

Think
Visegrad
V4 Think-Tank Platform



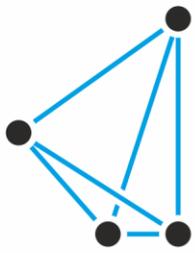
Report from the international conference *Security in Europe from a Visegrád viewpoint: strengthening fundamentals, but rethinking perspectives?* organized by EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, Centre for European Policy Studies and European Policy Institutes Network on 9th December 2016 in the framework of the 'Think Visegrad in Brussels' project.

Security in Europe from a Visegrád viewpoint

On Friday, 9 December 2016, the Think Visegrad in Brussels organized a conference on Security in Europe in cooperation with the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) and the European Policy Institutes Network. The purpose of the seminar was to provide platform for deliberations on current security challenges from the Visegrad perspective. The Visegrad region currently finds itself in a unique position of balancing out its commitments that it had made at the NATO Summits in Wales and Warsaw with its newly assumed position of driving support for further cooperation on the defence issues within the EU. The conference brought together policy representatives and think-tank analysts from the V4 countries and Brussels within two panels. The first panel which was moderated by Tereza Novotná, Senior Associate Research Fellow at EUROPEUM, Institute for European Policy, hosted Amb. David Konecký, Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the Political and Security Committee and Botond Feledy, Senior Fellow at the Center for Euro-Atlantic Integration and Democracy, focusing on the V4 in the post-BREXIT strategic and geopolitical framework. The second panel which was chaired by Steven Blockmans, Head of EU Foreign Policy at CEPS, featured Tomasz Żornaczuk, Head of Central Europe Programme at the Polish Institute of International Affairs and Tomáš A. Nagy, Research Fellow at GLOBSEC Policy Institute, debating the role of partnerships and neighbourhood policy in the Central European security.

Cooperation and Solidarity

The first panel identified cooperation and solidarity as the key factors after the BREXIT referendum and rising populism in Europe. In particular, the speakers focused on the role of the V4 in the EU's reinforcement of its security policy through the 'Winter Defense Package'. In this context, Ambassador David Konecký emphasized that the EU needs a will, capabilities and money but also keep up the EU's credibility through its engagement both in the South and the East of its borders. V4 understands this and contributes by its presence in Mali (Czech Rep.) and the Middle East/North Africa (Hungary) which no one would have expected only a few years ago. Moreover, the V4 cooperation should concentrate on concrete deliverables to EU security, such as the V4 battle group, which is planned again for 2019. Although the Winter Package includes reinforced mutual collaboration with NATO, Ambassador Konecký cautioned that EU Member States possessed only a single set of forces and hence could theoretically be asked to deploy them simultaneously within



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the EU and NATO context. Similarly, even though V4 is supportive of the permanent structured cooperation (PESCO), its potential use should not create any new dividing lines in the EU. According to Amb. Konecký, V4 welcomes increased financial cooperation through the European Defense Agency (EDA) and the Commission's incentives, particularly if they can lead to better possibilities for the V4 heavy (Poland) and SMEs-based (Czech Republic) defense industries to enter the supply chains.

Botond Feledy from the Center for Euro-Atlantic Integration and Democracy underscored that after the first wave of populists (such as Orban, Trump) who are more or less integrated into the political system, we now face a challenge of the second wave of populist politicians who want to abolish the system of governance. In order to make the costs of the exit clear to these new populist leaders that seek to undermine the established systems of governance, Mr. Feledy stressed the need to portray shared responsibility not as a zero, but a negative sum game where we always lose some sovereignty, but the question is how much: if we don't work together, we lose much more. Paradoxically, given its previous experience, V4 could offer some lessons on how to integrate the second wave of populist leaders into the current system.

The Future of Enlargements and Role of the V4

The second panel concentrated its discussions on the role of V4 and on enlargements, both in NATO and the EU, which remains a key agenda for Central Europe. The V4 leaders frame enlargement as a security issue, in that it increases European security and its ability to protect itself despite the EU's recent inward-looking tendencies. Nevertheless, EU enlargement will be negatively impacted by the British exit from the EU given the fact that the UK has been an influential supporter of the EU's expansion. Even if V4 countries continue to support the EU's enlargement to the East and the Western Balkans in general, its feasibility is declining due to slowing down of the process (e.g. more domestic actors involved such as national parliaments in its approval), the lack of resources, commitment and change in the perception of the EU (as well as V4) among candidate and potential candidate states.

On the future of V4 collaboration, Mr. Nagy from the GLOBSEC Policy Institute clearly stated that there is no political will within the V4 to strengthen integration within V4 if that endangers being a part of the EU mainstream. However, Mr. Żornaczuk from the Polish Institute of International Affairs asserted that, in contrast to the past, the V4 cooperation is seen by some countries such as Poland as being the main instrument to deal with the EU issues. Therefore, in the present situation, the future model for the V4 seems to be a sectoral cooperation and ad hoc political coalitions which is a model that, as stated by Mr. Żornaczuk, seems to work just fine.