that the situation will worsen.

Last, but not least we have to emphasize the problem of fragile and weak states. These entities simply do not have the capacity to cope with the emerging challenges ranging from climate change to radical jihadist movements. Their state apparatus is underdeveloped and lacks sufficient administrative knowledge. The same is true for security and social services. Piracy exists along the African coast not because of the local heritage but because many countries simply do not have the coast guard to cope with it, or they are so corrupt – due to the lack of regular salaries – that they turn a blind eye to armed robbery at sea. It is questionable whether most African states succeeded in capacity-building and whether the continent has progressed from the „backwards decade“ of the 1990s which was marked by failed and collapsed states. State building is a long procedure, and we cannot expect miracles. It means that most African countries still need decades, if not generations, to increase their capabilities and adaptiveness to cope with both the well-known and sudden challenges such as an epidemic or the rise of a jihadist movement. Therefore, these anomalies will generate smaller or bigger troubles in the continent, which will encourage migration, too.

## NEW TRENDS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

**A**fter the last Turkish military intervention in Syria, we saw in several cases that many fighters escaped from the region as civilians. Regarding the new challenges of migration, it would be more useful to focus on those thousands of people who have citizenship in a given European country and can leave Syria, Iraq, and even Turkey. If we take into consideration that the majority of the aforementioned terrorist groups on the ground were supported by Western powers, it is more than obvious that these members of the violent organizations tend to continue their activities somewhere else.

<sup>29</sup> *The World Bank*, 2017.

<sup>30</sup> Vogel and Scholes, 2015.

<sup>31</sup> Fage and Tordoff, 2004, p. 429.

For instance, the Uyghur fighters who come from China (East Turkestan) in order to fight for the "Islamic achievements" are a prime example of this. The number of Uyghur groups became so high that the problem was raised even at a political level in Turkey. The chairman of the East Turkestan Migration Association, Recep Sadettin Akyol declared that even for them, it is hard to control the incomers who settle down in the *Zeytinburnu* district of Istanbul. "Some of those who arrived have set up separate prayer rooms of their own instead of going to the official mosques... they teach them things we don't know."<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, some of them participated in the Turkish military operation in Afrin.<sup>33</sup> Most probably, these fighters will be unable to return to China. Therefore, there are two choices for them: they can settle in Turkey or move on to Europe.

Regarding the number of Afghans arriving since the beginning of 2018, we can talk of about 20,000 people. According to the statistics, at the moment approximately 170,000 asylum seekers are living in Turkey.<sup>34</sup> Apart from them, Iran hosts 3 million, while Pakistan is home to at least 2 million Afghan refugees. Tehran opened its borders to these people in 1979 and some of them have worked and lived in the Persian state ever since. Based on some Turkish sources, approximately half of them<sup>35</sup> have decided to move to Turkey and later on maybe to Europe. Since many Iranian Afghans have been enlisted and sent to Syria, the young population wants to avoid becoming a *şehit*, a martyr. The legal status of the mentioned group has not yet been officially settled in either Pakistan or in Iran. It means that while Turkey has the right to send these people back to Afghanistan, it is also possible that the Turkish authorities will let them go onwards to Greece or Bulgaria instead. Pakistan also has strained diplomatic ties with its neighbor, Afghanistan, because Islamabad blamed Kabul for the allegedly high portion of terrorists among the refugees.<sup>36</sup>

However, we would be on the wrong track if we accepted that the crises of the so-called Middle East stems only from regional factors. The role and the importance of the great powers are crucial as well. In this context, migration does not have priority, and it is instead considered only as a side effect. Non-European powers are especially uninterested in this phenomenon, as they are not affected by migration and their aim is to attain as much influence in the region as possible. This is partly the reason why in spite of all the slogans – according to which the whole world is fighting against terrorism – the atrocities are not decreasing. The responsibility of the West is obvious here.<sup>37</sup>

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32 *Asia Times*, 2017.

33 *ODATV*, 2018.

34 Çetin, 2017.

35 *Glokal Haber*, 2018.

36 *Türkçec eş-Şark el-Avasat*, 2018 a.

37 *YouTube*, 2011.





## THE V4 PERSPECTIVES

We cannot be naïve. Although the European countries have somehow managed the migration crisis of 2015–2017, it was unimaginable without the assistance and support of foreign actors, such as Turkey. The closing of the southern (Libya, Niger) and eastern (Turkey) gates offered some breathing room for EU and NATO countries to prepare for similar events. But we are far from developing capacities and knowledge which are adequate to cope with the same measure of irregular migration as happened in 2015.

There is another aspect we have to highlight. Especially in the case of Turkey – in connection with the Syrian war – the leaders of most NATO Member States were convinced that Damascus will not be able to resist the fighting and the state will collapse. However, the central Syrian government remains in power with Russian and Iranian help. They have also increased their prestige in international politics. For instance, well-known Turkish (and for instance Egyptian) politicians are seeking connections with Damascus.<sup>38</sup>

It is impossible to determine whether Europe will face a similar event or not, but the examination of our close neighborhood – Africa and the Middle East – and their trends do not offer much grounds for optimism. The population of Syria was just around 23 million before the war, and even its crisis – catalyzing other migrant and refugee communities – generated millions-strong migration. From this perspective, the collapse of any fragile North African state can create a similar influx, not to mention countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

At first sight, East Central Europe does not lie in the middle of the transit routes nor is it the main target of migration. Among the V4 countries, only Hungary was significantly affected by the migration crisis in 2015, mainly – but not only – as a transit country. The number of migrants from the Middle East and Africa who come as businessmen, students and relatives is limited and they are relatively well-integrated. If we change our perspective and concentrate on the West, it is also a possible scenario that through political and economic negotiations some rejected asylum seekers finally settle down in the Visegrad countries. Alternatively, it would be worth checking financial investments officially coming from the West that have a very pronounced “Eastern” background.<sup>39</sup>

Nevertheless, the migration crisis highlighted the limits and weaknesses of asylum systems. It quickly became evident that the staff of the Hungarian Immigration and Asylum Office was overloaded by the asylum applications – even if most of the applicants left the country within days. This was obvious if one compared the number of arrivals during the crisis and its average working capacity. This was also

<sup>38</sup> Haberleri, 2013.

<sup>39</sup> For instance, it is a lesser-known fact that the fourth-largest owner of the Euronews company was the *Turkish Television and Radio* (TRT) between 2009 and 2017. *Diken*, 2017.



true for the Hungarian police who needed support from the Hungarian Defense Forces in the field of border control and later the defense of the fences along the southern line of the state border. This was a time of emergency, and the states and its apparatus cannot stay in a constant state of emergency.

But the crisis also revealed other lack of capacities, which require long-term actions not only in Hungary, but in all V4 countries. What became evident was that the general public administration and public servants from police to the civil officials had very limited knowledge about the people from the Middle East and Africa, including their cultures, habits and languages. For example, there was a dire lack of interpreters. The insufficient information about the countries of origin also caused difficulties during the asylum procedures. For instance, it is relatively well-known that most people who arrived irregularly to Europe from Nigeria came from the southern part of the country. They are economic migrants who wish to try their luck in the greener European pastures. Yet, to increase their chances of attaining international protection, most of them stated that they were coming from the northern part of Nigeria affected by the Boko Haram insurgency.<sup>40</sup> A similar situation can be observed in connection with Somalis and Ethiopians. Somaliland, a de facto independent state on the Horn of Africa enjoys relative stability – and skyrocketing unemployment, which nonetheless means that they do not have the right for protection. Therefore many people from Somaliland declare themselves as Somalis from the southern part of the country who escaped from Al-Shabaab. In the case of Ethiopia, Tigray people leave along both side of the Ethiopian–Eritrean border. While Eritreans have a high chance of receiving asylum rights, Ethiopians do not. Therefore, Tigray people from Ethiopia claim that they came from Eritrea to have better positions in European asylum systems.<sup>41</sup>

There are more direct threats that we have to tackle. Although it is vital to avoid the direct securitization of migration, and we have to emphasize that most of the arrivals do not constitute a security threat towards the host country, we have to also realize that members of terrorist groups and organized crime networks are among the arrivals. This was demonstrated both in terrorist attacks and criminal activities in Europe in connection with new migrants who entered Europe in 2015–2017<sup>42</sup> and interviews with the members of the security apparatuses.<sup>43</sup> For instance, some officers complained to the authors about the fight against a Nigerian criminal group in Budapest, where due to a lack of interpreters the authorities do not stand a chance in collecting sufficient evidence against the criminals because they simply do not understand their communication.<sup>44</sup>

How can this be averted? Only if we have more knowledge about the situation and societies on the ground in crisis zones. Without proper academic and diplomatic background it is unimaginable. Therefore, a certain level of „Africanization” and

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40 Interview with an EU diplomat, Hradec Kralove, November 2017.

41 SAHAN and IGAD, 2016.

42 Dearden, 2017; Joób, 2016.

43 Interview with security officers in Hungary in 2015–2018.

44 Interview with police officers, January 2017.



„Arabization“ of V4 public services is a must. It does not mean that they have to train thousands of people who speak Kiswahili or Hausa – the focus of foreign policy and diplomatic commitments of these countries will remain Russia or NATO rather than Cairo or Addis Ababa. Nevertheless, less is not equal to nothing. In the four Visegrad countries only two – the Czech Republic and Poland – have systematic education of African Studies, and even these have limited importance and capacities, not to mention their insider problems (e.g. tensions between generations, lack of focus on specific fields). The knowledge about the Middle East seems more adequate. However, it is a general trend that Orientalists – who have the required language skills – are replaced by experts in defense policy and international relations. In practice, it means that some articles written in English are the main basis of many “scientific” works. These studies want to analyze a given problem and provide some advice for the decision-makers based on information translated from English sources that already have a given perspective. There is no need to explain in detail how harmful this method may prove.

We strongly believe that many of those individuals who are fighting in North Syria – who changed sides, are in hiding or trying to escape from the territory – have European passports or at least have enough connections to reach Europe. This is true not only for Arabic-speaking groups, but also for those Uyghur, Afghan and Chechen people who were fighting against the central Syrian government in the last years. The ones who have valid Western European passports can return to the old continent without any problems. At the same time, for the fighters who have Russian or Chinese documents, it is still a question how and where to leave the frontlines.

As we mentioned above, it became an obvious aim of the Turkish government to relocate the Syrian refugees in the northern territories of Syria. However the last military operation was not started just because of the refugees. According to Ankara’s official communication, the Turkish troops are fighting against the terrorist threat to stabilize the territories ruled by the YPG/PYD, the Syrian arm of the PKK. As a matter of fact, the military operations of Idlib, Afrin (and maybe in Manbij in the near future) are to prohibit the potential destabilization of a new state that will possess a superpower’s support. Ankara’s main interest is to establish an area of military and economic influence such as the one they have in Northern Iraq, where Turkey is among the biggest investors. That is the reason why Turkish forces trained and equipped the members of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and established bilingual education centers, schools where the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) provides the control. In political propaganda we can find many pictures that show the local inhabitants welcoming the soldiers in placards written in Arabic or Turkish.

Figure 2  
Welcome to Your Home<sup>45</sup>



All in all, the fragile political atmosphere will not change with the Turkish (or any other kind of) military intervention. Peace will not be exported either by Turkey or by the great powers. On the one hand, most of the Kurdish forces managed to withdraw their units in order to avoid direct fights with the FSA and the TSK. It means that the Kurds have not given up the fight until they get enough supplies. On the other hand, the official Syrian Arab Army also reached the region, which designates boundaries for Ankara.<sup>46</sup>

In addition, the first news and pictures do not suggest a peaceful harmony between the local culture and the soldiers who have intervened. The first troops that entered into the city of Afrin destroyed the well-known statue of Kaveh the Blacksmith, a symbol of independence for many Kurds. Kaveh was a legendary hero who started an uprising against foreign rule.<sup>47</sup> For this reason, some of the interviewed Turkish soldiers had the self-confidence to go to Kandil (the main camp of the PKK in the Iranian–Iraqi border), to Manbij and later on to Kirkuk and Mosul. “In front of the Turkish soldier, nobody can stand” – one of them said.<sup>48</sup> Of course we are aware of the fact that these words are uttered under conditions of stress. But at the same time, it shows very well how the TSK forces think about the operation and their role in the political and historical life of the region.

So from a Visegrad point of view, there is a strong contradiction. On the one hand, it is our common aim to have cordial ties with our ally, Turkey. On the other hand, if Ankara is involved in conflicts such as the Syrian one, as a side effect thousands of people can reach European borders. In addition, Turkish foreign policy deals with Central Europe as a region that can support Ankara to weaken Western European political pressure in some sensitive questions of political life in Turkey (e.g. imprisoned journalists, human rights, etc.).<sup>49</sup>

45 *Suriyeli Türkmenler*, 2017.

46 *Sayfa*, 2018.

47 *Rûdaw*, 2018 a.

48 *YouTube*, 2018 a.

49 *Altuntaş*, 2017; *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı*, 2014.



## POLITICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. V4 countries should support the „Africanization” and „Arabization” of their public services across a variety of fields:

- training relevant academics and experts who have first-hand knowledge gained on the ground, supported by scholarships to the Middle East and Africa;
- encouraging the studies of local languages with viable career opportunities in the state sector – perhaps, for financial reasons, initially in joint V4 courses in the centers where African Studies as an academic discipline still exists (Poland, Czech Republic);
- launching regular trainings about Africa and the Middle East for all levels of the public administration dealing with these two regions (e.g. security policy, development, agriculture, tourism, etc.);
- launching regular informative lectures for the public about the above-mentioned regions.

2. Turning towards the root causes:

- supporting EU and other initiatives which can create job opportunities in the countries of origin;
- harmonizing the independent development activities of V4 countries in the countries of origin;
- conducting common V4 development activities in the countries of origin;
- supporting peacekeeping operations in the crisis areas;
- conducting joint V4 educational programs in the countries of origin.

3. Direct short- and mid-term steps to stop the flow of irregular migration:

- supporting the state-building process in Libya;
- supporting Italy and Turkey to cope with irregular migrants;
- supporting the complete closure of the irregular Mediterranean routes towards Greece, Italy, and Spain.

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# ENERGY AND CLIMATE SECURITY

*Diána Szóke*

## INTRODUCTION

The end of the Cold War and the wide-ranging effects of globalization have led to a rethinking of the concept of security in international relations. Narrow, orthodox interpretations equating security almost exclusively with military power and deterrence have been rejected in the favor of a new, broader perspective. The reconceptualization of security involves both the “widening” of the idea (i.e. the inclusion of other topics, such as environmental or societal security), as well as the “deepening” of its referent object (i.e. a greater focus on actors both above and below the state level). As a result, several new issues have come to the fore in the international relations literature, among them the security-related implications of energy use and its long-term climatic consequences.

Access to energy (in the form of certain strategic raw materials) has always been an object of competition throughout the course of history. In the specific, contemporary context of the East Central European region, energy is a typical example of an essentially non-political issue that has truly been politicized over the past few decades. Debates over energy import dependence tie in to broader, more sensitive questions about foreign relations vis-à-vis Russia, along with the need to diversify import sources and routes. Social concerns, such as the affordability of energy for economic competitiveness or the imperative of eradicating energy poverty, are also high on the political agenda of Visegrad states. From a long-term point of view, mitigating and adapting to anthropogenic global warming also looms on the horizon as another major challenge. This study attempts to assess the security-related impacts of energy and climate security in the Visegrad countries, aiming to highlight the often contradictory nature of short and long-term aspirations in this policy area.

## FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE:

### THE EVOLUTION OF ENERGY SECURITY AS A CONCEPT

Questions of energy and politics have always been, and shall remain, closely intertwined.<sup>1</sup> Energy issues themselves are unique insofar as they link the domestic and foreign realms of governmental policy.<sup>2</sup> The concept of energy security as a domain of national security and international relations came to the

<sup>1</sup> Shaffer, 2009, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 3.



fore most noticeably with the oil crises of the 1970s. Traditional interpretations of energy security tend to relate to:

- security of supply (ensuring sufficient domestic energy production, or ease of access to energy imports);
- geopolitics (i.e. oil prices, free use and navigation of strategic infrastructural chokepoints, the sociopolitical stability of major exporter countries);
- competitive pricing of energy sources (to spur economic growth);
- social stability (affordable access to energy for all in the name of social equity).

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, classical interpretations of energy security are being reshaped. Energy systems themselves are becoming more and more globalized in an increasingly multipolar world.<sup>3</sup> The growing awareness of climate change has led to an interest in the new geopolitics of renewable energy, and the sociopolitical effects of global warming. Greater attention is devoted to the interlinkages between energy and other security risks, i.e. cyber and terrorist attacks against key energy infrastructure.<sup>4</sup>

Within the European Union, the concept of energy security is primarily associated with the share of energy imports in the aggregate energy mix. In particular, narratives focus on the role of Russian energy imports in Member States' energy supply, and the possible political/economic leverage Russia may consequently have over these countries. This issue has always been highly politicized, given that the EU imports a large proportion of its energy from foreign sources, many of which are often in a state of geopolitical turmoil (i.e. the Middle East and North Africa), or with which the EU has a fraught relationship (i.e. Russia, the Caucasus, Turkey).

In recent years, significant steps have been taken at an EU level to combat this dependence. The major milestones in this regard include the so-called Third Energy Package of 2009, which was essentially a legislative effort to establish a joint electricity and gas market. The plans for the EU's Energy Union were announced by the European Commission in 2015. The Energy Union is a framework strategy for the creation of a truly European market for energy, meant in turn to help ensure secure, affordable and environmentally sustainable energy for all EU citizens. The Energy Union includes a number of diverse measures ranging from regulatory steps and market integration to improving energy efficiency or investing in clean technologies. The completion of the Energy Union is therefore paramount to the success of any energy system integration effort within the EU.<sup>5</sup> These legislative procedures were coupled with the ongoing diversification of import routes and energy sources, which shall be explored in more detail in the following sections.

The EU's quest to establish a coherent internal energy market and to ease its dependence on external sources of energy clearly has economic, technological, and societal implications, but the political/security aspects tend to be the most

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3 Scholl and Westphal, 2017.

4 Luft and Korin (eds.), 2009.

5 European Commission, 2018.

pronounced in the discourse. In fact, energy security became increasingly important in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in the 2000s.<sup>6</sup> The securitization of energy will likely continue so long as the issue remains so closely intertwined with the EU's foreign relations. Experts suggest that even complete market liberalization is unlikely to directly translate into the depoliticization of energy security.<sup>7</sup>

Energy security risks themselves can be differentiated by type. So-called "hard security risks" tend to be associated with the physical safety of the energy supply, and may include physical attacks on pipelines or key energy facilities, or even cyber threats. "Soft security risks," on the other hand, relate more to the sociopolitical or economic context within which energy policy decisions are made. It can refer to competition between major economic blocs (i.e. between the European Union and Eurasia) or disputes over resource ownership (i.e. in the East Mediterranean).<sup>8</sup>

Because of the complex interplay between politics, economics and security in energy policy, it is difficult at times to speak of a single voice in EU energy matters. There often seems to be a contradiction between Brussels' bureaucratic, market-based approach to energy governance and individual Member States' own geopolitical goals.<sup>9</sup> A typical case of this is the controversy over the Nord Sea 2 pipeline, which will be discussed later on.

Due to its geographic proximity to Russia, the Visegrad region is pivotal to the EU's quest for energy security. The following section will explore the major developments of recent years in this regard.

### **POLITICS, PIPELINES, AND PRICING: THE COMPLEX NATURE OF ENERGY SECURITY IN EAST CENTRAL EUROPE**

Questions pertaining to energy security have been fundamentally important to countries of the East Central European region since the system changes of 1989–1990. The most politicized aspect of this is, of course, security of supply, although concerns relating to environmental sustainability and the affordability of energy sources should not be overlooked either.

The energy markets of Visegrad countries share some common characteristics worth taking into account. They generally have limited domestic energy production, leading to a reliance on foreign (oftentimes Russian) imports. The share of fossil fuels in the energy mixes of these countries is above the EU average, although per capita energy use is relatively low by EU standards. Energy intensity and air pollution levels tend to be relatively high as well. In terms of their geostrategic location, these

6 Youngs, 2009, pp. 26-27.

7 Prontera, 2017, pp. 232-233.

8 Scholl and Westphal, 2017, pp. 22-27.

9 Youngs, 2009, p. 27.



are transit markets, and there is a need for infrastructural modernization and greater interconnectedness.<sup>10</sup>

Despite these structural similarities, the Visegrad region is far from homogenous, and the energy markets of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary differ in terms of their market sizes and energy mixes. To cite a particularly telling example, the Polish market in itself consumes more energy than those of the three other states combined.<sup>11</sup> While Hungary is highly dependent on nuclear power, coal plays a vital role in the energy mix of Poland (and, to a lesser extent, the Czech Republic). In fact, Poland remains the largest producer of coal within the European Union.<sup>12</sup> Slovakia and Hungary stand out for their particularly high levels of dependence on Russian energy imports.<sup>13</sup>

As mentioned above, the main source of energy insecurity in the Visegrad region relates to the share of Russian energy imports, and the perceived political/economic leverage this may give Russia over East Central European countries. (Although the region imports both crude oil and natural gas from Russia, the latter is the thornier issue: whereas oil has a more globalized market, gas pipelines tend to create linear dependencies.) It is clear that the EU will be forced to rely on substantial quantities of Russian gas in the years to come, most of it delivered within the framework of long-term gas supply contracts. The goal for Visegrad countries is, therefore, not to push Russia completely out of their markets, but rather to force their Russian counterparts to follow market-based rules, to offer more competitive prices, and to reach a greater degree of transparency. The dangers of Russia potentially using the so-called "energy weapon" were best exemplified by the 2006 and 2009 gas crises, when the transit of energy sources via Ukraine was halted due to pricing disputes between the two countries.

Before examining the steps taken by East Central European countries over the past few years to ease their dependence on Russian energy imports, it is worth noting some of the structural changes that have occurred in the global energy landscape. Since 2014, global commodity prices have remained at a relatively moderate level, and are unlikely to suddenly rise (unless there is a major geopolitical shock to global energy markets). The unparalleled growth of shale oil and shale gas production in North America has redrawn the global energy map, particularly since this can now reach European markets in the form of liquefied natural gas (LNG). All this ensures more flexible and cheaper gas potentially available to Visegrad countries as well, undermining the Russian monopoly in the region's energy markets.

Fundamental changes have occurred in the East Central European region as well. The grandiose, oftentimes competing pipeline projects envisioned just a decade ago (such as Nabucco or South Stream) are now off the table. Instead, the major game-changer within the East Central European region has been the case of Nord Stream 2. This 1,200-km-long gas pipeline would potentially transport

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10 E3G, 2017.

11 Central Europe Energy Partners (CEEP), 2016, p. 7.

12 International Energy Agency (IEA), 2014, p. 218.

13 Slobodian, 2016.



approx. 55 billion cubic meters (55 Bcm) per annum of natural gas from Russia to Germany. (To put that into perspective: 55 Bcm is roughly six times Hungary's entire annual consumption, and would account for over a tenth of total gas use in the European Union as a whole.) The consortium for the construction of Nord Stream 2 is comprised of Gazprom and five major European energy companies, namely Uniper, Wintershall, Royal Dutch Shell, OMV, and Engie.

Nord Stream 2 has become a highly controversial project, with criticisms relating both to its economic viability and potential geopolitical effects.<sup>14</sup> On the economic front, many argue that it will not actually benefit end-consumers, while simultaneously weakening the EU's gas market and strengthening Gazprom's chokehold on Europe. From a political point of view, there are worries that the construction of Nord Stream 2 would undermine supply security and the solidarity among EU Member States. In particular, East Central European countries feel sidelined by the project, and eight countries of the region vocally protested against it in the form of an open letter to the European Commission in 2016. Because Nord Stream 2 would essentially circumvent the Ukrainian transit route, fears abound that this may lead to the further destabilization of the country.

Those arguing for Nord Stream 2 are of the belief that this new project would not weaken, but rather complement existing pipelines and routes in Europe, highlighting that Ukraine could still play a role in the transit of natural gas. This line of thought suggests that Nord Stream 2 would enhance competition between pipeline gas and gas imported in the form of LNG, ensuring more competitive prices for consumers. Furthermore, those in favor of the project are adamant that the pipeline would be subject to strong legislative and competition oversight from EU authorities, and would, therefore, not present any threat to the future of European gas markets.<sup>15</sup> It is outside the remit of this chapter to assess all the arguments in favor or against Nord Stream 2. Nonetheless, it is important to highlight that the project should be assessed not only on its technical merits and economic feasibility, but also the wider geopolitical context of relations between Russia and the West following the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in Ukraine.<sup>16</sup>

Over the past few years, several regional integration projects have been started or completed to promote regulatory standardization and infrastructural coupling in order to boost energy security in the Visegrad region.

The so-called Three Seas Initiative, for instance, is a joint project of Poland and Croatia meant to deepen ties between the twelve countries located between the Baltic, Black and Adriatic Seas (namely Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia). It enjoys the support of Donald Trump's administration, and covers a number of potential areas of cooperation, be that trade, energy, transport infrastructure, etc. Although the Initiative is not openly anti-Russian in its purpose, its indirect geostrategic goal is to weaken Russian influence in the Central and Eastern European region.<sup>17</sup>

14 Barnes, 2017.

15 Ibid.

16 Korányi, 2018.

17 Ansley, 2017.



Figure 1  
Gas Pipelines in Central and Eastern Europe<sup>18</sup>



Another major proposal has been the creation of the North–South Corridor, through the integration of regional infrastructure and markets between Visegrad countries. For historical reasons, most of the infrastructure in this territory is east–west in its direction, and the north–south interlinkages between the four states are often lacking or underused. The North–South Corridor's northernmost point is on the Baltic coast of Poland, namely the Świnoujście LNG storage and regasification terminal opened in 2015. This landmark project enables Poland to import gas from alternative suppliers, among them the United States. It is complemented by the Klaipėda terminal in Lithuania, which was officially inaugurated just one year prior to Świnoujście.

The southern tip of the North–South Corridor would prospectively lie in Croatia, on the island of Krk in the Adriatic Sea. This proposal has actually been on the table for many years, and is strongly supported by Washington. Nonetheless, doubts over its economic feasibility and bilateral quarrels between Croatia and Hungary have hindered any meaningful progress in the project.

<sup>18</sup> Central Europe Energy Partners (CEEP), 2016.

Between the two ends of the North–South Corridor, the energy infrastructure between neighboring Visegrad states is also being modernized and developed. These interconnectors help diversify supply routes and allow for reverse flows when necessary.

Additional projects are also on the radar to boost energy security in the region. For instance, there are plans for Romania to export natural gas extracted offshore in the Black Sea to Hungary, and then potentially onwards to Serbia and Slovakia. The final investment decision is expected in early 2019.

A further avenue for increasing energy security in East Central Europe is through the strengthening of gas storage capacities, both strategic and commercial in nature. This would also help Visegrad countries attain the regional energy hub status they have long coveted.

Overall, it is clear that major developments have taken place over the past few years to ease dependence on Russian energy imports. Some of these stem from fundamental structural changes in global energy markets, but the establishment of the North–South Corridor and the EU's plans for an Energy Union are indigenous European initiatives. All this means that the most pressing concerns related to energy security could possibly be alleviated to some degree in the medium term.

Although energy import dependence is considered the most significant security risk, there are several other energy policy choices facing Visegrad countries that could have long-term political implications as well. The role of nuclear energy is a key debate in several countries: Hungary is currently expanding its Paks nuclear power plant with two new blocks, whereas the Czech Republic is facing a similar decision over the need to replace the capacities of older nuclear power stations in Temelín and Dukovany.

The role of coal also generates much discussion, particularly in the case of Poland. Coal is a cheap, but very heavily polluting source of energy that serves as the backbone of economic growth in Poland. Its sociopolitical role cannot be overlooked, considering that the coal industry employs around a hundred thousand people, and represents a strong lobby force in Polish public life.

Energy security in East Central European countries is closely interconnected with other non-conventional security challenges, the most notable of which is cyber security. The cyber defense of critical energy infrastructure has emerged as a key concern in recent years. This covers a number of issues, from the stability of the national grid and the safety of vital facilities to the need to avoid power outages or protect consumers' personal data.

To summarize, energy security in the Visegrad region primarily relates to efforts to ease import dependence, but other long-term concerns (such as the role of nuclear energy and coal, or cyber defense) are also on the agenda.



## **NEW CHALLENGES ON THE HORIZON: CLIMATE SECURITY**

Since the focal point of energy policy in East Central Europe is supply security, the long-term environmental consequences of energy-related decisions, or the looming threat of climate change are often underestimated. Nonetheless, climate change is in itself an unconventional security challenge of increasing importance in the international relations literature, so it is worth assessing the preparedness of Visegrad countries to tackle this phenomenon.

There is no widely recognized, universal definition of climate change. It can generally be described as the large-scale and long-term changes of weather patterns induced by human activity. This can manifest itself in rising average temperatures and sea levels, ocean acidification, desertification, the loss of biodiversity, or the more frequent occurrence of extreme weather events (i.e. hurricanes, tsunamis, flash floods).

Climate change as a major concern first appeared on the global diplomatic agenda in the 1970s.<sup>19</sup> Anthropogenic global warming has been referred to as a “threat multiplier,” as it exacerbates existing social, political, and economic cleavages.<sup>20</sup> While climate change will surely have widespread consequences, there is a great degree of uncertainty over the distribution and severity of these impacts. Nonetheless, it could result in security challenges in the forms of resource/water scarcity, potential armed conflicts related to environmental stress, or even an influx of climate refugees. Developing countries are considered the most vulnerable to the effects of global warming. According to the literature, climate security problems unfold in a complex causality: it is difficult to draw obvious cause and effect relationships between environmental degradation and social conflict, economic misfortune, or political turmoil.

### **BRIDGING THE POLICY GAP: CLIMATE SECURITY IN THE VISEGRAD REGION**

East Central European countries are not considered the most vulnerable to climate change in an international comparison, thanks both to their geographic location as well as their status as upper-middle income states. However, the issue should not be overlooked, particularly because we live in a globalized world, where the consequences of threats such as anthropogenic global warming could potentially impact Visegrad countries too.

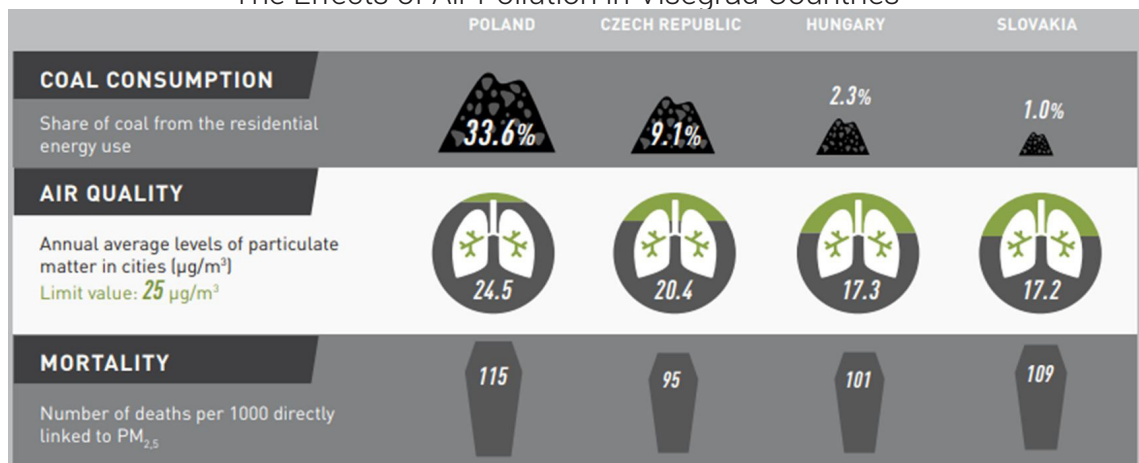
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<sup>19</sup> Swain, 2013, pp. 20-21.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

There is a growing social awareness of climate change in East Central European countries. Polls suggest that citizens are increasingly feeling its effects, be that hotter summer, milder winters, or more frequent extreme weather events such as floods or droughts.<sup>21</sup> There are nevertheless some specific signs of environmental problems palpable in the region among which air pollution has dominated the headlines in the past years. A recent, rather grim statistic shows that 10% of premature deaths in the Visegrad region occur as a result of poor air quality and a heightened level of particulate matter concentration.<sup>22</sup> The problem is especially grave in Poland, due to its heavy reliance on coal in its energy mix. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Poland is home to a shocking 33 (!) of Europe's 50 most polluted cities.<sup>23</sup>

Figure 2  
The Effects of Air Pollution in Visegrad Countries<sup>24</sup>



A fresh study by Newcastle University assessed the expected impact of climate change on major European cities in the period between 2050 and 2100, and found that East Central European countries will be strongly affected too. According to the results, we are likely to witness serious heatwaves in the entire continent; Northern Europe could experience heavy floods, whereas Southern Europe could become more prone to droughts. In Eastern Europe, Riga, Vilnius, and Zagreb are specifically mentioned as being susceptible to flooding. Prague and Vienna are expected to be hit by major heatwaves.<sup>25</sup> In general, Central and Eastern European countries are not as prepared for these impacts as Western Europe, with relatively few Visegrad countries having climate mitigation and adaptation plans in place.

The fundamental framework for action on global warming is the European Union's ambitious climate targets for 2030, adopted by the Commission in 2014.<sup>26</sup>

21 E3G, 2017.

22 *Ibid.*

23 Huber, 2016.

24 E3G, 2017.

25 White, 2018.

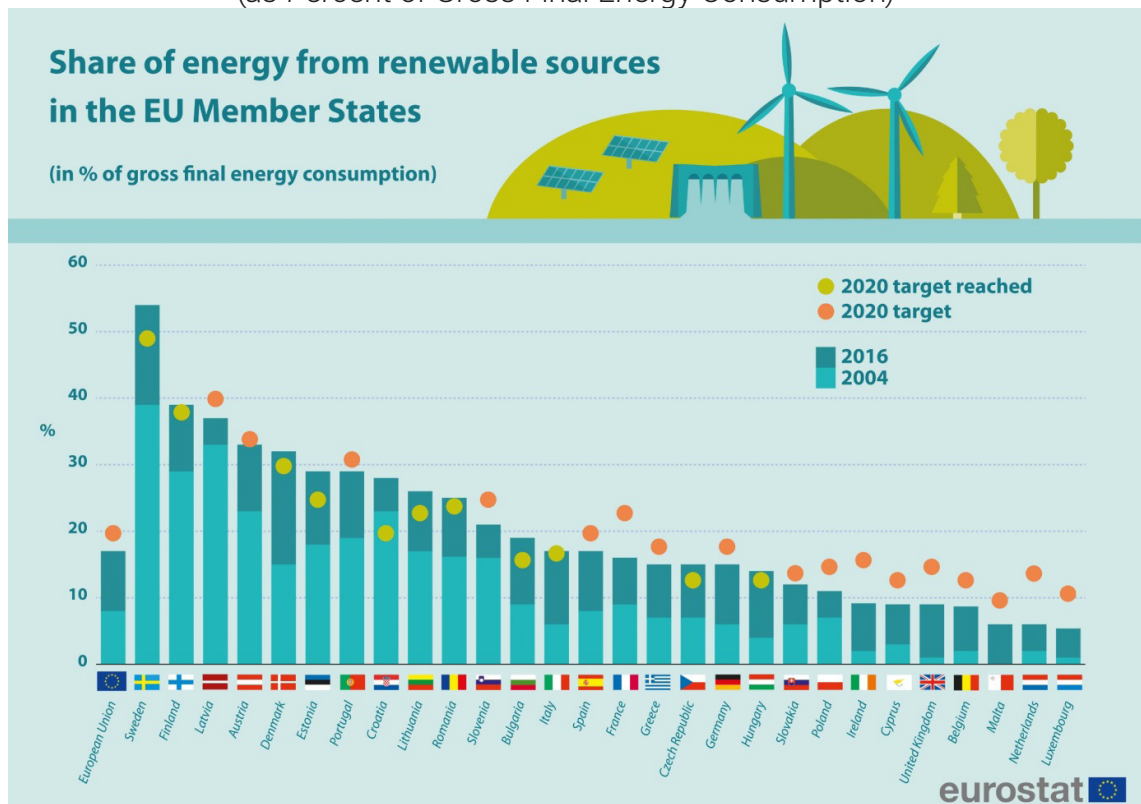
26 European Commission, 2016.





These environmental goals are a good reference point for assessing the status of Visegrad countries in fighting climate change. The first objective is a 40% decrease in greenhouse gas emissions, compared to 1990 levels. Central and Eastern European countries actually tend to score well on this front, since the role of highly polluting heavy industry has diminished since the system change. On the second objective, however, the results are far less promising, with Visegrad states falling far below the EU target of a 27% share of renewables in the energy mix for the time being at least, as shown in the infographic below. The third objective relates to energy efficiency, where the Commission targets a 27% improvement until 2030. Again, this is another area in which East Central European countries have much work to do.

Figure 3  
The Share of Renewable Energy in the Energy Mixes of EU Member States  
(as Percent of Gross Final Energy Consumption)<sup>27</sup>



Despite lagging behind in several indicators, Visegrad countries have stepped up their diplomatic efforts in the global fight against climate change over the past few years. This is particularly the case in the context of the United Nations. There is somewhat of a contradiction between their seemingly half-hearted approach to the issue in Brussels (which prescribes specific measures to be taken) and the well-worded diplomatic commitments made at global forums (which are more rhetorical in their nature). Nonetheless, the world's eyes will be on East Central Europe soon,

<sup>27</sup> European Commission, 2016.



since the Polish city of Katowice will host the next Conference of the Parties (COP 24) of the UN's Framework Convention on Climate Change in December 2018.

## CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to showcase the main energy and climate security challenges facing Visegrad countries. The primary focus of governmental policy in the East Central European region is still supply security, especially in terms of easing the dependence on Russian energy imports. To this end, several steps have been taken in recent years, including the creation of the North–South Corridor, investing in LNG capacities, or increasing regional interconnectivity. Unfortunately, these achievements sometimes come at the expense of economic competitiveness or long-term environmental concerns. New, non-conventional security challenges are already looming on the horizon, such as the danger of cyber attacks on critical energy facilities, or the need to combat and adapt to climate change. Ultimately, the three fundamental goals of energy policy (supply security, affordability, and environmental sustainability) should be reconciled to some degree. The Visegrad cooperation serves as a unique platform for the coordination of these important aspirations, and can hopefully play a more pronounced role in the harmonization of energy and climate policies between Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary.

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