

WISEGRAD GROUP: HISTORY

Mgr. Martin Jirušek, Ph.D.

Question at the beginning

- Is identity a result of a bottom-up or a top-down process?

Journey to the integration

- What lead V4 countries to the integration?
 - Collapse of the USSR along with Warsaw pact and COMECON
 - Fragmentation of the former Soviet bloc
 - Diversification of interests of newly established states
 - Concerns about future development in Russia (economic and political consequences of instability)
 - Desire to join major „western“ organizations
 - Uncertainty about the future role of Germany in CE

Journey to the integration

- Regional cooperation as a signal
- 'Return to Europe'
- Integration as a proof that CE countries are stable and mature enough to cooperate
 - Especially in the time of further fragmentation and instability in Europe (esp. former Yugoslavia)
- The strongest claims came from CZ – former dissenting intellectuals – Havel, Dientsbier

Journey to the integration

„For the first time in history, we have a real opportunity to fill the great political vacuum that appeared in Central Europe after the collapse of the Hapsburg Empire with something genuinely meaningful. We have an opportunity to transform Central Europe from what has been a mainly historical and spiritual phenomenon into a political phenomenon. We have an opportunity to take this wreath of European states - so recently colonized by the Soviet Union and now attempting to build a relationship with the nations of the Soviet Union based on equality - and fashion it into a special body. Then we can approach the richer nations of Western Europe, not as poor failures or helpless, recently amnestied prisoners, but as countries that can make a genuine contribution.

- Václav Havel (speech in the PL parliament, 25.1.1990)

Journey to the integration

- Early efforts rather unsuccessful - summit in Bratislava (4/1990) - lack of will and mutual understanding
- Accession of CZE to „Pentagonale“ (later CEI) – 1990
- Series of various (Baltic initiative, efforts of Ukraine to join the group,...) initiatives helped to form the future V4 region
- Cooperation agreements with EFTA – 6/1990
- Efforts started to pay off – better relations with western countries than other postcomm. states

Foundation of the „Visegrad“

- Meeting of CZ, PL and HU in Visegrad – 2/1991
- Commemoration of the meeting of 1335 (John of Luxembourg, King of Bohemia; Charles I of Anjou, King of Hungary; and Casimir III, King of Poland)
- 4 motivating factors:
 - the desire to eliminate the remnants of the communist bloc in Central Europe
 - the desire to overcome historic animosities between the Central European countries
 - the belief that through joint efforts, it will be easier to achieve the set goals, i.e. to successfully accomplish social transformation and join in the European integration process
 - the like-mindedness of the then ruling political elites.

Visegrad declaration

- „The similarity of the situation that has evolved over the past decades has determined for these three countries convergent basic objectives:
 - full restitution of state independence, democracy and freedom
 - elimination of all existing social, economic and spiritual aspects of the totalitarian system
 - construction of a parliamentary democracy, a modern State of Law, respect for human rights and freedoms
 - creation of a modern free market economy
 - full involvement in the European political and economic system, as well as the system of security and legislation.“

Je úterem nás všichni, abychom
tuto naši práci proměnili ve skutečnost,
k tomu je podle našeho názoru
třeba:

1) Uchovat našemu západu
~~jeho~~ ~~z~~ character, který mu dal
jeho výchozí bod; ~~totiz~~ ~~boj~~ ~~za~~
— mimo jiné i na cílovém úseku —
~~schůzky~~ ~~položil~~ ~~schůzky~~
~~na~~ ~~kvantitativně~~
úspěšný ~~boj~~ boj za lidská práva
v nejširším slova smyslu. ~~a~~ ~~tržba~~

2) ~~Svoje~~ ~~centra~~ ~~charakteru~~
~~našeho~~ ~~západu~~ ~~vyjádřit~~ v

2) Koordinovat a tímto
duslem své ústí nejen o
demokratický právek v našich
zemích, ale i o náš návrat do
Evropy jako vládnutím systémů
včetně ~~našeho~~ ~~národní~~ a
demokratického a nezávislého státu.

3) Trvat na ~~tom~~ tom, aby
byla ~~bez~~ ~~definitivně~~ ~~strážena~~
~~z~~ ~~našeho~~ ~~ústřední~~ ~~tečky~~ ~~za~~ ~~druhým~~
světovou válkou a že všichni jejími
neblahými následky. Samozřejmě
soudit takové věci musí být
konečné stupněm současných
evropských kvantitativně, které nemají
něm nikdy nikdy problematické,
a které ~~než~~ ~~zároveň~~ ~~kvantitativně~~ ~~stát~~
~~kvantitativně~~ ~~kvantitativně~~ ~~kvantitativně~~ ~~kvantitativně~~
kvantitativně a kvantitativně

Early development

- Coordination in foreign policy (dissolution of Yugoslavia)
- Economic cooperation done within CEFTA (1991 – 1992)
- Cautious steps in terms of military cooperation – NATO remained to be the main goal
- Region successfully established as a coherent and cooperating unit

Weakening Visegrad

- The spirit of 1989 weakened - replacement of the original idealistic elites with more pragmatic ones (Klaus)
- Dissolution of Czechoslovakia (1993) – weakening of the ties within the V4
 - little to no interest to continue
 - V4 marginalized

End of the „idealistic“ period

- Impact of dissolution of the Czechoslovakia
- Conflicts in Yugoslavia and Chechnya
- 1994 Partnership for Peace – disappointment for CE countries – no common position presented

After the dissolution

□ Decline of cooperation

- Worsening relations between HU&SVK
- Reorientation of SVK foreign policy
- Spirit of exceptionalism in CZ, underestimating the V4
- Weakening of mutual cooperation (energy supplies as an example, diversification of CZ vs. SVK oriented on the transit role)
- Diversification of interests – SVK leaning toward the East, PL – West, CZ – on its own
- No institutions = no formal ties
- Missing link to a civil society and shared identity?

Visegrad 4 1993-1998

- Invitation of CZE, PL & HU to NATO (Madrid 7/1997)
– Slovakia left out
- Start of EU enlargement process (1997/1998) –
Slovakia originally left out
- Erosion of V4 as an entity representing CE
- Weakening presence of political and cultural ties
- CEFTA as the bare minimum of possible cooperation
- EU prioritized

The turnover

- Changes of governments in CZ and SVK – 1998
- Interim government in CZ followed by socialist gov.
- SVK: Vladimir Meciar replaced by the coalition gov. led by M. Dzurinda
- Formal renewal of the cooperation – Budapest 10/1998 & Bratislava 5/1999
- V4 membership perceived as an advantage once again
- Improvement of SVK position

The turnover

- The need for cooperation and negative stance of Russia towards integration and the NATO accession helped to relieve the V4
- Focus rather on cultural aspects, foreign and defense policy
- Economic aspects left out
- 6/2000 – foundation of IVF – cultural cooperation, strengthening the concepts and ideas underlying the CE region – the missing link to civil society?
- Secretariat of IVF in Bratislava
- Introduction of alternating presidencies

Accession to the EU and after

- Pre-accession talks conducted rather separately, low level of coordination
- Kroměříž 2004: Guidelines for the future, areas of Visegrad cooperation
 - Cooperation within the V4
 - Cooperation within the EU
 - Cooperation with other partners
 - Cooperation within NATO and other organizations

V4 after the EU and NATO enlargement

- V4+ - cooperation with states outside the V4 group
 - broad group of partners (China, Taiwan, Israel,...)
- Eastern Partnership (2011) – (launched in EU during CZ presidency 2009) strengthening relations with countries of the EaP (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine)
- Assistance to countries of the Western Balkans
- Energy security – regular meetings regarding cooperation

V4 after the EU and NATO enlargement

- 3 'No's'
 - NO to further institutionalisation: informal (but regular) meetings, flexibility first
 - NO to enlargement: 4 is enough, V4+ for cooperation
 - NO to slowdown in cooperation: to avoid 1994-1998 scenario

Energy Security in the V4 group

- Energy and energy security as one of the most important points of current cooperation
- Based on dependency on external supplies (mostly from Russia)
- Building on the experience of supply crises
- Focusing on cooperation in securing the supply and infrastructure
- Cooperation with other countries on the basis of V4+ platform

Energy Security in the V4 group

- 2009 – Energy Security High-Level Group – regular meetings
- Creating ad-hoc ‘energy groups’
- Support for the North-South gas corridor
- Promoting interconnections within V4 countries
 - To enhance security, diversification of sources and enhance EU internal market, to create regional market
 - To address possible supply crises
- Supporting construction of LNG terminals (Swinoujście PL)
- CE as an important crossroad of supply routes
- Efforts to bring CE energy issues to the EU level (N-S corridor)

*Indicative map - not to scale



Polskie LNG

Poland

Czech
Republic

Slovakia

Hungary

Krk Island LNG

Croatia

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