Enlargement of NATO Eastwards and Slovak Security

Ivo Samson

Security Categorization of Central (Eastern) Europe

NATO's enlargement eastwards remains the coveted goal of Central Eastern European and especially of Central European countries*[1] in the second half of the nineties. The generally expected American "hands off Europe" strategy puts the foreign policies of post-Communist countries in a risky position vis-á-vis Russia. Some of these countries, however, are more inclined to adapt to the American neo-isolationism than others. Without the USA following traditional American interests in Europe, it will be extremely difficult for small post-Communist countries to preserve full independence facing the economic great power Germany on one side and the political and military great power Russia on the other side.*[2] To escape from danger by looking for NATO-membership seems to be the only logical and reasonable step to undertake.

Officially, all statements of Central Europe's governments in the first half of 1996 have confirmed integration into western economic and defence sructures as final objectives of their diplomatic activities.*[3] The countries of Central Europe, of course, think that they are more entitled to be in the first round of the widely announced enlargement, be it for proclaimed cultural, historical, geographic, geopolitical and geostrategic, or for economic and political reasons. To assess the entry chances of Central European countries, great emphasis will be laid in this paper on security Issues.

From a Central Eastern European and particularly Central European point of view, three post-Communist scenarios remain possible. They are not so much actual political realities

as theoretical derivations of an ongoing political and ideological struggle among different power groups within Central Eastern European societies. Yet, the characteristic feature of Central Eastern European politics is exactly this struggle underlying all political events. The scenarios seem to be the following:

a) *Assimilation to the ruling western paradigm.* In this
   case the focus is on liberal values and human rights, as well as democratic principles. Any deviation from them or retardation in their implementation represents nothing more than unwanted compromises due to the backward character and the lost opportunities of these societies.*[4]   Within   Central   European countries
   Slovakia   is   less   able   than   others   to follow   this
   paradigm.

b) *Creating an independent national paradigm.* In this
   case the focus is on the reemergence of the nation-state, the   primacy   of national   (ethnic) values and
   historical heritage. It emphasizes the uniqueness of a nation and considers the acceptance of certain liberal values only as an unwanted compromise. Slovakia provides   a   splendid   example   of   such a   value
   orientation, mixed partly with the third perspective (c).

c) *Mixed paradigm.* The focus is on how to pair the two previous paradigms. Democratic values and human rights are supported but liberal and market principles are considered as threats to   the national heritage.
   Thus,   the   standardizing   effects   of   the Western
   paradigm are opposed. This paradigm is to be found in   all   Central   Eastern   European   societies and   is
   projected in security thinking.

One has to admit that the security goals of all these four or five countries are incompatible. In security matters their various desired outcomes are so divergent that effective cooperation

must seem *a priori* impossible, except in the economic sphere. Bringing the Central European countries to one bloc following one identical global orientation resembling that of EFTA-countries in the last decade before entering the EU is unrealistic. By considering several variables we can devise a schema of nothing better than several two-bloc conceptions within the Visegrád / CEFTA group, furnishing proof of mutual inconsistencies that exclude the possibility of a full "bloc admission" to NATO (and/or EU / WEU):*[5]

a) *Poland-Hungary* (affinities): these two countries form a cohesive two-member bloc that is tightly bound by economic, foreign policy and historical orientation (traditionally strong agriculture, recently formed post-Communist, i. e. socialist governments preserving,
however, a permanent NATO-orientaton, "special
relations" to Germany, jointly shared bad experience with Russian / Soviet influence harking back deeply into the 19-th century and a deeply-rooted distrust of the Russians that is widespread among the
population). Hungary's foreign policy has been, under the post-Communist government, even more anti-
Russian than that of Poland.*[6]

b) *Czech Republic-Hungary* (affinities): These two
countries can display some recently forged political ties. Although they are burdened with disputes about ethnic issues from Czechoslovak times, the liberal political cultures of Czechs and Hungarians drew
nearer during the seventies and eighties due to liberal-minded dissent in both countries. After the division of Czecho-Slovakia political relations can be further
developed without the former Czechoslovak-
Hungarian memories. These went over to
contemporary Slovak-Hungarian relations. What is
important, there don't exist any recent historically-based conflicts between Czechs and Hungarians.

c) *Poland-Czech Republic* (affinities): relations between these two countries document a great measure of understanding in the past. In spite of possible Polish (nationalist) claims on tiny parts of Czech territory,*[7] Poland is for the Czech Republic the only indispensable partner in Central Europe owing to Poland's importance for the West, especially for Germany. That's why Czech-Polish relations have begun to be extremely friendly since 1995. The Czech Republic needs the geopolitical significance of Poland and Poland needs the economic high repute of the Czech Republic. As a team, these two countries could be the first to reach full NATO-membership.*[8]

d) *Slovakia-Czech Republic* (affinities): Both countries realized a peaceful division of a common state and, in a long term perspective, remain connected in many ways, in particular economically. Czech politics have preserved a somewhat paternalistic, although careful, attitude to Slovakia due also to the large number of ethnic Slovaks living in the Czech Republic.*[9] Owing to contemporary deficiencies in Slovak domestic policy and to difficulties Slovakia can expect in its strivings for entering the EU and/or NATO, the Czech Republic can appear as the only "Western" ally unselfishly supporting Slovakia's admission to Western integration structures. Both countries still confront similar transformation problems but each of them in its own way.*[10] Today some problems still exist of an economic character (division of the former common property), resulting from the differing levels of the two economies. Certain problems also remain in settling mutual claims and debts. The remaining questions are being worked on intensively, and there is a strong desire in both countries to reach agreements.*[11]

e) *Slovenia-Czech Republic* (affinities): the relations between these two geographically distant countries*[12] are of an economic and cultural nature. Economically, both are the most dynamic CEFTA-members and culturally, Czechs and Slovenes are obviously the most ethnically related West Slavic nations in cultural and ethnolinguistic terms.*[13] As candidates for EU-membership (EU meaning in this context predominantly the CSFP-common security and foreign policy) the Czech Republic and Slovenia are leading countries.

f) *Slovakia-Hungary* (inconsistencies): the relations between these two countries disturb the accepted image of the Visegrád group. Both countries remain ethnically estranged due to historical memories and current political disputes about international issues.*[14] Slovak-Hungarian relations represent a variety of Central Eastern European conflicts as a whole. Central Europe represents only a part of the post-Communist world and in the sense of a possible full-membership in NATO better chances have been assigned, unfortunately, to others.*[15]

The lack of transparency and of an unambiguous orientation of Slovakia derives from *specific features* of its development. Orientation strategies are unstable-they have proceeded very quickly and Slovakia can be regarded as hardly amenable to concrete typologizing among the post-Marxist states.*[16] According to the level of accomplished transformation, of domestic political development and of transformation processes of Central Eastern European economies we can differentiate among:

1) *The former communist countries* that have already passed the crucial point in both domestic, and foreign policy, as well as economy. The countries that

represent this group already have a political system stable and strong enough to accommodate even significant shifts of political orientation within governments. They can allow the classical right-left shifts on the domestic political scene without raising doubts about the sincerity of their security orientations. We speak about the *Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland* and *Slovenia.* Slovakia, which logically belongs to this group, too, has become somewhat isolated in the last two years due to developments in domestic policy. Both the European Union and NATO responded with severe criticism. Even the OSCE has expressed doubts about developments in Slovakia throughout the first half of 1996/[17]

2) *The former post-Communist countries* that have not

reached political   stability   and are   still fighting for

economic   macro-stabilization.   These countries

experience security handicaps owing to large ethnic minorities of their own living abroad or to ethnic minorities living on their territory. We have in mind *Albania, Bulgaria and Romania.* The domestic policy of these   countries   is   developing   in   a somewhat

turbulent   and   incalculable   way   despite formally

correct, democratically performed election procedures.

3) The remaining post-Communist countries (post-Soviet and   post-Yugoslav),   forming   a   complicated and

heterogenous group that can be divided into sveral sub-groups:

a) Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania

b) Russia, Belorussia, Ukraine

c) The three post-Soviet Republics of the Caucasus

d) Moldova

e) The four post-Soviet islamic Central Asian countries

f) Kazakhstan (a "nuclear power" with an ethically dim future)

g) Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia

h) Bosnia (differing from other post-Yugoslav countries
   by a culturally   divergent foreign policy
   (Islamic
   links)

Slovakia's position differs from the third group listed as one. On the basis of excellent macro-economic results in the last two years Slovakia belongs to the first group (1), while domestic political development put it in the second group (2), in particular with Albania and Romania, but also with some of the third group (namely with Serbia and Croatia), Slovakia's foreign policy resembles that of Bulgaria, group (2).*[18]

Security Policy: Starting Point and Prospects

The Slovaks have had to confront a much more complicated situation than prevailed at the time of common security planning within the framework of the former Czechoslovakia. Although Slovakia is not threatened with imminent armed attack, economic coercion and/or political pressure is conceivable and Slovakia has to balance national security interests and a secure political and economic coexistence with its direct or indirect neighbours so that the society can pursue its development. According to the *Defence Doctrine of the Slovak Republic,*[19] national security is guaranteed when, in the opinion of the national leadership, there does not exist any threat of a military attack or use of force or coercion in any form whatsoever. Hidden security threats are not taken into consideration explicitly, although the key structural components of national security mention also political, economic, social, geographic, environmental and demographic aspects, besides purely military security.

Compared with the former Czechoslovak military conception of defence and the current Czech defence strategy, Slovakia finds itself in a much more sensitive position. The still existing Czechoslovakia behaved in a very anti-Soviet manner

in 1990, whereas the federal Slovak government*[20] did not share such a strong anti-Russian orientation. For the former Czechoslovakia this orientation was easily explainable by the trauma of 1968 and the first step was to negotiate the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Czechoslovak territory (from Slovak territory first), which they entered unlawfully and by force during the WTO invasion in August 1968.*[21] The Soviets wanted to establish a new basis for their presence in Czechoslovakia, which was to coincide with the intending remodelling of the WTO as announced by the Soviet president Gorbachev in Malta already in December 1989. The WTO was to have been reformed along the lines of NATO, to become an instrument for political dialogue with the West. The Czechoslovak side succeeded in restricting this question to a bilateral negotiation and the "Agreement on the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Czechoslovak territory" was signed.*[22] The last Soviet soldier left the country in Summer 1991. During that time Czechoslovakia pursued a very rigid anti-WTO policy. At the consultative meeting in Budapest in February 1990, Czechoslovakia was the only country which rejected the Soviet proposal to create a permanent secretariat of the WTO. The country's representatives declared a clear objective: to remove the Czechoslovak army from the authority of the Joint Command, which was in the hands of the Soviets, and instead to strenghten the political dimension of the Pact as a temporary consultative body. This meant the rejection of the old bloc concept of European security. All this contributed to the final dissolution of the WTO, but the orientation of Czechoslovak foreign policy in security matters experienced a reorientation in Slovakia after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia itself.

Owing to the break-up of Czechoslovakia*[23] two successor states came in to existence in Europe facing brand-new security problems. A number of problems arose especially for Slovakia, which had "shifted" much more to the East and lost common borders with NATO as an acknowledged guarantor of peace after 1989.*[24] Slovakia was left alone with its frontiers on the

unstable CIS region and Hungary, with which it has serious historical controversies. The feet of the dissolution of Czechoslovakia seemed to run contrary to the general trend of the European political and military integration. This brought the new security position of Slovakia to the foreground and put new questions as to the Slovak security orientation in the future. The division of Czechoslovakia has changed not only the geopolitical position of its successor states, but also that of all Central Europe. We can summarize the changed position of both successor states as follows:

a) The geopolitical center of gravity of the new Slovak Republic shifted eastward, whereas the geopolitical center of gravity of the Czech Republic shifted westward.

b) The geostrategic assymetry of Slovakia vis-á-vis the former Soviet space deepened, whereas the geostrategic assymetry of Czequia deepened, too, vis-a-vis Germany, which has been, however, considered a reliable neighbor.

c) Whereas the Czech Republic was cut off from the "Carpathian arc of instability" and gained (in Slovakia) a "buffer" between itself and the territory of the CIS, Slovakia became tied to this territory without the previous (between 1989-1992) Czech security background. The Slovak attempts to persuade the Czechs to form a military union with Slovakia after the division failed.

d) The subregional assymetry in Central Europe increased with Poland becoming a subregional geostrategic power.

In Slovakia, there arose the necessity to redefine the foreign policy of the new state, which was conceptualized in the realist terms of "national interest". There was a marked effort of the new Slovak elites to define themselves negatively

vis-a-vis the previous federal or domestic foreign policy-makers, who were at the same time their rivals in the elections. The problems of conceptions concerning military strategy and defence acquired a quite new dimension, because Slovakia's identity in Czechoslovakia had been felt suppressed and unlike Czequia Slovakia began to develop without any tradition of a state of its own. The philosophy of defence of the Slovak Republic consists in looking for answers to the crucial question: what is necessary and what is possible to do for guaranteeing the country's security in the critical period after the bipolar world ceased to exist and the involuntarily received guarantees given by the WTO*[25] disappeared. Security risks for Central Europe have not been as fundamental as they have been for south-eastern Europe but they do exist, and will remain a problem until a security integration in any vital alliance has been reached.

One can localize the principal dilemma of Slovak security policy. This dilemma involves two irreconcilable contradictions: economic crises and traditional military thought.*[26] From this presumption we can develop rationalizations of the possibilities for choices in security policy-making and planning. The second presumption is the answer to the question what specific security problems a small state like Slovakia could face and what are the choices Slovakia can opt for. *First,* becoming a member of a security alliance or coalition. Because in the near future full NATO membership seems to be a purely illusionary idea (joining another alliance, e.g. accepting Ukrainian offers to serve as a nuclear umbrella for Central Eastern European countries has been refused decidedly)*[27] and Slovakia, although not exposed to a direct military threat, lives, nonetheless, in a security vacuum, the country can take the *second* choice: to provide for its own defence. It means either a variant of armed neutrality (this variant is, however, for Slovakia as expensive as other models), or a variant of neutrality meaning a position between two blocs*[28] that is completely unrealistic at present. *Third,* a renewed non-conventional thinking. It means the

evaluation of defence expenses and stressing saving (economy) and the so called synergic effects (multiplication of military consequences, military-strategic effects). According to this philosophy the only efficient conception is the so called defensive model of defence*[29] that follows the national interests of Slovakia excluding the priority role of the army in security policy.

In considering the new military strategic conception of defence for Slovakia one has to take into account the fact that the contemporary security system in Europe does not foresee an early integration of postcommunist countries into institutionalized European defence structures, as documented by the PFP program. The second factor that exerts a big influence on the new conception of military strategy ensues from the unique position of Slovakia in the Carpathian basin and in the Danube curve. Although geopolitical priorities have changed substantially since world war II, Slovak military analysts still underline the historical significance of the Carpathian basin and the Danube stream for economic, social and military-political development of those countries that have been situated in this European region, where during the last centuries and decades huge state-forming movements of all-European importance were taking place (the formation of Czequia and Slovakia being the last example). The significance of this territory, including the territory of Slovakia as an important geopolitical factor at the intersection of important communication directions North-South and East-West, increased after the disintegration of the Soviet Union in all aspects: politically, economically, militarily.

The military strategic conception of Slovak security policy-making and planning can be accomplished only by a radical re-orientation of both military and political thinking, and of strategic-operational considerations that take into account security risks and imaginable military conflicts. During the three-year existence of independent Slovakia three types of military conflicts have been theoretically possible:

1) A strategic defence against an armed aggression on a large scale. The Slovak Republic could be directly attacked or Slovakia could serve as an operational space of contending powers with other aims. Because Slovak territory is, vis-á-vis the supposed superiority of a big power practically undefendable, Slovak

   policy-planning can reckon only with a preventive deterrent effect of its army. The goal is only to

   demostrate the decision to defend its territory until possible foreign help becomes available.

2) A large-scale conflict (e.g. the Balkan war or,

   theoretically, a North-South conflict), where the armed forces should be able to lead a defence operation in order to localize and neutralize the conflict and to preserve the territorial integrity of the country.

3) A neutralization of internal unrest caused by ethnic tensions and bearing the danger of intervention by other states.

From the supposed types of conflicts it is clear that it is unrealistic to follow the traditional models of defence-planning in such a small country as Slovakia. A real alternative can be seen in the above mentioned economic and effective defence conception ("defensive model of defence") based on the presumption that the new strategic conception foresees an army that is able to deter the aggressor by threatening to inflict heavy damage. This defensive model of defense is preferred, because due to the economic transformation and to the difficulties of the transition period the Slovak Republic is visibly not capable of bearing the expenses for building traditional armed forces of the coalition type. With NATO membership out of sight (in this case, in cooperation with NATO members and regional newcomers the expenses would be sustainable) the defensive model of defence is very attractive for Slovakia.

The Scope of Change

The reorientation of military-strategic thinking made it necessary to realize a principal rebuilding of the armed forces, the reduction of their numbers according to earlier obligations in curved by Czechoslovakia*[30] (the reduction of both army personnel and armaments was reached in 1995), a new dislocation and technical modernization. The reality given by the division of federal property of the former Czechoslovakia and by special agreements in the sphere of the armed forces left Slovakia three possible variants of solving the problem of change whose necessity became evident.

1) The "classical reduction" of the army. This method would mean the reduction of manpower by preserving the traditional strategic principles of defence based on the already existing military and arming-technical structure of the armed forces. The realization of this variant would have entailed extraordinary costs (90% of expenses would swallow the plain existencial consumption). No means would have been left for the modernization of the armed forces. This variant, which was taken into consideration as a choice at the beginning of independence, mirrors the thinking of the classical Soviet school (specific geostrategic features are neglected). Although this model has had several defenders in Slovakia, the impossibility to reach compatibility with NATO in this way has been quite obvious.

2) The "considerably reduced" armed forces. It means only a more drastic realization of the first variant (as to the reduction of manpower). The arming, organizational and logistic structure of the armed forces would be preserved, too. No principle reform of the armed forces has been foreseen and the traditional conventional military thinking has been preserved.

This model would also not be persuasive enough to bring Slovakia into the member states of NATO. 3) The greatest chance has been accorded to the third variant-the "unconventional, extremely reduced army". It means a slightly stronger reduction of manpower than the second variant foresees and an adoption of a quite new strategic conception of the "defensive model of defence". The advantages of this model lie with saving finances, does not hinder the economic activity of the state and although a hypothetical aggressor may find it easier to be successful in an attack, it also transmits the non-aggressive posture of the country. At the same time, defensive striking power remains high. This model represents a trend in postcommunist countries and we can discover it elsewhere.*[31] The army consists of mobile forces having at their disposal modern arms. Quality replaces quantity. The main difficulty in introducing this model is represented by the necessity of adopting a new philosophy of military thinking that entails a replacement of old officers and traditional army personnel. It means also that civilian experts are accepted into the army and bring new, not purely military aspects to security theories.

Defining the search of new models for security policy-making and policy-planning in Slovakia leads to a comparatively simple conclusion that in the sphere of security policy the only thing to do is to look for new answers to old questions. It is clear that a defence self-sufficiency of Slovakia in military matters is an illusion and is not realizable economically. The adoption of a non-conventional defensive model can display several substantial military, political and economic advantages. First, it signals to the western defence Alliance that the Slovak armed forces are able to get rid of thinking in old categories and to create an effective defence

model anticipating the future security structure of Europe. Second, through its economy it leaves available the means needed for overcoming the economic unstability of the country. Fourth, it forms a starting point for building a modern, long-term and complex security policy.

The compatibility of the Slovak armed forces with a NATO / West European disposition has several aspects. One of them, obviously the most difficult, is the compatibility of *military thinking,* the change of philosophy. This change can be brough about only by active personal contacts with NATO / WEU reality and by a consequent personal re-building of the armed forces, by adding people who have not been linked to the previous WTO period. The contacts with western armed forces are very useful. Slovak peacekeeping activities are relatively modest, but considerably more active than, say, Czech peacekeeping activities. Preparations for Slovak peacekeeping are in full progress, however (as a rule, on the territory of former Yugoslavia). Besides this, Slovakia keeps a military mission in the NATO HQ in Brussels and cooperates closely, especially with the USA, which finances the reform program for the Slovak army and has launched education programs for Slovak army officers in the USA. During 1995 Slovak soldiers have taken part in several peacekeeping trainings in the Central European region and in the West. For 1996 the establishment of a special *Office for Military and Security Assistance* has been planned.*[32]

Another problem Slovakia experiences can be found in the matter of common speech, i. e. in *terminological compatibility.* The traditional terminological instruments that are still used in the Slovak armed forces have very often their origin in the terminology of the WTO. The problem becomes even exacerbated, because among NATO members there does not exist concord about many principal terms concerning security: strategic interests, security, security policy (grand strategy, national security strategy in the USA), military strategy, military doctrine, etc. Among the American, French and German terms

we find several differences in meaning and Slovakia has to look for equivalents that correspond to Slovak specific conditions. After much considerations, the term "military doctrine" was rejected in favor of "defence doctrine". There still exixts a slight confusion about the proper meaning of "security". In the Anglo-Saxon countries and especially in the USA, "security" is a synonym for a defence of long-term values and is seen as a means for reaching goals in relation to other countries and international organizations. In this way one creates a condition, under which the vital interests of the people and of the state can be defended against exterior and interior danger. It does not matter if this danger bears a real, a potential or a hypothetical character.*[33] In the case of Slovakia, however, security can't be guaranteed the moment the country is attacked and Slovakia can reckon only with potential enemies relying on prevention and deterrence only (this could be elaborated with several examples).

Another important issue is the *compatibility of arms, armaments.* In this case Slovakia can display quite good results that have their root in the fact that the heavy armament industry was concentrated in Slovakia in communist times, although in the second half of the eighties and especially in the euphoria following the change in 1989 production was drastically reduced. So the former Czechoslovakia, historically among the WTO's chief arms producers, reduced arms output to about one tenth of pre-1989 levels in 1990. After the split of Czechoslovakia Slovak arms executives and government officials made it clear that the industry would be given a second chance. Slovakia succeeded in modernizing the arms industry and gaining new markets in the course of 1993-1995.*[34] In light of the collapse of the WTO as well as the failure of Soviet-typed arms in the Gulf war, the traditional market for Slovak weapons like the Soviet-designed T-72 was almost lost. Now it is the Slovak objective to raise the production of arms to at least 25 per cent of 1989 capacity*[35]-still far from the levels of the 1980s, when Czechoslovakia (in fact Slovakia)

ranked seventh among the world's arms exporters. The former quantity should be replaced by quality that corresponds to western arms. Topping Slovakia's list of military goods is the newly designed howitzer called "Zuzana" firing NATO-standard ammunition, which military experts believe to be possibly the first of its kind intended for western markets. Slovakia has also modernized*[36] its classic T-72 tank in the form of the T-72 M2, which is also on the market. According to experts there are an estimated 8 000 T-72 tanks in use around the world. So the modernization of the Slovak arms industry contributes to the compatibility of the Slovak Army with NATO armed forces and has been a frequent theme for discussions with western military officials during 1995.*[37] The Slovak arms industry, according to official statements, can produce all modern weapon systems necessary for the world. Membership in NATO depends mainly on five basic criteria Slovakia has to meet:-completing the democratic transformation of the society, free market economy, civil control of the army, compatibility of the Slovak Army with NATO armed forces, and friendly relations with neighbours.

According to the assesment of the American Minister of Defence in September 1995, Slovakia reached the best results in the third and fourth points.*[38]

During a visit to Slovakia in September 1995, J. Shalikashvili, indicated that it is the Czech Army that is the most advanced in transformation and arms compatibility and keeps the most mature contacts with the US armed forces. Nevertheless, both armies (i.e. Czech and Slovak) are in the "foreground".*[39] Here we can discover the first signs of differentiation that was absent in statements made by NATO officials one or two years ago.

In spite of all these positive facts, Slovakia is still considered to experience severe shortcomings on other points that are seen as crucial conditions for full NATO membership. Due to domestic political developments that differ from the classical left-right model in most of the West European

countries and in the other CEFTA members, Slovakia has been often regarded as the weakest spot in the regional Central European mosaic. Since the beginning of Slovak independence Slovak diplomacy has tried, with varied success, to disperse doubts about Slovakia's integration backwardness. The division of Czechoslovakia made it necessary to re-evaluate the principal pro-NATO federal policy and the first months of independence witnessed a slight confusion as to security orientation. NATO began to discuss seriously the Visegrád proposals no sooner than in 1993 and had to find out that it was not prepared to swallow such a huge enlargement (taking Visegrád as a bloc) of four countries that numbered around 65 million inhabitants (such an enlargement is unparalled in NATO history). There was first the need to adapt NATO to post-bipolar reality and one had to take into account the opinion and possible objections raised by Russia. The discussions about eventual NATO membership became heated in Slovakia in January 1993, because the idea of neutrality found strong support in the country at the beginning of independence. Slovakia's decision to establish an independent state was, besides other reasons, caused also by rejection of the radical westernization plans of the Czechs in economic reform and strongly pro-western foreign policy. In the first half of 1993 public discussion turned on the question of either NATO-integration or neutrality, although any analysis based on real politics left only the first alternative as rational. Membership in the first broad post-cold alliance-NACC-did not pretend to radiate any semblance of security prospects and was felt as unsufficient. The setting up of NACC was understood as a platform for NATO to launch a dialogue with the former adversaries, not as a waiting room for NATO membership. Yet, to be put on a level with Central Asian countries, where civil war raged at that time, induced the Visegrád countries to look for a different security posture. The Visegrád bloc wanted, of course, to be seen differently even from countries like Bulgaria and Romania, which had been raised to the same level at the

Copenhagen summit of the EU in summer 1993.

It was in the half of 1993 that Slovak foreign policy took a pro-western course. On the domestic political scene in the first months of 1993 the pro-eastern versus pro-western tug of war ended in the purge of the Foreign Minister,*[40] whose diplomatic activities betrayed strong pro-NATO inclinations. His successor,*[41] however, continued the orientation of Slovak security policy toward NATO, leading to the visit of the Slovak president to NATO HQ and an official application for NATO membership at the end of 1994.*[42] This security and foreign policy orientation led to another crisis and resulted again in the purge of Foreign Minister, in a government crisis and in premature parliamentary elections in October/November 1994. In between, the new Foreign Minister in the temporary government*[43] steered to a NATO integration course as well. Despite the permanent domestic policy crisis with regard to changing foreign ministers, Slovak NATO policy was assuming more positive features during 1993 and 1994. Already in March 1993 a NATO delegation paid a four-day visit to Slovakia and in June J. Shalikashvili arrived in Bratislava to be informed about the Slovak will to cooperate closely with NATO. He recommended a closer military cooperation including peacekeeping tasks. As Slovakia's top priority he mentioned improving military education and offered an educational centre for language training to members of the Slovak Army. At that time he refiised to concede that Slovakia was behind other Visegrád countries.*[44] The official presentation of the Slovak application to join NATO by the president of Slovakia can be seen as the culmination of the pro-NATO development of Slovakia. At that time the PFP program was not yet decided upon and the president expressed the hope that the January summit would offer the Visegrád countries "formal assistance membership" with the right to consult NATO if they thought their security was endangered, as well as an assurance of eventual full membership. The PFP program failed to offer even "soft guarantees" like these.

The Slovak government*[45] signed the PFP program in February 1994 as the seventh country and without the reservations the other Visegrád countries expressed.*[46] A more direct approach of NATO toward membership would have brought a dilemma for Slovak foreign policy in its friendly relations to Russia. It is because of the desire for good relations both with Russia and with NATO that disputes have broken out among the Slovak public during 1995, doubting the sincerity of official Slovak declarations toward NATO-integration.

To reaffirm the efforts of Slovakia to join NATO, all Slovak governments, including the present one, have repeatedly pledged allegiance to this intention since 1993 and officially, there have been no doubts about this issue.*[47] Despite this fact, since 1993 several statements made by western politicians, and views expressed in articles published in the western press, have ceased to mention Slovakia as a first-round candidate for admission to both NATO and the EU. Slovakia has been many times omitted from the preferential list, because the country has not been regarded as folly stable, especially in terms of domestic policy. The reservations of western countries turn on the methods used in domestic policy and on the alleged shortcomings in minorities' policy.*[48] The Slovak political representation has undertaken a series of diplomatic steps to clarify the situation, especially in connection with the latest criticism from the EU.

According to the latest statements of leading western politicians, the eastern enlargement of NATO will be decided in the first months of the next year (1997).*[49] The invitations to "some Central Eastern European countries" should be sent in 1997 and final admission to NATO should take place at the 50-th anniversary of NATO is founding, i.e. in March 1997. If Slovakia wants to preserve a real chance of NATO-admission, it will have to persuade the western countries of its ability to behave as an unproblematic NATO-member. In the first place, Slovakia will have to disperse doubts about democratic shortcomings. The purges in some ministries in August 1996*[50]

will hardly be sufficient for appealing to NATO. Slovakia is still accused of following a double-faced foreign policy and of showing large-scale differences between declarations and real political actions.*[51] In summer 1996 pessimism about admission chances has been further strengthened in Slovakia and the Slovak political representation seems to be preparing the population for a western refusal and is now trying to stress the risks of a NATO-membership (an alleged deployment of nuclear weapons on Slovak territory, military costs of integration, etc.).*[52]

Notes

In using the problematic term "Central Europe" I mean, generally, the countries of the Visegrád group or, as the case may be, of the CEFTA, see. Samson, I.: *The Linguistical Concept of Central Europe,* in: *History and Politics,* Slovak Academic Press, Bratislava 1994.

After the end of the bipolar world there arose an increased difficulty with the typology of powers (world powers, super powers, great powers, nuclear powers, regional and/or subregional powers) Countries like Ukraine and Kazakhstan became nuclear powers overnight, but they have not had any chance to become " great powers".

In the Slovak case these goals have been recently confirmed during the negotiations between representatives of the Russian and Slovak Committees for Defence and Security (of both parliaments) in Bratislava on 6-8 May 1996, see in: *Sme:,* May 15,1996.

Weidenfeld, W., Janning, J.: *Europe in Global Change,* Guetersloh 1993, p. 186.

The "bloc approach" vis-á-vis EU and NATO was at the basis of the original Visegrád Three. Soon Poland and Hungary (in 1991) and finally the Czech Republic (following the Copenhagen Summit in July 1993) ceased to cooperate with the other member-countries. Poland and Hungary returned to the group immediately, the Czech Republic remained

"stubborn"   until 1996, following a "solo"   trip to
Western economic and security structures.

6   Zellner, W., Dunay, P.: *The Foreign Policy of Hungary in the
        FirstYearofHorn'sGovernment{m* German), in: *Suedosteuropa,*
        No. 44/95, pp. 654-655.

7   A problem arose concerning the Tesm region in the north of
        Silesia. Generally, however, the Versailles (St. Germain) Treaty
        (fixing the frontiers after World War I) would be endangered.

8   On the goals of Polish foreign policy in the sphere of security
        and the affinities to the Czech Republic, see: Bartoshewski, W.:
        Polish Security Policy, in: *Perspectives,* Prague 1995 (Summer
        issue), pp. 5-7.

9   With approximately 300 000 members the Slovaks form by far
        the most numerous ethnic minority in the Czech Republic.

10   *Both Countries to Europe, each on its Own* (in Slovak), in:*Mosty,*
        No. 30/95.

11   Bombk,S., Samson, I.: *Security for Europe* (forthcoming, N. Y.
        1996), Chapter 11 (Slovakia).

12   Seperated in the most direct and natural way by Austria.

13   Décsy, G.:   *The Linguistic Structure of Europe*   (in
        German),
        Hamburg 1973.

14   The   Gabcíkovo-Nagyamaros   controversy   that   has
        been
        delivered to the International Court in the Hague is only one of
        them. Much more dangerous have been the accusations made
        by the   Slovaks of Hungarians'   hurting   the air
        space of
        Slovakia, lasting and potential feuds about Slovak cultural
        goods allegedly withheld by Hungary, and the overall general
        distrust. See also in: Renner, H., Samson, I.: *The Hungarian
        Minority in Slovakia* (in Dutch), in: *Internationale Spectator*
        (the Netherlands), October 1992.

15   Slovakia has been recently, again, omitted from the first-round
        candidate list presented by the Republican Party of the USA
        that has proposed limiting the enlargement of NATO in the near
        future to only three countries: the Czech Republic, Hungary
        and Poland. See in: *Sme,* May 5,1996. Slovakia, however, can
        block the admission of Hungary by its own incapability to

become a full-member.

16 Gabal, I.: *Five Years after. The Post-Communist World. Crisis or Evolution?* In: *Perspectives, No.* 5 /1995, Prague, pp. 47-48.

17 The criticism of the high commisioner of the OSCE Max van er Stoel see in: *Domino Efekt* No. 21 /96.

18 Pantev, P.: *Security for South Eastern Europe: Bulgaria.*
Conference paper (free to quote), Munich, September 1995.

19 Intentionally, it was decided to avoid " military doctrine". The "Defence Doctrine of the Slovak Republic" was approved by the Slovak Parliament in June 30, 1994.

20 Czechoslovakia had after January 1, 1969, when it became a federation, three governments: federal, Czech and Slovak.

21 The negotiations started on 15 January 1990.

22 Signed in Moscow in February 22, 1990.

23 Accomplished by a legal and peaceful way through the decision of the federal Parliament and valid since December 31, 1992-January 1,1993.

24 The considerably shortened frontier with neutral Austria does not represent an equivalent to a NATO frontier despite the fact that since January 1,1995 Austria has been member of the EU.

25 Warsaw Treaty Organisation.

26 Robejsek, P.: "Defence without Army..." (in Czech), Prague 1992, p. 29.

27 What is meant are several Ukrainian initiatives, the most famous of them being the so called Krawchuk Initiative from 1993. According to the treaty with Russia (1994) Ukraine will give up its nuclear weapons no sooner than in 2000.

28 At the very beginning of the Slovak independence and even before, this choice found expression in the theory of "bridge between East and West", see e.g. in: Fabian, J.: "In the Crossroads of Geopolitics" (in Slovak), in: "Slovenské pohlady" 4 /1991, Bratislava 1991, pp. 28-33.

29 Kulasík K., Kulasik P.: "Security and Defence Policy of Slovakia" (in Slovak), in: " Medzinárodné otázky" (International Issues) 1-2/1993, Bratislava 1993, p. 51.

30 CFE (Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe) from

         1990.

31   Zachariás, K.: " Variants of a Reduced Army", Prague 1992.

32   See in: " Národná obroda", 19 Sept. 1995.

33   " National Security Strategy of USA", Washington 1993, 13 pp.

34   According to the former Deputy Defence Minister Andrej Sobol
         (in office until the beginning of 1995) "we do not want to be
         known as the gun suppliers of Europe, we just want to supply
         our citizens with jobs... It is a strategic fight for the arms market
         out there, and every tactics and means is fair game. We will do
         what the rest of the world does". See the Interview
         for

         " Reuters", Bratislava, 24 November, 1994.

35   The   former   Defence   Minister   Pavol   Kanis   to
         "Reuter",

         Bratislava, 24 November 1994.

36   In the arms industrial complex ZTS Martin in Central Slovakia.

37   Defence Minister Ján Sitek with the British Defence Minister
         Malcolm Rifkind on   15   February   1995, see in:
         "Národná

         obroda", 16 February 1995 and with the US Defence Minister
         William Perry   on   18   September 1995, see in: "Sme",
         19

         September 1995.

38   William Perry on   18 September 1995, see in: "Pravda", 19.
         September 1995.

39   See in: " Sme", 28 September 1995.

40   Milan Knazko, removed from office in March, 1993.

41   Jozef Moravcik.

42   On 4 November, 1994.

43   Eduard Kukan in the government led by the former Foreign
         Minister Jozef Moravcik.

44   TASR, 22 June 1993.

45   On 9 February 1994 by prime minister Vladimir Meciar.

46   See e.g. the joint Czech-Polish   declaration after the
         PFP-

         approval by NATO foreign ministers ,CTK, 9 December 1993.

47   See   in: "Documents   on   Foreign   Policy   of
         the   Slovak

         Republic", MFA of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava 1993 and
         1994.

48   Since the end of 1994 the Slovak government has received two
         demarches on behalf of EU (November 1994 and October

      1995) and one on bahalf of the USA.

49   The statements made by the German chancellor Helmuth Kohl during his visit in Moscow in August   1996 and by the
    Secretary General of NATO Javier Solana in September 1996. See in *Pravda,* 19. September 1996.

50   Including the replacement of the Minister of Interior and the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

51   Slovakia has had to swallow severe criticism even by extremely friendly nations. Serving as an example is the statement of the Austrian chancellor Franz Vranitzky, who sees " two faces of Slovakia. One that is friendly disposed to the EU and another that looks different". Zajac, P.: *Two faces of Slovakia* ("Dve tváře Slovenska"), in: *Domino efekt* 24 / 96.

52   The anti-NATO speech of the Slovak prime minister Vladimir Meciar in: Štulajter, I.: *Two faces* ("Dve tváře"), in: RFE / RL 16. 9. 1996.