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– a Stable or Diluted Coalition?**

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Visegrad Group within the EU – a Stable or Diluted Coalition? (case studies on Schengen enlargement and visa policy)

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Summary:

The paper deals with the Visegrad Group's (V4's) co-operation in the Schengen enlargement and efforts to achieve visa-free travelling to the US. I ask whether the V4 is able to act as a stable coalition in these matters or whether their co-operation is diversified and consequently more diluted. I came to the conclusion that the V4 cannot be called a firm single issue lobbying coalition. Their common positions and actions can be broken very easily whether due to both internal and external problems. Joint efforts at achieving a common goal begin to split up in cases when one state gets the feeling that it is more successful acting alone than collectively. Such findings signify the lack of homogeneity and self-restraint within the Group.

Keywords: Visegrad Group, the European Union, coalition building

Višeegrádská skupina v EU – stabilní nebo volná koalice? (případ rozšíření Schengenského prostoru a vízové politiky)

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Abstrakt:

Stat' se zabývá spoluprací Višeegrádské skupiny (V4) v oblastech Schengenského rozšíření a snahy o dosažení bezvízového styku s USA. Kladu si otázku, zda je V4 schopná v těchto záležitostech jednat jako stabilní koalice anebo je diverzifikovaná a tudíž volnější. Dospěla jsem k závěru, že V4 orientující se na konkrétní oblast spolupráce nemůže být označena jako pevná lobbující koalice. Společné postoje a akce mohou být snadno narušeny at' už interními anebo vnějšími problémy. Snaha dosáhnout společných cílů spojenými silami se začíná rozpadat v případech, kdy jeden stát získá pocit, že může být úspěšnější sám než v kolektivu ostatních států. Takové závěry signalizují nedostatek homogeneity a sebeomezování v rámci skupiny V4.

Klíčová slova: Višeegrádská skupina, Evropská unie, budování koalic

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Introduction

To what extent do the different points of view affect the character of the V4's co-operation, especially after accession to the EU? How does the character of co-operation influence the ability of the member states to achieve common goals together? In this working paper I will examine the specific areas of Justice and Home Affairs, namely the Schengen enlargement and common visa policy within the EU (efforts to achieve visa-free travelling to the US). I ask whether the Visegrad Group (V4) is able to act as a stable coalition in these matters or whether their co-operation is diversified for some reason and consequently more diluted.

The literature dealing with the V4's co-operation, or touching on some of its activities is relatively numerous [Vykoukal, J. et al. (2003): *Visegrád. Možnosti a meze středoevropské spolupráce*. Dokořán, Praha; Šťastný, M. (ed.) (2002): *Visegrad Countries in an Enlarged Trans-Atlantic Community*. Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava etc.]. Nevertheless, studies evaluating its activities within the EU in more detail are not very numerous. This is certainly true with regard to the fields of Justice and Home Affairs. I chose the two examples of co-operation (the Schengen enlargement and efforts to abolish the visa requirements for travelling to the US) where the V4 members have common aims. I will use these examples to disclose the character of their co-operation. Are the Visegrad states able to act together in reaching these goals?

Concerning the theoretical approach to regional co-operation, I will employ the methodology developed by Drulák (Drulák 2002: 47-66). He tried to answer the question: 'under which conditions regional co-operation makes sense; setting four criteria based on an Alexandr Wendt's Social Theory of International Politics (1999): interdependency, common fate, homogeneity and self-restraint.' By using these criteria I will show that the co-operation within the V4 Group corresponds to some of the elements of regional co-operation (common fate, interdependency); whereas some of the elements are borderline (homogeneity, self-restraint). I cannot do full justice to the V4 co-operation in all its aspects; nevertheless, I can develop some assessments based on the specific case studies. I argue that the lack of homogeneity and the lack of self-restraint in particular are the main reasons why the V4's co-operation as a coalition is more diluted than united.

To start with, I will explain the theoretical basics of this paper so that I could apply them later to the empirical cases of the V4's co-operation. Secondly, I will divide the co-operation; of many years standing; into two periods – the first period, before EU accession, and the second one, after it. To start with the first period, I will define the initial successes in the V4's co-operation in contrast to the increasing disputes among member states after 1992. In this respect, the building up of mutual relations in the period after 2004 was very similar

to the first period. Some of the criteria of the regional co-operation have started to dissipate. Thirdly, I will exemplify developments in the cases of the Schengen enlargement and on the visa policy. Finally, I will describe the character of the V4 Group, which seems to be a single issue lobbying coalition weakened by heterogeneity and lack of common identity among the member states.

1. Theoretical background

This working paper is based on the methodology developed by Drulák (Drulák 2002: 47-66).¹ He suggested a set of four criteria where regional co-operation is possible: interdependency, common fate, homogeneity and self-restraint.

interdependency means that „mutual interactions bind the states to one another and lead to the sharing of profits and losses.“ (Drulák 2002: 49);

common fate represents sharing of a common destiny, i.e. when the „individual's survival, fitness, or welfare depends on what happens to the group as a whole“ (Drulák 2002: 49, excerpt from Wendt);

homogeneity is based on similarity among actors (similarity in domestic organization of political authority, institutions, values; shared common features and shared perception of „others“) which helps to reduce conflicts among them (Drulák 2002: 51-52);

self-restraint is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition of transition from a state of conflict to enduring co-operation. „By holding ourselves back, in short, we make it possible for others to step forward and identify with us, enabling us in turn to identify with them“ (Drulák 2002:53). Self-restraint is conditioned by mutual trust.

Moreover, Drulák applied the four criteria to the V4's co-operation as such, coming to conclusions relating to the character of their co-operation: firstly: that internal interdependence is quite low; secondly: that the countries do not face any clear external foe (i.e. the common threat which could unify them is lacking); thirdly: that the homogeneity is of dubious quality, and; fourthly: that the self-restraint has yet to come (Drulák 2002: 60-63).

In this respect I will apply the four criteria on the Schengen enlargement and on efforts to obtain visa-free entry to the US. I will examine if the conclusions are unambiguously valid for the chosen fields of interest as well. Then, I will ask whether the V4 co-operation represents more stable or diluted coalition. By stable coalition I mean a coalition of states having similar objectives. Herewith, the stable coalition is composed of members who are able to fulfil the objectives by common efforts, side by side. There may be some

¹ His work results from Wendt's Social Theory of International Politics (1999): Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

internal disputes among member states, e.g. about methods or tactics, but they are able, nevertheless, to maintain their common stance. By diluted coalition I mean a coalition which might have similar objectives but which is not able to act as „one “. Their internal disputes indicate a disunity which is hard to overcome.

The V4 is an example of coalition building² which means that it is „a primary mechanism through which disempowered parties can develop their power base and thereby better defend their interests“ (Conflict Research Consortium 1998). On the other hand, working in the coalition can be handicapped by the fact that „a coalition may only be as strong as its weakest link“. Consequently ... „[the actors] that provide a lot of resources and leadership may get frustrated with each other members´ shortcomings“ (Sprangler 2003). This applies to the V4, undoubtedly, and that is why I argue that the V4 is, rather, a diluted coalition – there are many signals in the Justice and Home Affairs matters that „faster “ V4 members are not able to „wait“ for the slower members. In other words – when one member state falls behind the others go on. This is the moment when the V4, or indeed any, coalition falls apart.

2. Co-operation within the Visegrad Group before accessing the EU

2.1 Initial success

The Visegrad co-operation started in 1991 among Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary. These three and after the split up of Czechoslovakia in 1993, when the new Slovak republic joined the group, four states of Central Europe had to solve very similar problems in their foreign relations. They declared their efforts for „... creating foundations and new forms of political, economic and cultural cooperation of these countries in the altered situation in Central Europe“ (Visegrad Declaration 1991). The states claimed their orientation towards the Western European values so as to assure the genuine independence of the Visegrad states from the Soviet Union.

The Visegrad Group platform originated in the beginning of the 1990´s in order to confirm their common goals of leaving the Soviet Union´s sphere of influence, and entering the family of modern democratic states of the Western type. Not only the aim, but also the processes leading to achieving it were common. During the period 1991-1993 there came no greater disputes about „... the main areas of co-operation [which] were ... state sovereignty, human rights, common market and membership in NATO and EEC“ (Pruska 2005: 1). The co-operation brought successes in dissolving

² Coalition building uses the terminology of political science (or of trade/business sphere, e.g. trade associations lobbying within the EU).

the Warsaw Pact and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance [COMECON] (1991). After that, their co-operation was less united, even though EU entry was still a matter of common interest; „ EU accession has opened up a new period for the Visegrad Group, while also revealing new challenges to face“ (Pruska 2005: 1).

The beginnings, and the very first years of, the Visegrad co-operation were very successful and common efforts helped them to achieve their proposed aims. It was mainly the notion of their common fate (communist past, transformation processes), interdependency and to a certain level also homogeneity within the Group which contributed to the efficiency of the co-operation.

2.2 The V4's co-operation in the period 1992-2004

The candidate states had to adopt a wide range of Community law (*acquis communautaire*) with a minimum possibility to negotiate any exceptions. Moreover, they had to conform to the EU reforms after the Amsterdam Treaty reminiscent of attempts to catch an express train going at full speed. Was it worth co-operating during the accession period within the V4? Which avenues and obstacles have brought about this co-operation?

When negotiating the admission to the EU, all the Visegrad countries informed one another of their achievements which made possible very efficient coordination on the Visegrad level. The benefits conceded to one of the countries were automatically applied to all of them (Drulák 1998). However, during the middle of 1990's the operation of the Group changed a bit, and it was, especially, the Czech Republic which tried to limit its activities to, rather, the free-market type of co-operation, and disavowed the V4. At the same time, the attitudes of the other member states towards their mutual co-operation diversified as well: the Czech strategy has been minimalist, the Hungarian stance has been more pragmatist, the Polish has been maximalist and Slovakia has considered it as an essential part of its foreign policy (Kolankiewicz 1994: 483-484). All the four member states have had different approaches towards the co-operation within it:

- the Czech approach has been rather minimalist seeing the V4 as a kind of consultative body with no consistent content and decisions;

- the Hungarian approach has been close to pragmatism seeing the V4 as a process rather than an entity;

- the Polish approach has been maximalist and the V4 has been seen as a tool for achieving their own ambitious political goals in Central Europe;

the Slovak approach has been more likely essentialist as membership in V4 has been perceived as confirming its belonging to Central Europe.³

Disputes among member states produced heterogeneity and inability to reach a common stance at times. In the middle of the 1990's there occurred the first conflicts between Hungary and the Slovak Republic relating to the Gabčíkovo hydroelectric dam, and problems with Hungarian minority living in Slovakia later. Nor has the Czech Republic been a keen booster of Visegrad co-operation, as the then government tended to cool relations with this group. For example, when Bill Clinton visited the Czech Republic in 1994, the Czech government insisted on strictly bilateral meetings between Clinton and the four Visegrad states as they did not have common interests. From the Czech point of view, the V4 Group could have been inappropriately perceived as an alternative to EU membership, and could thus prevent Czech access. Czechs preferred free trade zones and the term: „Visegrad“ belonged among the discredited efforts. Also Poland had its own ambitious visions about its role in Europe which could have been blocked by co-operation with the other states of the Visegrad Group. Poland, as the biggest state in the Central Europe has had expectations of being more powerful within the EU (by virtue of qualified-majority voting); and of acting as the leader of the region.

Nevertheless, when negotiating with the EU, all the Visegrad countries at least informed one another about their achievements during the whole period. Admittedly, such regional co-operation streamlined the process and increased the influence of the participating countries to a certain level. On the other hand, it was more competition than real co-operation which was realized in this period, generally. This tendency was to a certain extent supported by the EU itself, which gave way, so as „to avoid forming a group with a potentially more powerful voice in the accession negotiations; the EU decided to negotiate with each accession country separately and simultaneously“ (Brusis 2002: 71). The Visegrad members were „travelling together but separately“ (Kolankiewicz 1994: 480). They had different conceptions on the accession process and different expectations which led to individual and differentiated strategies (Kazmierkiewicz ed. 2005: 13). All the candidate states tried to hit a moving target themselves, which undermined the possibility of an effective common effort.

The end of 1992 brought the first signs of heterogeneity which have come to influence the group's co-operation. Even a „common identity consisting of something more than post-communist societies awaiting European

³ These approaches may slightly vary in time (after the EU entry especially) but they can still best characterize the general stance of the V4 members to the mutual co-operation within the Group.

membership [was] most keenly missed ...“ (Kolankiewicz 1994: 480). Sharing the communist past could not have been a source for a firm homogeneity within the V4. During the transformation in 1990s, the heterogeneity prevailed over the homogeneity. And, after all, it was the lack of self-restraint which caused the fundamental obstacles to regional co-operation.

3. Co-operation within the Visegrad Group after EU accession

EU accession has given rise to new challenges to the V4's co-operation. The V4 states signed, in 2004, the „Declaration of Prime Ministers of the Czech Republic, the Republic of Hungary, the Republic of Poland and the Slovak Republic on co-operation among the Visegrad Group countries after their accession to the European Union“. The signatories stated that „the co-operation of the Visegrad Group countries will continue to focus on regional activities ... In this context, their cooperation will be based on concrete projects and will maintain its flexible and open character“ (Declaration 2004). This statement predicts the character of the Visegrad co-operation within the EU – it should be based on ad-hoc, single issue operations.

The open method of co-operation occurs in the „Guidelines on the Future Areas of Visegrad Cooperation“ which were amended to the Declaration (2004). The proposed matters of common interest are specific, I chose the fields of Justice and Home Affairs, namely, the issues of Schengen enlargement and common visa policy (efforts to achieve visa-free entry to the US).⁴ I would like to demonstrate that the V4 co-operation shows its worth in dealing with specific issues, and that it admittedly adds weight to special-interest single issue types of co-operation. In the above mentioned issues the V4 seems to act more as a single issue lobbying coalition than as a kind of regional organization.⁵

Accession to the EU has brought wider scope for co-operation. The new members have changed their status from policy-takers to policy-makers. During the accession period the candidates were „merely consumers of EU policies and [could] not influence them“ (Grabbe 2000: 526); whereas, after 2004 this asymmetrical relation should have been abolished. It is not the case on all points - non-participation in the Schengen system, and to a certain extent different visa regimes with the US (and Canada), make new members feel like second-class

⁴ „Consultations, co-operation and exchange of experience in the area of Justice and Home Affairs, Schengen co-operation, including protection and management of the EU external borders, visa policy ...“ In: *Guidelines on the Future Areas of Visegrad Co-operation*. Available from: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/main.php?folderID=830&articleID=3936&ctag=articlelist&id=1>

⁵ Though, the V4 has not been a regional organization, it has been more a kind of regional association without firm organizational hierarchy.

members. Currently these two tasks have revived the co-operation among the V4 states.⁶ They are now striving to achieve the same conditions in these matters as the old EU members have.

3.1 The Schengen enlargement

The Schengen acquis was released in 1999 in the Amsterdam Treaty, thus, right in the middle of the hectic times of the *acquis communautaire* harmonisation, which had started several years earlier. In 2001 the EU decided to divide the Schengen acquis into two categories – the first should have been adopted before entry to the EU, the second after entry.⁷ Hence, it was clear that entering the EU did not mean entering the Schengen Area at the same time. In September 2003, the V4 Interior Ministers decided to establish a common working group on Schengen co-operation (Druláková 2006: 95). This enhanced co-operation „has been invited to check conditions and means for the joint submission by V4 States of an application for participation in the Schengen system. The Group also created a platform for mutual collaboration among V4 countries in their preparations to implement the Schengen acquis“ (Declaration 2004).

The V4 states were able to represent mutual confidence at that time, and have applied for Schengen membership together in 2004. They also decided to run parallel screening on their readiness to enter Schengen. They formulated the political will to enter Schengen simultaneously which enabled them to be perceived as unanimous block on this question (Kazmirkiewicz 2005: 17).

This move seems to give evidence of the Visegrad Group as an example of successful regional co-operation. Although, abolishing internal border controls depends on a Council decision adopted by unanimity. That means that „they [should] have sufficient confidence in the CEE members’ external frontier controls“ (Grabbe 2000: 527). It was Austria and Germany which expressed their misgivings about the applicants’ preparations recently. The mutual working of the V4 can be disrupted easily by such attitudes.

An even easier way to disrupt their joint efforts in the matters of Schengen enlargement was caused by the V4 states themselves, occasionally blaming one another for delay in preparations. It was the Czech Ambassador to the EU Kohout, together with the Czech Minister of the Interior Langer, who accused Slovakia of serious technical problems in preparations, and stated that it is possible to continue without Slovakia. According to Kohout: „The Czech

⁶ Together with so called B3 group (Latvita, Lithuania and Estonia) which have joined the V4 group in some negotiations.

⁷ According to the fact whether the Schengen acquis is linked to the Schengen Information System (SIS) or not. Those linked to the SIS have belonged to the Schengen acquis of the second category.

Republic is resolved to restoring tough controls on Slovakia's borders ... if Slovakia is not have been ready in time to enter the Schengen" (Grohová 2006). At the same time, Poland also admitted having some problems securing the sea border effectively. The V4 coalition seemed to disintegrate in those days and a new strategy – each state on its own – was appearing.

But a new event revived this single issue coalition, and that is the declaration by the Schengen members that the date of enlargement set for October 2007 must be postponed due to technical problems with SIS II⁸ innovations. Whether this is the real reason or not, this statement has reintegrated the V4 states. In September 2006, during the presidents' meeting, the V4 made public a common protest against Schengen entry delay. The Schengen entry was described as an „absolute priority“ and the delay „would [be] viewed as discrimination ...“ (Visegrad Four protest 2006). The member states representatives declared on this occasion that „the group has regained impetus“ and that „the V4 has decided to re-join forces and battle its common problems in today's Europe“ (Asiedu 2006: 1). The Schengen entry has been stated as the most pressing issue, together with visa-free entry to the U.S.⁹

The same position even on a wider platform (V4 + Baltic states) was expressed in November 2006. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs „expressed their firm interest in joining the Schengen area by the seven countries in October 2007 according to the original timetable“ otherwise it could „affect the credibility of the EU in public opinion in the new EU Member States“ (Ministři jednali ... 2006). The state of the Schengen enlargement as it appears to now¹⁰ conform to the Portuguese compromise that the enlargement is possible on the SISone4all basis on December 31, 2007. The Schengen issue remains to be a key priority within the V4 during the Czech Presidency of the Group as well (June 2007 – June 2008). It plans to be oriented towards the finalization of the preparations to enter the Schengen Area and the discontinuance of checks a internal borders (Czech Presidency of the Visegrad Group 2007).

Issue specific co-operation among V4 members seems to be successful. However, neither the V4 co-operation as a whole, nor the single issue coalition of V4 striving for Schengen entry, can be seen as a firm single issue lobbying coalition. The common positions and actions can be disrupted very easily, whether due to internal problems (bilateral disputes, more ambitious policies of one member etc.) or external problems (coming from the EU). Such findings signify the lack of homogeneity and lack of self-restraint within the Group.

⁸ Schengen Information System (SIS) is a database enabling to secure the Schengen Area without internal border controls. It contains relevant criminal records which are shared among member states.

⁹ Nevertheless, even in this period some disharmony appeared due to the lurking tension between Slovakia and Hungary on Hungarian minority living in the Slovak Republic.

¹⁰ The Working Paper was written in July 2007.

3.2 The EU common visa policy (visa-free travelling to the US)

The general EU visa policies are a matter of the first pillar and thus belonging to the the *acquis communautaire*. All the candidates had to adopt all the EU provisions in this field and take over the „black“ and „white“ lists as they were (the lists being non-negotiable). The new members have had to adjust to the EU visa policies which meant that they abolished the visa-free regimes with their neighbours on their Eastern and Southern borders and included them in the „black“ list. At the same time they expected to gain the same treatment in visa policy concerning the third states as any other EU country (having the US in mind, especially).

That is why I will, in this chapter, focus on the battle for visa-free entry to the US as the visa policy is not reciprocal and is not the same for all the member states within the EU. It should have been based on reciprocity as the Hague Programme (2004) states: „The European Council: „... calls on the Commission to continue its efforts to ensure that the citizens of all Member States can travel without a short-stay visa to all third countries whose nationals can travel to the EU without a visa as soon as possible ...“¹¹ Also in this matter, the V4 members were able to establish a lobbying coalition – „Coalition for Visa Equality“ (2005). The coalition includes not only the V4 but three Baltic states as well. As in the case of the Schengen enlargement I will explain only V4 group attitudes and leave out the Baltic positions. The aim of the Coalition is to reach visa reciprocity with the US, which is also backed by the EU at least by the general proclamations published in the years of 2006 and 2007. The EU is calling on Washington to allow visa-free travel to the US from all the EU countries. The EU representatives said that „we don't want other people to be picking and choosing between our members ...“ (Alden 2006).

The real co-operation within the Coalition has begun in 2006 when the V4 member countries' Ambassadors in the U.S. sent a clarification letter on the visa regime to members of the Congress (Foreign Affairs Ministry of the CR a/). This is an example of one method of V4 lobbying; i.e. the direct communication with the responsible US authorities. And it is exactly Congress which can decide on the abolition of visa requirements and on the inclusion of the V4 countries into the Visa Waiver Programme. The second method of lobbying the US is to engage the European Commission and Presidency, respectively, in efforts to acquire visa-free status.

The V4's co-operation regarding the visa regime is not stable and firm; as stated in the Visegrad Declaration (2004): the co-operation is to be based on concrete

¹¹ Hague Programme 2004. Available from:
http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/doc_centre/doc/hague_programme_en.pdf

projects and should maintain its flexible and open character. All the characteristics mentioned in the Declaration hold for co-operation within the Coalition – the member states share the common aim, they are able to act together, but on the other hand, individual countries acting alone is not excluded. Such kind of co-operation is generally incorporated in the abstract of objectives of the Czech Presidency of the Visegrad Group as well: „On top of this „coalition approach“, each country of the Visegrad Group will remain engaged in their own, bilateral discussions with the USA, and Canada, respectively, with the aim of achieving visa reciprocity“ (Czech Presidency of the Visegrad Group 2007-2008).

Thus, Poland appeals to the Polish minority living in the US to put pressure on the Congress the other way. The Polish lobby was efficient in a certain phase of negotiations – some of the Congressmen proposed in 2006 a set of criteria for states with visa-free status to which only Poland (i.e. not exceed the maximum limit of rejected visa applicants, which is 3% a year, or support the US military missions abroad by contributing at least 300 soldiers). Nevertheless, these criteria were not adopted and another set of criteria is on the table at present. Also the Czech Republic started a campaign calling on the American Friends of the Czech Republic organization, and other involved American organizations, institutions and persons, and last but not least, on the Czech minority to ask their elected representative in the Congress to support the Czech Republic's admission among countries with a visa-free regime (Foreign Affairs Ministry of the CR a/).

The results of the visa regime case are very similar to the Schengen enlargement case – the V4 member states are able to keep together to reach a concrete common aim but lacking homogeneity and, especially, self-restraint, can destroy the common effort. The joint effort to achieve a common aim begins to split up in cases when one state gets the feeling it is more successful by acting alone rather than collectively.

Let's imagine that the US will adopt a set of criteria enabling the abolition of the visa requirement for only a couple of the V4 states. In such a situation and according to the aforementioned judgments, no one could expect that these states will deny themselves the advantageous conditions until the rest of the Group receives the same benefits. Each state would enjoy the acquired benefits on its own and as soon as possible. The new set of criteria adopted by Congress in July 2007 (maximum 10% visa refusal rate a year among others) could bring such situation into being. The Czechs could fulfil the criteria, probably in two years, and although the Poles, especially, feel thwarted, the Czechs „will express any frustration at the highest levels ...“ (Čeští diplomaté ... 2007). It means that they do not plan on supporting the rest of the Group at the highest political levels (besides formal declarations of solidarity).

Conclusion

When looking at the V4's co-operation in Justice and Home Affairs matters (the single issues of the Schengen enlargement and the visa-free entry to the US) we can assess that it omits at least one important feature peculiar to regional co-operation, which is the virtue of self-restraint. The V4 members are not able to restrain themselves, i.e. in cases they should „wait“ for other members so that all can gain similar conditions for all, they decide to act separately regardless of the other member states. When the state feels that the other members act more slowly, and that it feels held back by such states; then it decides to act alone immediately.

This working paper has argued that it is also the lack of homogeneity within the Visegrad Group which hinders joint action. The common (communist) past is not sufficient to provide a solid basis for homogeneity in future. Nevertheless, the possibility to perform as an united and firm organisation within the EU¹² is complicated by the EU itself. Some decision-making processes are still adopted by consensus which is based on the lowest common denominator among all the member states. This is the moment when all the EU members begin to put through their own objectives while looking for states with similar objectives and setting up flexible coalitions for the single purposes. Any firm V4 co-operation would constitute an obstacle as the aims of the V4 members are not the same in all aspects and as the homogeneity and the self-restraint within the Group is missing.

Both of the studies illustrate that the common position and action can be broken very easily, whether due to internal problems (bilateral disputes, more ambitious policies of one member etc.) or external problems (coming from the EU). In such cases it is precisely the lack of homogeneity and, especially, the lack of self-restraint which hamper regional co-operation and make the states act on their own bat. That is why I argue that the V4 is a rather diluted single issue coalition. It cannot face the fact that a stable coalition moves only as fast as its slowest member.

This working paper has found that the joint effort of the V4 to achieve a common goal begins to split up in cases where one of the states gets the feeling it is more successful acting alone than collectively. The V4 Group may in these cases have a centrifugal effect instead of a centripetal one: „...

¹² Within the EU, all the V4 members have chosen their own strategies (more theoretical comments in DRULÁKOVÁ, DRULÁK 2007: 66 – 68) – Poland tries to act as an intrusive ally (e.g. relations between Poland and Russia in the case of the agricultural sector drag the EU into the disputes with negative consequences on the EU-Russia relations); the Czech Republic acts as a gad-fly ally (it is making problems advisedly); Hungary is a more or less unreliable ally and Slovakia is close to being an impotent ally (it gives signals that it will fall down if the EU will not help).

somewhere on the road of negotiation they forgot they had [common aims] and implemented competition rather than partnership“ (Pruska 2005: 6). It comes to this that competition has prevailed over co-operation. The lack of self-restraint means that the V4’s co-operation cannot be regarded as an example of successful coalition-building. This conclusion is valid for the examined case studies absolutely. However, as I stated in the introduction to this paper, I focused exclusively on cases of Justice and Home Affairs cooperation. I did not examine other fields of co-operation such as the cultural, environmental, infrastructural areas, etc. where the conclusions may not be as strict as in this area of research.

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