

- Europe and the New Independent States* (Paris: OECD 1999).
21. See www.europanet.int.
22. It is for this reason that world systems analysis is often criticized for economic reductionism. This, in large part, reflects the Marxist heritage of the approach. However, there is no reason why a more balanced approach cannot embrace non-economic factors when explaining the position of a particular state in the world economy, or its prospects for development.
23. For more on this see: M. J. Bradshaw, 'Introduction: *Transition and Geographical Change*' in M. J. Bradshaw (ed.), *Geography and Transition in the Post-Soviet Republics* (London: Belhaven Press 1997), pp.1–8.
24. Unicef (note 18), p.3.
25. For a detailed explanation of 'transition orthodoxy' see: M. Lavigne, *The Economics of Transition: From Socialist Economy to Market Economy* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press 1999), pp.99–263.
26. The World Bank (note 15), p.5.
27. UNDP (note 17), p.6.
28. V. Popov, 'Investment in Transition Economies: Factors of Change and Implications for Performance', *Journal of East-West Business*, 4/1–2 (1998), pp.47–97.
29. For a more scholarly analysis of this issue see: D. Dyker, 'The Transition Economies – Why has Performance been so Variable?', in D. A. Dyker (ed.), *The European Economy* (Harlow: Longman 1999), pp.198–215.
30. In an analysis of the impact of the revolutions in 1989, Dunford shows how in the space of two years the collapse of economic activity in eastern Europe led to the region slipping from an intermediate position between the core regions of western Europe, North America and Canada and Australia, to one of level footing with most of Latin America. M. Dunford, 'Differential Development, Institutions, Modes of Regulation and Comparative Transitions to Capitalism', in J. Piekles and A. Smith (eds.), *Theorising Transition: the Political Economy of Post-Communist Transformations* (London: Routledge 1998), pp.76–111.
31. EBRD (note 16), p.26.
32. R. A. Gibb and W. Z. Michalak, 'The European Community and East Central Europe', *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 85/5 (1994), pp.410–16.
33. A. Kuznetsov, 'The EU and Central and Eastern Europe', in F. McDonald and S. Dearden (eds.), *European Economic Integration* (Harlow: Longman 1999), pp.314–31.
34. *Ibid.*, p.326.
35. Much more can be found on this in the Agenda 2000 pages of the EU website (see note 21).
36. UNCTAD, *World Investment Report 1998: Trends and Determinants* (New York: UNCTAD 1998).
37. By comparison, in Brazil by 1996 it stood at \$108.3 billion. Lavigne (note 25), p.254.
38. The World Bank (note 15), p.64.
39. EBRD (note 16), p.61.
40. M. A. Marinov and S. T. Marinova, 'Foreign Direct Investment Motives and Marketing Strategies in Central and Eastern Europe', *Journal of East-West Business* 5/1–2 (1999), pp.25–55.
41. European Commission, *Sixth Periodic Report on the Social and Economic Situation and Development of the Regions of the European Union* (Brussels: European Commission), p.184.
42. Lavigne (note 25), pp.252–64.
43. K. E. Meyer and Christina Pind, 'Research Note: The Slow Growth of Foreign Direct Investment in the Soviet Union successor States', *Economics of Transition* 7/1 (1999), pp.201–14.
44. A. M. Williams and V. Balazs, 'Transition and Division in Central Europe', in R. Hudson and A. M. Williams (eds.), *Divided Europe: Society and Territory* (London: Sage 1999), p.167.
45. A. Smith and P. Pavlynek, 'Inward Investment, Cohesion and the "Wealth of Regions" in East-Central Europe', in J. Bachtler, R. Downes and G. Gorzelak (eds.), *Transition, Cohesion and Regional Policy in Central and Eastern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2000), pp.227–42.
46. Lavigne (note 25), p.280.
47. The original conference paper contained a section on the social costs of transition and I had planned a section on the environmental impact. Clearly, there are many more important issues to consider.
48. I. Wælestein, *Geopolitics and Geoculture: Essays on a Changing World System* (Cambridge: CUP 1991), pp.1–2.

The Elusive Defined? Visegrád Co-operation as the Contemporary Contours of Central Europe

RICK FAWN

When not entirely elusive, the definition of central Europe has been contradictory. Its boundaries may be defined culturally, religiously, intellectually, emotionally, perhaps even geographically, as illustrated in the appropriately entitled collection of essays *In Search of Central Europe*.¹

None of the terms of reference used for the region as a whole are mutually reinforcing; they all produce ambiguity. The region has been known by as many names as have been rejected: the Germanic *Mittleuropa* or 'middle Europe'; the Slavic alternative of, as the Czechs call it, *Střední Evropa*, or 'central Europe'; or the generally geographically – and politically – neutral east central Europe.² Most recently, 'eastern Europe' has been rejected by the region's populations as an anachronistic and painful reference to Soviet rule, even if, as in this collection of papers, it is used to identify a region in terms of its political and economic movement out of a previous geopolitical location. As other contributions also show, the definition of the 'Balkans' similarly remains problematic,³ but as contested as that term may be, this article will also argue that any post-communist conception of central Europe includes a distinction of the region as separate from the Balkans. Thus, for all of the geopolitical uncertainties and border shifts the end of the Cold War has created, determining what constitutes central Europe may now be more clear, particularly in view of initiatives since 1998, than perhaps ever before.

This is because a near-institutional term may be used. Ironically, before the post-communist era an institutional definition of central Europe would have been the most unlikely form. Indeed, the debates on central Europe remained circular, even inconclusive precisely because the terms of reference were predominantly cultural and therefore also anathema to institutionalisation. The contours of the region – those who are in it and out of it – can now be discerned.

An added irony is that those who supported the conception of a 'central Europe' were the communist-era dissident intellectuals. They both believed in and attempted to mobilise the power of civil society; but the contours of

central Europe are not defined by popular inputs. Rather, national suspicions remain at the grassroots level; these have often fed off or been heightened by the nationalist policies adopted by some post-communist governments in the region. To be sure, some of the region's newspapers will use the term 'central Europe', even as a section heading for regional news, such as the occasional insert in the Polish daily *Gazeta Wyborcza* and the Czech daily *Lidové noviny*. This practice belies more of the origins of both newspapers — both have been underground dissident-intellectual publications during the communist era — than popular support for or belief in the concept.⁴ While 'central Europe' is a term of reference for financial and business interests, this again is a result of governmental policy facilitating regional economic exchange. As a Polish author wrote in 1997: 'There is no use pretending. There is no central European community. This won't be fixed by any political voodoo with the Visegrád Group. Central Europe lives only in intellectuals' nostalgic dreams and in occasional speeches by presidents'.⁵ But such declarations only prove the difficulty faced in attempting to create a central European identity. This article recognises that the project has not reached, and may never permeate wider populations; but what is striking about developments since 1990 in this region is that a definition can be found through multilateral co-operation.

These caveats already suggest that determining the insiders and outsiders of central Europe is not straightforward. The pursuit of the definition has been made more complicated in the 1990s because what can be called central European membership shifted and became diffuse, with the advent of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) and the Central European Initiative (CEI). But the changes responsible for what can be seen as this fluctuating membership also helps to fortify the terms of reference.

The article considers how 'central Europe' has come to be defined since communist rule, both in terms of regional and extra-regional views. It begins with the immediate post-communist period of 1990 and shows how central Europe was formed by various processes of inclusion and exclusion. It proceeds to consider how membership was made more diffuse in the period between 1993 and 1998. This was the result predominantly of the break-up of Czechoslovakia and of external recognitions of the region and implicit and explicit expectations of its behaviour. This was foremost codified by the separate decisions of NATO and the EU in July 1997 to open accession negotiations with Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic but not with Slovakia. The identity of central Europe was also challenged in this period by the geographical and sector dimensions of the region more broadly. The term 'central Europe' was adopted by other entities and processes. In geographic terms, the Central European Initiative in particular

overlapped with the Visegrád conception of central Europe; and in terms of establishing free trade, what had become a defined central Europe by 1992 adopted a wider economic dimension thereafter as the Central European Free Trade Agreement. Finally, however, the definition of central Europe came back into focus in later 1998, following domestic changes, once again in the Czech and Slovak Republics. The article considers each of these issues in turn.

Determining the contours of a region is always challenging. Regions are more often constructs of the mind than of objective geography. Central Europe is hardly an exception; indeed, it might be the quintessential example of an imagined region. Apart from its lack of natural frontiers, it has usually been the shatter-belt between major empires. Rather than having an identity of its own, it has at best been defined as 'the lands between'.⁶ When the contours of the region are to be studied, they need to be done in their historical context, and that context has changed radically since 1989.⁷ The duty of the study of geopolitics is to provide reality to subjective maps; the dangers of a 'Kafka-like mental map filled with uncertainties, fears and apprehension' are very great in central Europe; appropriately, the birthplace of that author.⁸

Membership in 'central Europe' after 1989 holds both cultural and strategic significance. It is a means for several countries to escape being on the symbolic periphery of Europe; it is also the hallmark of earlier entry and faster and greater access to the social, economic and military-security benefits of European integration. Even though negotiations for EU accession are underway with ten post-socialist countries, some are clear front-runners. Membership of Visegrád is not fundamental to this process; Slovenia and Estonia entered the first wave of accession negotiations. But the marginalisation from Visegrád of Slovakia was acute, if also potentially reversible; for others, from Croatia to Ukraine, exclusion from Visegrád is reinforcement of being on the periphery. Most importantly, while Visegrád was explicitly never meant to harm other states, its self-definition of membership was exclusive. These are some of the issues involved in determining the extent to which post-socialist central Europe can be said to be coterminous with Visegrád co-operation.

Getting to a Definition of 'Central Europe': 1990–92

The origins and instigation of post-communist central European co-operation have been somewhat contested. The Polish, Hungarian and Czechoslovak governments each made some claim. But rhetoric and diplomatic actions in early 1990 suggest strongly that the chief proponents were the former dissidents Václav Havel and Jiří Dienstbier, who became

Czechoslovak President and Foreign Minister, respectively, in December 1989. Within his first month in office, Havel made state visits to Poland and Hungary. In addresses to their Parliaments, he called on these peoples to remember their communist-era support for one another and to co-operate in their mutual extrication from the legacies of communism and their reintegration into western Europe. Havel also made reference to filling the vacuum left in the region since the demise of the Austro-Hungarian empire.⁹

The practical manifestation of Havel's call was an April 1990 meeting in Bratislava. Italian, Yugoslav and Austrian observers partook alongside the main delegations from Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, which, if the meeting was to help identify central Europe, suggested a broad interpretation of the term, but one that corresponded roughly to the post 1989 successors of the territory of the Habsburg empire. Certainly part of the project was the practical purpose of effecting integration into west European institutions, particularly the European Community and NATO. But this aim was synonymous with – indeed a vindication of – the region's return to its European cultural-historical heritage.

At this time, 'central Europe' became rather easily defined within the region. East Germany was largely not included because the dissident-intellectual view was that East Germany had a logical partner in West Germany.¹⁰ To be sure, some diplomatic efforts were made in 1990, such as co-ordination of some policy between East Berlin and Prague towards the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). In practical terms, East Germany was expected to undergo a unique political-economic transformation; while its post-socialist neighbours 'had to repair their sinking ships while still at sea, the GDR was refitted in the Federal German dry dock'.¹¹ Indeed, by October 1990, East Germany was already part of the West through the automatic membership of the European Community and NATO that German unification bestowed.

Although East Germany was thus excluded from co-operation initial efforts otherwise suggested that regional co-operation would be broad. When Havel initiated regional co-operation at the Bratislava summit of April 1990, the Polish, Hungarian and Czechoslovak delegations were clearly the core, even though observers were invited. That meeting produced few tangible results, even being called a 'fiasco',¹² perhaps foremost because the Polish and Hungarian delegations still contained communist officials unympathetic to new diplomatic initiatives.

Central European co-operation was not the only regional initiative in the early 1990s. Rather, Havel's approach to regional relations was also to attempt to place Czechoslovakia in numerous, overlapping geographic groupings and to expand the membership of those to which it was already

party. Thus, Czechoslovakia lobbied successfully to join the four-way co-operation of Italy, Austria, Hungary and Yugoslavia that emerged in November 1989 for the decade-old Alpen-Adria talks. Prague's entry as the fifth member of the grouping resulted in it being renamed the *Pentagonale*. Thereafter, Havel argued for the admission of Poland, which made the group into the *Hexagonale*. Havel also sought, this time unsuccessfully, to have his country included in the emerging Council of Baltic Sea States. Land-locked Czechoslovakia would have been the group's only non-littoral member. Havel's intentions for his country were summarised in a prominent Western newspaper thus: 'Czechoslovakia, conveniently situated [between the Baltic and south east European groupings], would be the geographical and cultural link between the two'.¹³

Despite, or more appropriately, because of these numerous regional co-operation initiatives, the notion of central European regional insiders and outsiders was already being formed. The many initiatives suggested diffuse membership; they were certainly the result of a post-communist rediscovery of diplomacy: countries undertook tentative multilateral steps in part simply because, with political sovereignty restored, they could. The multiplicity of regional bodies did not correspond to any clear sense of regional identity outside of that of 'central Europe'.

Rather, other countries in the first two or three years of the post-communist period realised that they were outside Visegrád central Europe. Ion Panu, security and foreign policy adviser to Romanian President Ion Iliescu, was asked at a conference in Budapest in April 1991 if Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia were not seeking regional integration to the exclusion of Romania. He replied: 'In the wake of the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, the intention to create new structures is natural. Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary rightly wish to strengthen the traditional ties that link them, and in the meantime, all three also want to be part of the large[er] European integration, too'.¹⁴ Indeed, *The Economist* wrote that Romania 'feels hurt to be left out' of the trilateral central European co-operation.¹⁵ For all of Romania's emotions, neither it nor Bulgaria were seen to have even composed policies towards regional co-operation.¹⁶

Bulgarian leaders acknowledged that political developments in their country after communism were not as advanced as that of Poland, Hungary or Czechoslovakia and that it was using those three countries as a standard against which to measure its own progress. Bulgarian President Zhelev Zhelev told his political party conference in June 1991 that one of the main measuring sticks for transition from its communist past was 'whether Bulgaria will no longer be apart from the three central European countries – Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia'.¹⁷ In turn, this exclusion made

Bulgaria and Romania 'wary of the group because it implicitly excluded them as primary candidates for integration with the West'.¹⁸

Visegrád excluded others further afield, particularly Ukraine, that aspired to join it. Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, along with Bulgaria and Canada, were the first states to recognise Ukraine's independence in 1991. Ukraine even sought formal membership of Visegrád, but this never materialised. Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk's 1993 proposal to build a 'zone of stability and security' in the region, specifically involving the Visegrád countries, also failed.¹⁹ In addition, problems remain even in the enhancement of ties with central Europe, and where ties have expanded, these have tended to be bilaterally rather than multilaterally.²⁰ Thus, while Ukraine has been involved in more broad initiatives (discussed below), it did not compromise the core of central Europe.

Visegrád co-operation assumed specific dimensions, and with the ethos of its dissident-intellectual founders, it also had clear ideological content and meaningful identity. What became known as Visegrád has not only been referred to as 'the most significant attempt at regional co-operation' but also that it 'marked an entirely new kind of security mechanism'.²¹ In contrast to, for example, the Council of Baltic Sea States or the Central European Initiative, Visegrád was distinctive for being composed solely of non-Soviet post-communist states, and was not a mix of Western and post-communist states.

This core of central Europe was fortified by external perceptions of it and responses to it. In June 1990, the three states signed the co-operation agreements with the European Free Trade Association countries that laid the groundwork for free trade among them. In September 1990, the EC's Council of Ministers approved the start of negotiations with the three central European states. While the resulting Association Agreements were signed between Brussels and the three separately, they nevertheless signalled that the central European states were of a different category from other post-communist states. European countries generally lifted communist-era visa requirements from Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia together, while not doing so, or doing so only later, for all other post-communist states. The United States also removed restrictions on arms sales first to these three countries together, and before those on other former Soviet bloc members.

Central European identity through regional diplomacy was codified further in February 1991. In the middle of that month, the three central European presidents convened in the Hungarian town of Visegrád. The site was symbolically chosen to invoke memories of the 1335 meeting of the Hungarian, Polish and Czech kings, where they pledged mutual assistance. By specific reference to the historical significance of the meeting of the

three kings,²² membership in the ensuing co-operation was presumably restricted, although the formal declaration said that the co-operation was in no way to harm or limit their relations with other states.²³ The meeting proclaimed a new ethos to regional relations, pledging to overcome the xenophobia and nationalism that had marred its history:

Building on the most important elements of the European tradition – on universal human values and supported by individual national identities, it is necessary to build a society of people working in co-operative harmony, that would be tolerant toward the individual, the family, and the local, regional and national communities, and which would be free from hatred, nationalism, xenophobia and tensions with its neighbours.²⁴

The Visegrád Declaration also proclaimed the joint efforts of the three countries to reintegrate themselves into western Europe. Visegrád co-operation had formally begun; its members were clearly Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

Throughout 1991 and 1992 the Visegrád Three or Visegrád Triangle, as they became known, pursued common policies across a range of issue areas. In security they were cautious not to provoke the Soviet Union by creating what could seem like a hostile military alliance of 65 million people in Moscow's historically most sensitive geopolitical area. By 1991, the three central European states understood that NATO was not offering immediate membership of the alliance. As a result, the three countries avoided establishing formal military structures among themselves that could relieve NATO of a sense of responsibility to the region and their desire for the meaningful security guarantee that only full alliance membership provided. To this end, the three central European states only signed bilateral military agreements; but various defence officials, including deputy defence ministers, held trilateral meetings such as in Zakopane, Poland in September 1990.

Co-operation developed in other areas as well. Summits in Krakow in October 1991 and Prague in May 1992 saw the Visegrád Three make statements on various aspects of world politics, including the need for international recognition of secessionist Yugoslav republics. Co-operation extended to the Krakow Declaration of 6 October 1991 which was to lead to the creation of CEFTA. Although the signing of the Agreement, which was intended to liberalise virtually all industrial trade and eventually much of the agricultural exchange among the three, was delayed several times in the second half of 1992, it was finalised on 21 December 1992 and came into effect on 1 March 1993.²⁵ That potential competitors to Visegrád as central European identity were already emerging in this period, and would

gain importance in subsequent years, demonstrates the strength of Visegrád as the defining identity.

By the end of 1992, then, Visegrád appeared firmly to exist on an official level. Its activities were wide-ranging, including statements on international affairs and a programme of extensive trade liberalisation; documents such as the Krakow Declaration referred to the 'Central European Three'; officials of the three countries used the terms 'Triangle' or 'Visegrád' in mutual reference;²⁶ and major international actors treated the three countries in common fashion. Central Europe seemed now to be defined by Visegrád co-operation.

Contesting Visegrád as Central European Identity: 1993-94

With the contours of central Europe having been established by 1992, central Europe as an identity through co-operation risked failure; and that meant also the newly-established contours of the region. Just as Visegrád co-operation reached its height, its strength was sapped by changes in domestic political power in Czechoslovakia and the resulting break-up of that federation.

The impact on Visegrád came from both the replacement of politicians in Czechoslovakia and the geopolitics resulting from the split. Those who drove regional co-operation were either replaced or sidelined. Foreign Minister Dienstbier, who was also leader of the small centre-left party, was defeated in the June 1992 election. Feeling increasingly powerless and sensing that other politicians willed the end of the country, Václav Havel resigned as president. This left the political field open to Václav Klaus in the Czech Republic and Vladimír Mečiar in Slovakia, who agreed by August 1992 to the practicalities of the Czechoslovak divorce.

The break-up of Czechoslovakia posed severe challenges to Visegrád co-operation, but the challenge to this membership definition was not readily apparent. As of the official division of Czechoslovakia into Slovakia and the Czech Republic on 1 January 1993, the Visegrád Three and the Visegrád Triangle became the Visegrád Four and the Visegrád Quadrangle. Forms of co-operation among the Four continued throughout 1993 and outside actors, as shall be discussed, still viewed the Four as a distinct entity. But while Klaus and Mečiar could agree the split of Czechoslovakia during 1992, relations with each other and with their central European neighbours deteriorated thereafter.

The nationalistic Mečiar government antagonised the 600,000 Hungarians in Slovakia, prompting the Hungarian government to attempt to derail Slovakia's entry into the Council of Europe in 1993 (the two successor states of Czechoslovakia having to apply for new membership).

Hungarian-Slovak relations were also strained by the Gabčíkovo-Nagyymaros dam. This massive hydroelectric project on the Danube had been proposed by Moscow in the 1950s as a new source of electricity for the ideologically-driven industrialisation of the Soviet bloc. The communist regimes in Prague and Budapest finally agreed to it in the late 1970s but with little regard to the ecological or political implications. These included that the dam's enormous concrete aqueducts, that would uplift and reroute the Danube, would physically divide Hungarian villages in southern Slovakia. By the later 1980s, the reformist and somewhat enlightened communist regime in Hungary became sensitive to the implications of the installation and withdrew unilaterally from its completion. The independent Slovak state, however, pressed for the project's completion. Even though the dispute was finally submitted by both governments to the European Court (the decision finding both governments at fault for renegeing on parts of the original agreement) and thus dealt with peacefully, the issue nevertheless strained bilateral relations.

Slovakia under Mečiar was also reorienting its foreign policy at least somewhat towards Russia. While the other central European states were concerned to lessen their dependence on Russian energy, Slovakia uniquely in this period entertained joint ventures with Russia's energy conglomerate Gazprom, although Mečiar said the calculations were technical and economic. When Mečiar hosted Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov in Bratislava in February 1996, Czech media commented that that Slovakia was not only pro-Moscow but even dependent on it.²⁷ The practical facets of Slovakia's eastern foreign policy for central European identity (and western integration) included Slovak plans to purchase Russian air defence missiles systems. Considerable contrary evidence existed, therefore, against the statements of Slovak Foreign Minister Juraj Šenk in this period that Slovakia was still intent on NATO membership. Indeed, when Slovakia was left out of NATO's decision to begin accession talks, Mečiar was distressed. This led to further regional tensions after Havel called him 'paranoid' over NATO enlargement and Mečiar responded with vociferous demands for an apology (that was not offered, although Havel later said the comment may have been 'imperfect'). The Slovak ambassador to Prague was recalled in protest over Havel's remarks. These personalised comments indicated that the co-operative definition of Visegrád as central Europe could be eroded rather easily.

The integrity and potential of the Visegrád Group was affected even more seriously and more widely by the policies of Czech Prime Minister Klaus. This had three related strands. The first was his support for free trade. In this respect alone his rhetoric could be helpful to the maintenance of Visegrád co-operation. But the other two aspects of his economic policies

were detrimental to the group. Klaus believed that under his stewardship the post-communist economic transformation of the Czech Republic was superior to that of any other state in the region. He therefore believed that his country could and would enter the EU of its own accord; so confident was Klaus of the successes of the Czech transformation that by the mid 1990s, he and his economy ministers spoke of the country not as 'post-communist' or 'transitional' but as entirely post-transitional. The implication of this thinking was that the Czech Republic did not need regional co-operation to help it generally, or to enter the EU specifically. In practical terms, this meant that the Klaus government did not submit a membership application to the EU until a year after Poland and Hungary, all the while rebutting the idea of a joint application. The third aspect of Klaus's policy outlook was to deem Visegrád 'an artificial creation of the West'. Accordingly, his government often treated Visegrád-related meetings with diplomatic contempt, even sending inappropriately low-ranking officials to regional meetings.

Despite the strains that the Czech and Slovak leaderships placed on regional relations in the mid 1990s, forces continued to treat the Visegrád Four as an entity up until approximately 1994. Within the region, Poland was deemed to pursue a 'maximalist' position towards Visegrád co-operation and the Poles to see themselves as the moving spirit behind the 'Visegrád Four' as part of their on-going process of extricating themselves from the Russian sphere.²⁸

Within the post-communist space, the institutional legacies of pre 1993 economic co-operation, namely CEFTA, meant that in 1993 the Four were ahead of Romania and Bulgaria, the former already addressed accession to the EU while the latter were just completing their Association Agreements.²⁹ The EC also continued to view the Four as a distinct entity in statements made at the Copenhagen Summit in June 1993. In addition, US President Bill Clinton met with the presidents of the four countries in Prague and then announced in Warsaw in July 1994 that the question regarding the expansion of NATO was not whether but when. In December 1994, NATO foreign ministers decided to begin an assessment of alliance expansion, and this would result in 1997 in a further division of the four central European states. But 1994 was the last time that the co-operative processes of Visegrád could serve to identify what constituted central Europe.

The Fuzziness of Visegrád, 1995–98: Numerical and Sectoral Divergences

To the degree that central Europe could be defined by the membership and activities of Visegrád co-operation, this definition floundered after 1994.

This was partly because co-operation widened, even if it did not necessarily deepen. In broad terms, the uniqueness of the Visegrád Four in their relations with the EU was lost when, in October 1994, Bulgaria and Romania signed association agreements as well, and thereafter, all six countries were to partake in EU meetings.

It is not entirely accurate, as some have suggested, that co-operation among the Four ended firmly in 1994.³⁰ Rather, the geographic and issue-area expansion of central European co-operation permitted Slovakia to remain part of the Visegrád Four when it would otherwise have been relegated from it. CEFTA in particular gave Slovakia means to continue as part of central Europe and those meetings were also practical in facilitating meetings between the Czech and Slovak premiers. The Mečiar government was actively involved in development of the Free Trade Area, even approving a proposal in February 1996 to establish a permanent secretariat for the agreement.³¹ Meetings among the four governments occurred in other areas as well; the four defence ministers met, for example, in Budapest in May 1995 and then in Gdańsk in September 1996, with the Slovak media even referring to these as a conference of the Visegrád Four.³² The four countries also signed a co-operation protocol on 17 February 1995 outlining agreements on future collaboration on customs matters, including the prevention of the smuggling of drugs and nuclear materials.³³

Despite continued activities among the Three or even Four in the mid 1990s, the intensity and frequency of that co-operation diminished; the cultural features that were important in the early 1990s, and would be renewed in the later 1990s were also absent. This change had much to do with Klaus's attitude to regional co-operation. The Czech news agency CTK reported of Klaus's February 1995 meeting with Hungarian premier Gyula Horn that he 'praised the quality and importance of the relations that exist between central and east European countries, but only that he had different views on how to achieve EU membership and that regional relations should not be institutionalised.'³⁴ While this view was shared in other capitals, particularly in Budapest, Klaus's attitude ensured that co-operation was limited to functional and economic activities rather than cultural or diplomatic. Even Hungarian premier Horn agreed with his Polish counterpart Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz at a CEFTA meeting in September 1996 to continue the political co-operation of Visegrád, while Klaus declared his interest strictly for economic co-operation.³⁵

But even without the actions of Klaus, the utility of the definition of central Europe as Visegrád was weakened in this period through two expansions of regional co-operation. CEFTA, which was signed in December 1992 by the Visegrád Three and came into force in March 1993, held a series of regular meetings thereafter, as Table 1 below indicates.

TABLE I
CEFTA SUMMIT AND JOINT COMMITTEE MEETINGS
AND DATES OF ACCESSION

Date	Nature of meeting	Location	Attendees ^a
1994			
2 February	Joint Committee	Prague	
29 April	Joint Committee	Budapest	
25 November	Summit	Poznań	Slovenia
1995			
11 September	Summit	Brno, CR Romania	Bulgaria, Lithuania Slovenia
17-18 September	Joint Committee	Warsaw	
25 November	Joint Committee	Ljubljana	
21 December	Joint Committee	Warsaw	
1996			
1 January	Slovenia admitted		
5-6 June	Joint Committee	Bratislava	Slovenia, Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine
13-14 September	Summit	Jasna	
1997			
12 April	Joint Committee	Bucharest	
1 July	Romania admitted		
3-4 July	Joint Committee	Bled	Slovenia and Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, FYROM, Ukraine
12-13 September	Summit	Portoroz	
21 December	Joint Committee	Warsaw	
1998			
3 July	Joint Committee	Prague	
18 July	Joint Committee	Sofia	
11-12 September	Summit	Prague	Slovenia
17-18 June	Joint Committee	Budapest	
1999			
1 January	Bulgaria admitted		
20 October	Summit	Budapest	Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria

* Visegrád Four (V4) always present; guest countries only invited to summits

CEFTA was expanded to include Slovenia on 1 January 1996, with Romania following on 1 July 1997 (and Bulgaria on 1 January 1999), while the Baltic states, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and Ukraine expressed strong interest in joining the Area, with Lithuania and the latter two formally applying for membership. At the September 1997 Summit meeting in Portoroz, guest countries included Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, FYROM and Ukraine.

Because of his emphasis on liberal economics, the only form of regional co-operation that Klaus countenanced was through CEFTA. As he put it at the 25 November 1994 meeting of CEFTA prime ministers in Poznań, 'Now the Czech Republic, in its dictionary, literally translates "Visegrád" as "CEFTA".'³⁷ (It is also relevant that he spoke in terms not of regional but of global trade liberalisation; such measures taken within the post-communist space were, therefore, simply subordinate to a necessary and inevitable worldwide process.) CEFTA could not be considered a proper institution, as it lacked any organisational infrastructure such as a headquarters or secretariat or even a website. While it set parameters for trade, these were considered a 'minimalist project', although this still had the effect of creating a barrier between the Visegrád and other post-communist economies. The Krakow treaty establishing CEFTA also did not foresee expansion of membership.³⁸ At the same time, the elastic nature of CEFTA also prevents it from serving as a regional identity. It adopted the universal principles of free trade rather than anything distinctly central European. Accordingly, its members also established bilateral free trade agreements with the Baltic Free Trade Agreement and other countries created bilateral trade agreements with CEFTA states.³⁹ Far from developing a regional cultural identity, as Visegrád would later seek to do, CEFTA pragmatically adopted English as its working language. If CEFTA provided any sense of regional identity, it did more so for those not among its original membership which 'sensed a "clubbish" character' and saw in it the opportunity to 'join the "avant garde" group of post-communist countries and in certain cases... to attempt to reinforce a preferred geopolitical identity'.⁴⁰ Thus, member countries have referred to CEFTA in economic but not cultural terms. Slovenia's official statements, for example, mention CEFTA member countries as sharing a common desire to secure human rights and democracy, but refer to CEFTA specifically as yielding greater economic development.⁴¹ CEFTA contrasts sharply in aims and objectives from Visegrád: the mutual sense of identity among the officials and leaderships of the latter were clearly evident. The lack of guest countries at CEFTA summit meetings in 1998 and 1999 may also indicate that expansion has been slowed down, but this does not suggest any tighter sense of mutual identification among Agreement members.

In addition to CEFTA, regional co-operation in the early and mid 1990s included the Central European Initiative. Visegrád's position as a sole representation of the region, and of the bearer of 'central Europe' was challenged. The CEI was formed from the loose, functional co-operation of sub-national provinces, constituent republics or regions of Italy, Austria, Hungary and Yugoslavia that occurred before November 1989. At the behest of Italian Foreign Minister Gianni Di Michelis, the group assumed

TABLE 2
CHRONOLOGY OF CEI MEETINGS AND MEMBERSHIP EXPANSION

November 1989	meeting of deputy prime ministers of Austria, Hungary, Italy and Yugoslavia called by Italy and convened in Budapest
May 1990	meeting of foreign ministers of Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Italy and Yugoslavia in Vienna; <i>Pentagonale</i> launched
August 1990	first <i>Pentagonale</i> summit in Venice
July 1991	summit in Dabrovnik; Poland joined <i>Pentagonale</i> , renamed <i>Hexagonale</i>
July 1992	summit in Vienna; Yugoslavia's participation ceased; Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina became members; name of Central European Initiative adopted
March 1993	at foreign ministers' meeting, Czechoslovak successors Czech Republic and Slovakia became separate members
July 1993	summit in Budapest; FYROM became a member
July 1994	summit in Trieste
6-7 October 1995	summit in Warsaw
November 1996	summit in Graz; Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania and Ukraine made members
November 1997	summit in Sarajevo
November 1998	summit in Zagreb
November 1999	summit in Prague
November 2000	summit in Budapest; Yugoslavia readmitted as a member

a more concrete form with representation from the national level. It then expanded to include Czechoslovakia and Poland, but the membership of Yugoslavia was suspended as that federation began its violent unravelling. As Table 2 shows, the CEI admitted as members the Yugoslav successor states of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia in July 1992. The Czech and Slovak republics entered as separate members in January 1993, as did the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia six months later. CEI further expanded south eastward in 1996 to include Albania, Bulgaria and Romania and eastward to embrace Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, with all of them partaking in the annual heads of government summits and foreign ministers' meetings. Yugoslavia was readmitted in November 2000 following the forced replacement of President Slobodan Milošević by Vojislav Kostunica.

For its use of 'central Europe', this grouping grew much too large to claim historical commonality, containing as it did countries with varying political and economic credentials. Unlike Visegrád in the early and late 1990s, the CEI did not purport to have a cultural dimension, although one proposal was made by the Austrian Cultural Institute and the Hungarian Academy in Rome to place a series of exhibitions promoting contacts of artists from the region under the auspices of the CEI. Overwhelmingly, however, the CEI's self-declared 'core objectives' have been to foster functional initiatives to improve cross-border infrastructure and promote

economic development and entrepreneurship. To that end, numerous, and commendable, financial and technical bodies have been created, with regular meetings of experts being convened.⁴²

CEI cannot be equated with Visegrád as the representation of central Europe. But both it and CEFTA, each using the term 'central Europe', and the domestic political agendas that undermined Visegrád co-operation, made reference to Visegrád as the definition of central Europe more uncertain in the mid 1990s. Further complications to the synonymy of Visegrád and central Europe came from divisions imposed on the Visegrád Four from outside bodies. By July 1997 a leading tier of post-communist states existed by virtue of NATO's Madrid Summit and the European Commission's Agenda 2000. Each determined that, of the Visegrád countries, Slovakia alone was to be excluded from accession negotiations, largely on account of its lack of political and democratic development.

Despite the difficulties that the Czech and Hungarian governments had had with their Slovakian counterpart, each still expressed the desire to maintain some co-operation in the region and to have Slovakia admitted into Western institutions. But it was Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski who underscored the new divide between Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, on the one hand, and Slovakia on the other. In March 1996, more than a year before Agenda 2000, he stated in Budapest that only those three would qualify for EU accession, a comment seen by the international media as a 'clanger'.⁴³ The Slovak government protested against his statements, and he later qualified them. But the implication was clear: Visegrád was down to three. The reverberations were felt further in the former socialist world. A Ukrainian official said that the impact of the Three having been identified for NATO expansion 'disrupted the very idea of regional co-operation'.⁴⁴ From a practical viewpoint then, 'the other three Visegrád states had obvious disinclines to continue defining themselves as a group with Slovakia' and by 1997 Visegrád as a group 'had largely disappeared from the diplomatic map'.⁴⁵

The Definition Resurgent? 1998 Onwards

1997 seemed to mark the definitive death of Visegrád as a regional co-operative initiative and thereby its utility as the meaning of central Europe. But it was only within a year that the prospects for the reinvigoration of Visegrád co-operation re-appeared.

Just as the original Visegrád co-operation hinged so much on the geopolitics of Czechoslovakia and of its leadership, so too did its renewal after 1997. In the Czech Republic, Václav Klaus was forced to resign in November 1997, after pressures from within his Civic Democratic Party,

which resulted in a formal split, and from increasing public dismay with his government's economic performance. Both the interim government that was installed in January 1998 and the Social Democratic government formed after general parliamentary elections in June 1998 were more intent on improving regional relations, including with Slovakia.

Regional co-operation was given a further boost with election results in Slovakia in September 1998 that saw the defeat of Mečiar. The successor government of Mikuláš Dzurinda, who led a multi-party coalition that also included a Hungarian party (itself a coalition of three smaller parties), pledged improved relations with its neighbours and distinct efforts to reassert the country on the path to membership of the EU and NATO.

The prime ministers of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic met in Budapest on 21 October 1998 – within days of the new Slovak government taking office – and invited it to rejoin the group formally. The benefits to the three would be great in expediting the accession of Slovakia into the EU and NATO. In particular, Hungary's strategic position, left physically isolated from other NATO members, would be improved with Slovakia's accession. While Czech–Slovak trade declined after the dissolution of the Federation in 1992, each remains a key trading partner to the other. Their important Customs Union would at a minimum require special negotiation if the Czech Republic entered the EU ahead of Slovakia. Even if Warsaw did not share such obvious gains as Prague or Budapest, Polish Defence Minister Janusz Onyszkiewicz said in April 1999 that 'to us Slovakia's entry into NATO is not only a question of sentiment [and] history, but also of geography and of our national interest', while Polish Foreign Minister Bronisław Geremek stated that Slovakia should gain membership as soon as possible.⁴⁶ The Slovak government also believed that all four states were disadvantaged by Slovakia's exclusion.⁴⁷ Slovakia's membership in Visegrád must also have been more beneficial to its aim of accession to the EU and NATO than membership of the CEI or CEFTA. Slovak Premier Dzurinda declared upon the announcement of the resumption of four-way Visegrád co-operation in November 1998 that this would signal to the EU and NATO that Slovakia was democratic and could co-operate with its neighbours and that consequently his government could 'knock on the EC door and prove that we have adopted several measures which entitle us to enter the EU and NATO'.⁴⁸

The governments of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic made a deliberate decision to bring Slovakia into their fold; conceivably it could have been extended elsewhere, particularly as successive Polish governments had assumed the role of advocating the integration of the Baltic republics into European institutions, while the Hungarian government pledged the same for Slovenia and Romania.⁴⁹ But this was a

TABLE 3
MEETINGS OF 'VISEGRÁD 2' OFFICIALS, 1999–2000^a

Date	Rank of meeting/rational representatives; non-Visegrád participant, if any
1999	
13 April	V4 co-ordinators in Bratislava on the content of Visegrád co-operation (preparation of the Bratislava Summit)
8 May	Ministers for the environment (joint statement on co-operation in the field of environmental protection and nature conservation)
14 May	Prime ministers' summit in Bratislava (approval of the content of Visegrád co-operation)
23–24 June	Consultations of consular departments
7 Sept.	State secretaries
21–22 Sept.	Heads of national border services
22 Sept.	State secretaries
24–26 Sept.	Ministers of culture
4–5 Oct.	Chairmen of foreign affairs and defence committees of the Parliaments
7–8 Oct.	Ministers of health service
8–9 Oct.	International theatre festival 'On the Frontier' in Český Tešín, CR and Czecyzyn, Poland; and meeting of ministers of culture
8–9 Oct.	Meeting of the ministers for the environment
15–16 Oct.	Meeting of prime ministers
4 Nov.	Meeting of ministers of defence
4–5 Nov.	Meeting of EU-negotiators of the V4 countries in Brussels
5–6 Nov.	Informal meeting of ministers of justice
3 Dec.	Meeting of presidents
9 Dec.	Meeting of directors of the consular departments of ministries of foreign affairs
2000	
10–12 Jan.	Meeting of first officers of geological surveys
3–4 Feb.	Visegrád co-ordinators and legal experts of the ministries of foreign affairs (consultation on the establishment of the international Visegrád fund)
15–18 Feb.	Ministers of culture
22 March	Meeting of delegations of academies of sciences
6 April	Meeting of Visegrád EU-negotiators
12–13 April	State secretaries
25 April	Meeting of co-ordinators (preparation of the summit in Prague)
26–28 April	Chairmen of the foreign affairs, European integration and defence committees of the Visegrád parliaments
28 April	Meeting of prime ministers with German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder
4 May	Meeting of prime ministers with French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin
11–12 May	Third meeting of ministers of the environment
30 May	Deputy ministers of foreign affairs (preparation of the prime ministers' summit in June)
1–3 June	Ministers of culture
9 June	Prime ministers' summit
4 August	Conference of youth delegations
9–10 Oct.	Ministers of culture
12–13 Oct.	Informal meeting of prime ministers
9–20 Oct.	Fourth meeting of ministers of the environment; and Sweden
20 Oct.	Ministers of the interior and Austria
21 Oct.	Directors of geological surveys
23–25 Oct.	6th meeting of the general directors of railways
26–27 Oct.	Meeting of deputy prime ministers and ministers of justice
13 Nov.	Consultations of ministers of foreign affairs; and Slovenia
23–25 Nov.	Working meeting of ministers of justice

move that was not, and would not be extended to any other country.

Accordingly, a formal Visegrád summit was convened in Bratislava in May 1999 which launched 'Visegrád 2', and a substantial programme of co-operation developed that included co-ordinated foreign policy, a range of socio-economic measures, initiatives to improve regional transportation and telecommunications and to deal with organised crime and illegal migration. Cultural aspects were also significant; even in advance of the summit, Slovak Foreign Minister Kukán told his Czech counterpart that the four countries should co-operate on culture.⁵⁰ At the summit itself, the development of central European television programming was proposed.⁵¹ The intensity and range of co-operation increased considerably in 1999 and 2000, as the quadrilateral meetings listed in Table 3 indicate.

The meeting of the Visegrád prime ministers in June 2000 in Strin, outside Prague, included discussions on the creation of the Visegrád International Fund to support educational, scientific and cultural programmes in the region. Indeed, the Fund contained explicit reference to developing a central European cultural identity, including initiatives such as:

- a central European arts project involving transfrontier festivals, performances and joint exhibitions by young artists, operating creative camps, support for journalism focusing on central European themes;
- creating a list of existing national events, open to participation from other V4 member countries;
- co-operation in the field of education of diplomats and civil servants, with a perspective of creating a joint educational facility (for example, a diplomatic academy);
- the foundation of a Visegrád Prize to honour personages and all institutions who have made serious efforts to promote co-operation between the states of the central eastern European region;
- addressing problems of human rights and co-operation with NGOs;
- improving cultural heritage, protection of historic buildings and sites;
- offering scholarships and awarding prizes for competition essays dealing with central Europe;
- creation of a common Visegrád home page on the Internet;
- steps towards launching a foundation of a common TV programme related to Visegrád issues in national TV stations; and
- steps towards creating a joint fund for financing joint activities in the field of education, culture and sport.⁵²

The formal resumption of the quadrilateral activities also sparked interest in other countries to join it. Expressions of interest were particularly

strong from Croatia in 2000 following the death of President Franjo Tuđman, who led the country to independence a decade before, but whose nationalism contributed to its relative diplomatic isolation. Even Slovenia, the first non-Visegrád member of CEFTA and an EU accession candidate, wanted to partake in Visegrád 2, as Slovene Premier Janez Drnovsek told his Czech counterpart in March 1999.⁵³ However, such overtures to join Visegrád were rejected. Slovak Premier Dzurinda and Polish Premier Buzek stated in May 2000 that Visegrád was not a closed entity but that it was most productive in its current four-way form and that, therefore, enlargement would not be considered.⁵⁴ The consequences of being on the outside of Visegrád were considerable. A Slovene opposition politician was reported as stating 'Slovenia made the mistake of not proving capable of forging in due time an alliance with the central European, that is, Visegrad Group. Had it done so, ... it would have been automatically in the first round of NATO expansion, and it would have also been in a better position as regards the European Union'.⁵⁶ While benefits might also have been gained to the Visegrád Four in accession negotiations with the EU – and some meetings were held between the Four and other post-communist applicant countries, namely: the Baltic States, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania – they decided only to issue a plea on 9 June 2000 to the EU to establish clear dates for accession. Opportunity to benefit from an expansion of Visegrád has not been seized by its members.

Visegrád 2 has not succeeded in advancing Slovakia from the second to the first wave of expected post-communist entrants to the EU. But it has certainly achieved diplomatic successes. Such testimony is drawn from Slovakia being addressed and treated as an 'equal' to Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic in the meetings held between the Four's heads of state and German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder in April 2000 and French Premier Lionel Jospin in May 2000.⁵⁷ Since 1998, the Visegrád Four are again not only a recognisable body but probably more tightly coherent than before. Their proposed activities extend beyond functional initiatives into the broader realm of culture. Rather than being challenged by overlapping regional bodies, the renewed success of Visegrád 2 in 1998 ironically emerged through the CEFTA's continued activities and thereafter seems to have limited the Agreement's overall utility.⁵⁸

Interests alone have given a strong imperative for Slovakia to be reintegrated into Visegrád. The commonality of political outlook among the four governments following political change in the Czech Republic and Slovakia also ensure that this is now possible. But the existence of overlapping regional entities such as the CEI and CEFTA, and wider common political interests, such as EU accession negotiations by ten post-communist countries, would give cause for the Visegrád countries to be

more numerous than the Four evidently have permitted. So successful is the projection, and absorption of the concept of Visegrád, that Hungary's daily *Nepszabadsag* wrote in 2000 that, 'In the West's language, Visegrád is a far more common term than the four Visegrád countries perceive it [to be]'.⁵⁹ The governments of the four countries have made clear in rhetoric and policies that they see themselves as a coherent regional unit.

Conclusion

Since 1989, one cannot yet speak of central Europe as a well-defined identity in a popular sense. It remains what it was in the 1970s and 1980s: an elite project. But a definition of the borders of central Europe can now be identified through regional co-operation, not least because that regional co-operation has self-defining membership. In the first three years following the 1989 revolutions, a set of insiders and outsiders of central Europe was created on the basis of political co-operation, with Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia as the core. To be sure, other forms of co-operation existed, but none undertook such intense and multilateral co-operation, and none had the ambition of redefining the political and cultural ethos of its region.

The Visegrád definition of central Europe, however, seemed to fade at the height of its co-operation, in late 1992 and early 1993. This was predominantly the result of domestic political changes in the newly-founded Czech and Slovak Republics. But in addition to that, overlapping initiatives emerged, both using the term central Europe: the Free Trade Agreement and the Central European Initiative.

Even with a series of diplomatic difficulties, even antagonisms among some of the Visegrád Four in the mid 1990s, some co-operation still continued. The July 1997 decisions of NATO and the EU to begin accession talks with three of the four, excluding Slovakia, appeared to have slain Visegrád, and thus this definition of central Europe, for good. A year later, however, and with political change again in Prague and Bratislava, Visegrád was reinvigorated and launched as Visegrád 2. Two years on, that co-operation extends into substantial foreign and regional policy initiatives, and often to the exclusion of countries that wish participation and even those, namely other post-socialist candidates to the EU, that would have a logical claim to participation. Despite obstacles, and very much in the face of them, Visegrád co-operation has a discernible membership and makes the best claim to defining 'central Europe'.

NOTES

1. G. Schopflin and N. Wood (eds.), *In Search of Central Europe* (Cambridge: Polity Press 1989).
2. Probably the most important argument for and definition of 'east-central Europe' is by O. Halecki, *The Limits and Divisions of European History* (London: Sheed and Ward 1950).
3. See Derek Hall, 'Albania in Europe: Condemned to the Periphery or Beyond?', pp. 107–18, and David Turnock, 'Romania: Contemporary Geopolitical Perspectives', pp. 119–40, in the present collection.
4. During a 1998 state visit to Poland Hungarian President Árpád Göncz gave an award to Adam Michnik, former Polish dissident and current editor of the major daily *Gazeta Wyborcza* for publishing the central European insert.
5. S. Majman, 'A Gap Called central Europe', *The Warsaw Voice* 26/453 (29 June 1997).
6. A. Palmer, *The Lands Between* (London: Macmillan 1970).
7. For a reconceptualisation, see A. Dingsdale, 'Redefining "Eastern Europe": A New Regional Geography of Post-Socialist Europe?' *Geography* 84/3 (1999), pp. 204–21.
8. Reference to R.E. Walters, *The Nuclear Trap* (London: Penguin 1974), p. 202, and G. Parker, *Geopolitics: Past, Present and Future* (London & Washington: Pinter 1998), p. 155.
9. 'Projev Prezidenta CSSR Václava Havela v Polském Sejmú a Senátu dne 25.1.1990', in *Československá zahraniční politika: Dokumenty* (1–3/90), pp. 9–14, esp. at pp. 11–12.
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14. Budapest Domestic Service, 8 April 1991, reported as 'Policy Conference Delegates Interviewed', in *Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report, Eastern Europe* (hereafter FBIS), 15 April 1991, pp. 1–2.
15. *The Economist*, 13 July 1991.
16. Martin Dangerfield, *Subregional Economic Co-operation in Central and Eastern Europe: The Political Economy of CEEFA* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar 2000), p. 30.
17. *Demokratiya*, 24 June 1991, in FBIS, 1 July 1991.
18. A. Cotey, 'The Visegrád Group and Beyond: Security Co-operation in Central Europe', in A. Cotey (ed.), *Subregional Co-operation in the New Europe* (London: Macmillan 1999), p. 83.
19. See O. Pavluk, 'Ukraine and Regional Co-operation in Central and Eastern Europe', *Security Dialogue* 28/3 (Sept. 1997), p. 351.
20. S. L. Wolechik and R. Zięba, 'Ukraine's Relations with the Visegrád Countries', in S. L. Wolechik and V. Zviagynich (eds.), *Ukraine: The Search for National Identity* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield 2000), pp. 133 and 136.
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22. Joint declaration of the three presidents and prime ministers, 'Slavností prohlášení', 15 Feb. 1991, in *Československá zahraniční politika: Dokumenty* (2/91), p. 123.
23. 'Deklarace o Spolupráci Madarska, CSFR a Polska', *Československá zahraniční politika: Dokumenty* (2/91), p. 126.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
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26. D. I. Clarke, 'Central Europe: Military Co-operation in the Triangle', *RFE/RL Research Report* (10 Jan. 1992), p.42.
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28. G. Kolankiewicz, 'Consensus and Competition in the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union', *International Affairs* 70/3 (1994), p.484.
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30. M. Rhodes, 'The Idea of Central Europe and Visegrád Co-operation', *International Politics* 35/2 (June 1998), p.182.
31. CSTK Ecoservice, 14 Feb. 1996.
32. TASR, 27 Sept. 1996.
33. TASR, 17 Feb. 1995.
34. CTK, 22 Feb. 1995.
35. PAR, 13 Sept. in *FBIIS*, 19 Sept. 1996.
36. Based on Dangerfield (note 16), p.50.
37. Cited in V. Todres, 'Czechs Reject Political Ties Within Free-Trade Agreement', *Prague Post*, 6 Dec. 1994.
38. Dangerfield (note 16), p.ix, p.20 and p.91.
39. *Ibid.*, p.42 and p.51.
40. *Ibid.*, p.83, and further elaborated on pp.98-9.
41. <http://www.vjs.sicelta/polsno/index.html-12>.
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43. See, for example, 'The Visegrád Three ...', *The Economist*, 9 March 1996.
44. Cited in Pavlink (note 19), p.352.
45. A. Cooley, (note 18), pp.70 and 87.
46. CTK 6 April 1999.
47. See the comments of the Chairman of the Slovak Parliamentary Committee on European Integration, Franišek Sebej, TASR, 13 March 1999.
48. TASR, 21 Nov. 1998.
49. See the coverage of the April 1998 meeting of Polish President Kwasniewski and Hungarian President Göncz in the *Warsaw Voice* 17/496 (26 April 1998).
50. CTK, 19 April 1999.
51. The statement is given at www.Visegrad.org/contents.htm.
52. Modified from <http://www.Visegrad.org/v4/calendar.htm>
53. Modified from 'Contents of Visegrád Co-operation Approved by the Prime Ministers' Summit, Bratislava, 14 May, 1999' at <http://www.Visegrad.org/v4/contents.htm>
54. CTK, 5 March 1999.
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56. Reported as 'SDS Jasna Views Foreign, Domestic Issues', in *FBIIS*, 11 Feb. 1998.
57. See the comments particularly in *Hospodárske noviny*, 5 May 2000.
58. RFE/RL Newswire II, 14 Sept. 1998; and Dangerfield (note 16), p.116.
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Russia, NATO and the EU in an Era of Enlargement: Vulnerability or Opportunity?

MARTIN A. SMITH AND GRAHAM TIMMINS

Geopolitical Thinking and Russian Policy-Making

A Brief History

The starting-point for our theoretical investigation of the impact of geopolitical concepts and ideas on official Russian thinking is to be found in the work of Sir Halford Mackinder and Nicholas Spykman respectively. In 1919 Mackinder had famously outlined his core geopolitical argument thus: 'who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; who rules the World Island commands the World'.¹ As this quote suggests, for Mackinder the core power in the 'Heartland' (that is, Russia) was what, in modern parlance could be called a 'pivotal' state; that is one whose policies and activities will likely have a particularly profound impact (for good or ill) on both regional and international security.² Such a position is far from being an unmitigated blessing for the states concerned however. The Mackinder statement quoted above clearly suggests that he saw the 'Heartland' power as being vulnerable in one key respect – to whoever could 'rule East Europe'. This view was reinforced in the work of Spykman who amended the terminology (eastern Europe for him was part of the 'Rimland') but not the essential idea. In 1944 Spykman wrote that 'who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia; who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the World'.³

It was, therefore, at least implicit in the writings of both Mackinder and Spykman that Russia was an inherently *vulnerable* state. Added to this was a sense, in at least some strands of geopolitical thinking as it developed during the twentieth century, that Russia was also an *alien* culture and country *vis-à-vis* western Europe and the United States. This view was particularly apparent, as Michael Heffernan has shown, in geopolitical thinking in Germany in the early years of the century,⁴ but it was not completely absent from the work of Mackinder himself. In one of his last major published pieces, in 1943, Mackinder turned his attention to the