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The "New Cold Warriors" and the "Pragmatics": The Differences in Foreign Policy Attitudes towards Russia and the Eastern Partnership States among the NATO Member States from Central and South-Eastern Europe

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Abstract

The post-communist NATO member states from Central and South-Eastern Europe (CSEE) comprise a group of 11 NATO/EU member states, from the Baltic to the Adriatic and Black Sea. The twelfth and thirteenth NATO member states from the region are Albania and Montenegro. The afore-mentioned NATO/EU member states have mostly shown a similar stance towards the Eastern Partnership Policy. However, since 2014, these states have shown more diverse stances, albeit declaratively supporting the anti-Russian sanctions. Due to the difference in stances towards Russia, the "New Cold Warriors" (Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania) and the "Pragmatics" (Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia and Bulgaria), will maintain a mostly common course towards Russia and the Eastern Partnership states because they have to. The Czech Republic, although hosting a part of the US anti-ballistic missile shield, is not a genuine "New Cold Warrior", while in 2016 Croatia effectively became one.

KEY WORDS:

Central and South-Eastern Europe (CSEE), NATO, European Union, foreign policy initiatives, Ukrainian crisis, Russia

Introduction and methodology

The post-communist NATO members studied here are located in Central Europe (also known as "New" Central Europe: hence, in this context, the term designates those post-communist states in the region, so it does not refer to Germany, Austria or Switzerland) and South-Eastern Europe, respectively. When discussing the communist past and the post-communist present day, these two regions can be perceived as a single, connected area, and referred to as Central and South-Eastern Europe (hereafter, CSEE), albeit they possess significant differences which mainly arise from the different paths that the CSEE states took in the 1990s. The present economic and institutional crisis has hit the European Union hard (and some of its member states in particular, especially the Baltic states and the Southern members plus Ireland, often referred to as the PIIGS — Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain — while Croatia has suffered the longest, with a six-year recession and/or stagnation). When the current migration crisis and the deterioration of relations with Russia, as well as Brexit and the terrorist threats hitting both NATO and the EU member states are added, this all points to a multi-fold crisis in the EU. Parts of the studied states from CSEE are showing commonalities in their attitude towards the migration crisis and the relations of national authorities towards the EU (particularly the states of the Visegrad Group). Concurrently, different states of the region are showing differences in their stance towards Russia and their interest/attitude towards the Eastern Partnership states in general. The group of post-communist NATO member states studied here is comprised of 13 states, of which two can be characterized as medium-sized European states (Poland and Romania) and the other eleven referred to as more or less small European states (of these states, only the Czech Republic has a population of more than 10 million, and the smallest studied state is Montenegro, with a population of about 600 thousand).

All of these states have some important features in common, which are referred to as common denominators:

- They are post-communist NATO member states.
- Eleven out of the thirteen studied states are both NATO and EU members.

- Most of the analysed states can be referred to as small. This affects their foreign and defence policy capabilities, as well as their behaviour in the international environment.[1]

- None of these states joined the EU before 2004, with Romania and Bulgaria joining at the beginning of 2007 and Croatia in 2013 (so these are all still "newer" members).

- All of the studied states are more or less dependent on energy imports (and some of them are especially dependent on gas imports from Russia, mostly via transit states Ukraine and Belarus).[2]

- The region has, especially in the last decade, and more intensely since the Ukrainian crisis, become a theatre for testing of the Western response to the renewed Russian economic and political influence.

- The Visegrad Group represents the core states of "new" Central Europe, or Rumsfeld's "New Europe", whose members support a stronger role of national governments in the EU and oppose the acceptance of refugees as an example of the supranational authorities' will imposed on national governments and societies, which neither uphold a tradition nor have a present willingness to accept refugees that are of different religions and cultures. Public opinion in the Baltic states shows similar attitudes (Lada 2015: 10). The gap between the "old" and "new" Europe can be seen in variety of issues — for example, the acceptance of refugees and respect for certain democratic standards. The so-called "illiberal democracy" pursued by the authorities of Hungary and the recent political developments in Poland are probably the best examples that confirm the tendencies in the most recent period.

- A (post-communist) history of certain initiatives and groupings of the studied states (see Table 1) has to be noted: the Visegrad Group, the Vilnius Group, "the coalition of the willing" and the Adriatic-Baltic-Black Sea Initiative. The initiatives either derive from the region itself or were/are sponsored from outside the region,

1 Druláková and Přikryl (2016: 135) stated a similar claim for the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The two states' compliance with EU sanctions was compared.

2 In geographical terms, seven of the mentioned states are located in Central Europe. Estonia is located on the border between Central and Northern Europe, and Croatia is located on the border between Central and South-Eastern Europe. Some parts of Croatia (the Adriatic coast and the islands) geographically and culturally belong to Southern (Mediterranean) Europe. However, for the purposes of this paper, we consider Croatia a CSEE state. Four NATO post-communist member states are clearly located in South-Eastern Europe: Albania, Bulgaria, Montenegro and Romania.

showing bandwagoning (towards the USA) and cooperation based on their rational choices (the aspirations towards NATO and EU membership), and certain "shared values" such as anti-communism and, more recently, the defence of European and Christian values (against non-European migrants).

Table 1: Overlapping and differences regarding various initiatives and informal regional groupings among the post-communist NATO/EU member states (and neighbouring small states) in CSEE

Visegrad Group	Vilnius Group (plus supporters of the attack on Iraq already in NATO)	Baltic-Adriatic and Black Sea Initiative (the ABC Initiative)	New Cold Warriors	Pragmatics
Poland	Poland	Poland	Poland	Hungary
Czech Republic	Czech Republic	Czech Republic	Estonia	Slovakia
Hungary	Hungary	Hungary	Latvia	Slovenia
Slovakia	Slovakia	Slovakia	Lithuania	Bulgaria
	Estonia	Estonia	Romania	Czech Republic?
	Latvia	Latvia	Croatia	
	Lithuania	Lithuania		
	Slovenia	Croatia		
	Romania	Slovenia		
	Bulgaria	Romania		
	Croatia	Bulgaria		
	Albania			
	Macedonia			

Two informal groupings, made up of NATO/EU members in the region, can be differentiated for analytical purposes based on their stance towards Russia, for the purpose of this paper referred to as "New Cold Warriors" and "Pragmatics". There are three main features that differentiate the two groups:

1. In the group of "New Cold Warriors", not only is the political elite predominantly anti-Russian and vigorously supportive of the independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine, but the public holds a similar opinion, especially in Poland and the Baltic states. According to the German Marshall Fund's Transatlantic Trends survey (2015), 78 per cent of Poles support economic aid to Ukraine, 77 per cent support sanctions against Russia and 67 per cent support helping Ukraine even if it heightens the risk of conflict with Russia (Fuksiewicz and Łada 2015: 4–5).

2. The willingness to contribute more to defence spending (see Table 2), host the anti-ballistic missile shield and demand permanent stationing of NATO troops on their territory. Because of the difference in geostrategic position and the degree of negative views towards Russia, the "Pragmatics", in comparison to the "New Cold Warriors", although NATO members as well, would be expected to be less willing to make efforts to narrow the gap between their actual defence spending and recommendations (a euphemism for the requirements of NATO: two per cent of GDP). It is therefore interesting to observe the defence spending of studied states since 2013, a year before 2014, which already seems to be one of the landmark years in NATO's history due to the events in Ukraine.

3. A staunch pursuit of the diversification of energy supply routes, with Poland and Croatia as forerunners and the Baltic states as supporters. The most important proposal in this initiative is that of a gas pipeline from the Adriatic to the Baltic Sea, which would originate at the proposed (planned) LNG terminal at the Croatian island of Krk, which could be supplied with gas from far away fields, primarily located in the USA and Qatar. Although it seems like a distant future, this plan shows the determination of some CSEE states to lower the dependence on Russian gas. However, the Pragmatics are concurrently still willing to develop the South Stream pipeline with Russia, which would be especially interesting to Bulgaria and Hungary (they are making efforts to diversify supply routes of Russian gas — hence they want to avoid transit through Ukraine as much as possible), while the New Cold Warriors are eager and very determined to radically decrease the level of dependence on Russian gas.

Table 2: Defence spending of studied NATO member states 2014–2016 (percentage of GDP, based on 2010 prices)

NATO member states (ordered by the level of their contribution in 2016)	2013	2014	2015	2016
Estonia	1.90	1.94	2.07	2.16
Poland	1.72	1.85	2.23	2.00
Lithuania	0.76	0.88	1.14	1.49
Romania	1.28	1.35	1.45	1.48
Latvia	0.93	0.94	1.04	1.45
Bulgaria	1.46	1.32	1.29	1.35
Croatia	1.47	1.41	1.37	1.23
Albania	1.41	1.34	1.16	1.21
Slovakia	0.99	0.99	1.14	1.16
Czech Republic	1.03	0.96	1.06	1.04
Hungary	0.95	0.87	0.94	1.01
Slovenia	1.06	0.98	0.94	0.94

Source: Defence expenditures of NATO countries, 2009–2016 (2016).

Table 2 clearly shows that the New Cold Warriors were willing to spend more on defence even before 2014 (Estonia, Poland and, to a lesser degree, Romania) or have, in relative terms, increased their defence spending far more than other studied states (Latvia and especially Lithuania). Compared to 2013 and 2014, by 2016, the Pragmatics had raised their defence spending much less than the New Cold Warriors, while some NATO members from the CSEE had even reduced it (Albania, Croatia and Slovenia).

Hence the focus of this paper is on the foreign policy initiatives and activities of NATO member states from CSEE regarding mainly their relations with Russia and the Eastern Partnership states. It is important to identify the most important issues that influence these activities:

1. The political relations with Russia;

2. Strategic military issues, such as the deployment of NATO troops and heavy weaponry, as well as the anti-ballistic missile shield;

3. The (geo)-economic relations with Russia, particularly energy (gas) supply issues, clearly tied to Russia: hence most of these states are dependent on Russian gas imports, which in some cases reaches almost 100 per cent of overall gas supply.

The main contribution of this paper is to study two groups of NATO/EU members from the CSEE in terms of their foreign policy initiatives and compliance with NATO and EU policy towards Russia in the last three years after the evolution of the Ukrainian crisis. Some of the "aberrations" in compliance of some of the studied states were visible earlier: analysis of data from the ECFR Scorecard for the 2012–2016 period and examination of data about the relevant economic indicators were used to study the influence of the most recent economic crisis and the dependence on gas supply from Russia on the studied states' compliance with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy.

The periodical document called the ECFR Scorecard (hereafter Scorecard) was used as a source of data and a pointer in analysis of foreign policy activities (initiatives, as well as non-compliance with ESDP) of the studied states that were NATO and EU members. The data on foreign policy leadership roles and "slackers" for each state were taken from the Scorecard and analysed for the years 2012–2016. The data from the 2016 Scorecard were analysed separately because for each area only two indicators were shown in the data sheet for the states, in contrast to four, five or even six indicators for each of the areas in the previous years analysed. The Scorecard should only be considered as an overview and a pointer that could direct us to certain conclusions. The intention of the paper is not to analyse the overall complexity of Russia-NATO or Russia-CSEE relations, or the relations between particular CSEE states and Russia and/or Eastern Partnership states.

Central and South-Eastern Europe: commonalities in the pre-1990s, differences in the 1990s, and similarities and differences in the present day

All of the states mentioned here, except Croatia, Montenegro and Slovenia, belonged to the Warsaw Treaty Organization until its dissolution in 1991, or were more isolated and communist than the members of this organization (Albania, which actually left the Treaty in 1968). Half of the states did not even possess formal independence (Slovenia, Montenegro and Croatia were parts of socialist Yugoslavia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia formed Czechoslovakia, and the Baltic states were part of the Soviet Union). Nevertheless, the independence of all these states, whether they formed formally independent states (Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria) or showed a significant level of foreign policy independence — whether nationalistic (Romania during Ceausescu, especially since 1968), or isolationist and Stalinist-style (Albania under Enver Hoxha) or were part of the multinational communist federations — was merely a fiction, which was particularly proved by military interventions in Hungary (1956), Czechoslovakia (1968) and Poland (1981).

Sztompka (2004) pointed out that the collapse of the Communist regime changed the boundaries. Nevertheless, this change only shifted the curtain to the East, strengthening the dividing line between the new Central Europe and the Western Balkans, and the Post-Soviet space in Europe (excluding the Baltic states).

In the 1990s, Central Europe was able to take a more stable and European integration-oriented path than the post-communist states of South-Eastern Europe, and especially post-Yugoslav states (except Slovenia). The states of the Visegrad Group plus the Baltic states and Slovenia managed to significantly increase their GDP, up to the level of middle-income states, and were accepted into NATO (1999 or 2004) and into the EU (2004).

Hamilton (2013: 303) pointed out the crucial role of NATO enlargement in the CSEE states: "During the 1990s and for most of the 2000s, US relations with Central and East European states advanced primarily through the prism

of NATO, with other elements playing a not so important part as strategic relations." The expression of these relations was clear bandwagoning, to a greater or lesser degree, of the CSEE states towards the USA.

The Visegrad Four comprises the foremost and the oldest post-communist grouping of the four states from the region (initially three, before Czechoslovakia was dissolved). The Visegrad Four, comprised of the core states of the region, is the most homogenous grouping of the states from the region, with common interests and goals. Belkin et al. (2014: 289) emphasize that members of the Visegrad Four "generally consult closely with one another in attempting to present a unified regional stance within NATO and on issues related to the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)". However, as Fawn (2013: 340) points out, the group has not always been so homogeneous: "It has faced inordinate challenges, and, for varying reasons, has even been pronounced dead, and not once but several times".

The Vilnius Group comprises ten (then) aspirant NATO and EU states, of which eight have been successful in fulfilling these goals (Albania has been a NATO member state since 2009; only Macedonia is not a member of either organization). Most of the Vilnius Group states (except Croatia and Slovenia) joined the "coalition of the willing". This foreign policy strategy is a good example of bandwagoning, aligning with the most powerful state in NATO and thus acknowledging that the US vote is decisive when decisions on NATO enlargement are being made. This group of states displayed a strong pro-US and pro-NATO stance in 2003, but later not all of them decided to participate in the intervention against the Iraqi regime.

The most recent grouping comprising CSEE states is the Adriatic-Baltic and Black Sea (ABC) Initiative. The official main goals of the ABC Initiative, in the words of the Croatian Madam President, are cooperation in the fields of energy, transport and economy: "The Baltic-Adriatic and Black Sea Initiative would comprise states in the same geographical area, from Baltic to the Adriatic and Black Sea, most of which are small. With the inclusion of Austria, the Initiative is trying to overcome the 'Iron Curtain' and the gap between the 'Old' and 'New' Europe" (Newsletter 2015: 2).

Central and South-Eastern Europe: A revived "battlefront region" between NATO and Russia

The events in Ukraine, which evolved into a full-scale regime change, showed both deep divisions inside this state and the strategic importance of Ukraine to Russia, which has, in the last two decades, more than once noted which issues represent "red lines" for its vital strategic interests. As Ruehle (2014: 234) pointed out, the crisis in Ukraine marked a new low in NATO-Russia relations: "While this relationship had been deteriorating for quite some time, Moscow's role in the Ukraine crisis revealed a geopolitical agenda that caught many observers by surprise."

However, the events of 2014 in Ukraine could probably have been forecasted, as the NATO-Russia relationship had been deteriorating prior to 2014 for some time. The events from 2008 have to be remembered, when the Five-Day War in Georgia stalled the prospect of NATO enlargement to the East for some time. Russia clearly showed where the "red lines" were laid: "Since the Georgia-Russia war, NATO leaders have not been as quick or assertive to counter Russian anti-enlargement rhetoric as they were previously" (Wolff 2015: 1110).

Nevertheless, if we return a little further to the past, at the Munich Security Conference in 2005, Russian President Putin had already said that he considered the break-up of the USSR to be "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century". That statement opened the space for analysing what the realization of the so-called "Putin doctrine" might bring in the future (Kazantsev and Sakwa 2012: 290); as Bennett (2015: 1) pointed out, "Putin has repeatedly alleged that the West has maintained a containment policy toward Russia since the 18th century; the Western reaction to events in Ukraine is merely the present manifestation of this policy".

Therefore, the present day hostility of Russia towards NATO, as well as mutual fears, distrust and pressures, have been building up for approximately a decade. Additionally, these trends can be perceived as a continuance of mutually distrustful relations from the second half of the 1990s, when the first NATO Post-Cold War enlargement was proposed and prepared. More

than two decades ago, at the end of 1994, the document titled *Study on NATO Enlargement* met with staunch opposition from Russia. Nevertheless, NATO pursued its own course of action until 2008, enlarging continuously, and inviting Croatia and Albania to join at the Bucharest Summit in April 2008, four months before the Five-Days War. Forsberg and Herd (2015: 42) conclude that the acknowledgement of difficulties in the Russia-NATO relationship prior to the Ukrainian crisis does not mean that the break-up of the institutional partnership between Russia and NATO was inevitable and was bound to happen. Drawing a conclusion on the nature of difficulties in NATO-Russia relations, Krickovic (2016: 176–177) pointed out: "Despite the opportunities presented by the end of the Cold War, Russia and the West have failed to establish binding institutional arrangements." It is true that NATO stalled its enlargement to post-communist states until 2017. However, it recently accepted Montenegro as its newest member, despite fierce opposition from Russia. Ukraine has recently changed its legal framework in order to be able to make initial steps towards NATO membership. This proves that the geopolitical ambitions of NATO have not been forestalled indefinitely — on the contrary, they have been revived.

Whether the claim about NATO's promises after the German unification — the so-called no-expansion pledge — is true or not (Wolff 2015: 1104), the facts remain that NATO has spread to parts of the former geopolitical East and that Russia has had a problem with that ever since the developments started. Consequently, ever since the post-communist states of Central and Eastern Europe — and, a bit later, of South-Eastern Europe — joined NATO and then the EU, Russia has been searching for ways to re-establish its influence. This process has been parallel to the process of Russia's economic, military and political rising, and evolved concurrently with the Putin era. Influence through investments into the energy sectors of the aforementioned states, economic ties, loans, political connections with some South-Eastern European states (Serbia particularly) etc. have been the means of Russia's renewed geo-economic influence, which translates the attempts to reach a strategic parity with the USA in the region, although most of the states in the region are NATO and EU member states. It was obvious that once these states were accepted into NATO/the EU, their strategic and economic positions would be clearly defined, and although there can be slight deviations from the common policies, it is unlikely that a certain state would leave the NATO/EU bloc to join some Russia-led or sponsored association.

From the perspective of core NATO members, newer NATO members' accession represents a spreading of the zone of security and stability, liberal norms and values, as well as the market economy, gaining strategic footholds in the former Soviet Eastern Europe. From a Russian perspective — and contrary to its fears about NATO expansion and aggression on its borders and its proximity — Russia is facing objectively weaker NATO member states (newer, and former Warsaw Treaty members or the former Soviet Republics) that can be more easily coerced. Without firm NATO support, these states (even Poland) do not stand a real chance in any kind of standoff with Russia. Their possibilities of action within NATO are also limited if their agenda is not important enough to the USA and the Europe's Big Three in NATO (the United Kingdom, France and Germany): "The newer members of NATO—states that directly experienced both Russian and Soviet occupation and hegemonic policies—are apprehensive about this forceful new Russia that does not hesitate to advance neo-colonial claims and practise cyberattacks and energy cut-offs" (Rachwald 2011: 122–123).

The problem for NATO in its reactions towards Russia in the Georgian and Ukrainian crisis lies in the ambivalence of its goals and instruments used. NATO no longer bases its actions on realistic perceptions of international relations, in which the relations with Russia should be perceived as relations between two centres of military and political power. Prior to the Ukrainian crisis, NATO perceived international relations in a more functional sense, similar to the EU, and has itself become a functional component of international relations. Due to the Russian actions in Ukraine, NATO had to cancel its future proclaimed mission and return to its original mission/ reason for existence (Teutmeyer 2014: 432).

Variety in responses to the Russian actions in Ukraine among NATO member states from CSEE

Regarding the strategic and political relations, the situation in Eastern Europe in mid-2017 is probably the worst since the end of the Cold War. Russian ambitions are realized, for now: "the Russian flag still flies over Simferopol, the

capital of Crimea; the conflict in Ukraine's Donbas region is now Europe's latest and greatest frozen conflict" (Conley 2015: 28). Forbrig (2015: 1) states that the Russian actions in Ukraine have challenged the architecture, rules and institutions of post-Cold War European security. The failure of European policy towards the Eastern neighbourhood was exposed.

However, the differences among NATO member states from the CSEE — even the members of the Visegrad Four — have started to blur after the events in Ukraine and the Russian annexation, despite the fact that the Visegrad Four have condemned the Russian aggression and stated their support for Ukraine. The Baltic states have also condemned Russian action in the Crimea and, later, in Eastern Ukraine. Despite the unanimity of NATO (and EU) member states about the illegality of Russian actions in Ukraine and withholding economic sanctions against Russia, exceptions and differences exist.

The group of New Cold Warriors is formed of a hard anti-Russian core, with strong anti-Russian and anti-communist rhetoric, comprised primarily of Poland and the Baltic states, whose public opinion is also strongly opposed to Russia and in favour of Ukraine. Balabán (2016: 96) pointed out that at the Welsh Summit, Poland and the Baltic states demanded the establishment of permanent military bases. On the other hand, Germany, Italy and France rejected the suggestion. Romania was included in the New Cold Warriors mostly because of its willingness to host the anti-ballistic missile shield, which Russia perceives as a threat to its national security, and its condemnation of the illegal annexation of Crimea and the revisionist policy of Russia. The Czech Republic, although hosting a part of the anti-ballistic missile shield, which Russia perceives as a strategic asset targeted against itself, has been sending mixed signals regarding the issue of Ukraine and, consequently, NATO-Russia relations. While the social-democratic government was pretty firm in its condemnation of Russia's actions and its support of Ukraine and NATO, while respecting the importance of Russia as an important economic and political partner to the Czech Republic (of which Russia is a key non-EU economic partner) and the entire EU, President Zeman led a somewhat different policy (Groszkowski 2015a). Due to the policy of the Croatian Madam President, who initiated the ABC Initiative with the Polish President Duda, oriented

towards decreasing energy dependence on Russian gas, and recent statements made by the Croatian Prime Minister Plenković about the Ukraine issue, which Russia perceived as anti-Russian, as well as the US weapons that have recently been donated to the Croatian Armed Forces, Croatia has effectively become a part of the anti-Russian core. The Croatian position may likely be influenced by the recent Russian re-armament of Serbia. Croatia is not strategically as important to either Russia or NATO as the other aforementioned states of the hard anti-Russian core. Therefore, the current Croatian policy towards Russia is a policy of choice and compliance with the goals of NATO, and not of the utmost need for defence. Actually, it can be described as an example of anti-pragmatism and effective shattering of the possibilities for future economic cooperation with Russia, an important and specific market, where Croatian firms (construction firms, as well as exporters of industrial and agricultural products) have traditionally been present.

Besides demanding (on several occasions) more permanent NATO troop deployment (Sytas 2015) and reconnaissance flights, Poland and the Baltic states especially have even asked NATO to focus its missile shield on Russia (Euractiv 2014). Besides security issues, the Baltic states have problems with Russia that derive from the Soviet period and comprise significant Russian minorities, which opens room for irredentism and increases the chances for hybrid warfare, similar to the Crimea scenario in 2014. On various occasions, calls were made for additional military exercises in the region and additional military assistance to the Ukrainian government. The decision to deploy more troops on the eastern flank of NATO was finally approved at the Warsaw Summit (Warsaw Summit Communique 2016). As a response to the NATO summit decision, Russia adopted a new doctrine, marking NATO's expansion as the primary threat to itself, and enabling the instalment of joint missile defence systems with allied states.

The group of Pragmatics, looser than the group of New Cold Warriors — hence these states are also pursuing their pragmatic national interest besides compliance with the official policy of NATO — is comprised of the post-communist NATO member states that are not so anti-Russian oriented and are not so worried by Russian policy. This

fact is a product of multiple factors. Slovenia never experienced a period of "Soviet occupation" (as the period of "socialist republics" is now usually referred to in Poland and in the Baltic states). Other Pragmatics (Hungary, Slovakia and Bulgaria), despite the fact that they were a part of the Warsaw Treaty, do not share a direct border with Russia and are not so strategically important in the possible NATO-Russia theatre of war, the Baltic. Therefore, the public opinion in these states is not so much anti-Russian and the pragmatism among the elite is more widespread. In addition, the sanctions are hurting these economies. It is quite clear that the Baltic states and those states that have agreed to host the anti-ballistic missile shield are the prime possible targets of Russian strategic and tactical capacities, simply because the military logic dictates this kind of reasoning and the possible actions. Different historical experience, and the difference in geopolitical positions, as well as the attitudes of the political elites shared among the Pragmatics, have influenced the development of their pragmatism.

Influence of the economic crisis and reliance on Russian gas supply on foreign policy of studied states towards Russia and Eastern Partnership states

In order to study the influence of the most recent economic crisis and the reliance on Russian gas supply of CSEE NATO/EU member states on pragmatism (or the absence of it) towards Russia in their foreign policies, the data on real GDP annual growth rate for the period 2008–2016 in percentage and unemployment in percentages for the period 2009–2014, October 2015 and May 2016 are shown below. The data on dependence of studied states on energy imports in percentages (2008–2012), data on the dependence of EU member states from the region on gas imports in percentages (2008–2012), and data on the percentage of gas imports from Russia in total gas imports for the studied EU member states (2012) are also shown.

Table 3: GDP per capita of post-communist NATO member states, indexes: 2000/1990, 2008/1990 and 2016/1990 (1990=100) and 2008/2000, 2016/2000 (2000=100)

State	GDP per capita 1990	GDP per capita 2000	GDP per capita 2008	GDP per capita 2016	Index 2000/ 1990	Index 2008/ 1990	Index 2008/ 2000	Index 2016/ 1990	Index 2016/ 2000
Albania	639	1,193	4,423	4,147	178.2	692.2	370.7	649.0	347.6
Bulgaria	2,377	1,579	6,917	7,351	66.4	291.0	444.7	309.3	465.5
Croatia	5,185	4,862	15,694	12,090	93.8	302.7	322.8	233.2	248.7
Czech Republic	3,787	5,734	21,708	18,267	151.4	573.2	378.6	482.4	318.6
Estonia	n/a	4,063	17,786	17,575	n/a	n/a	437.8	n/a	432.6
Hungary	3,186	4,543	15,365	12,665	142.6	482.3	338.2	397.5	278.8
Latvia	2,796	3,309	15,464	14,118	118.3	553.1	467.3	504.9	426.7
Lithuania	2,841	3,267	14,775	14,880	115.0	520.1	452.2	523.8	455.5
Poland	1,694	4,477	13,886	12,372	264.3	819.7	310.1	730.3	276.3
Romania	1,651	1,662	9,949	9,474	100.7	602.6	598.6	573.8	570.0
Slovak Republic	2,211	5,330	18,201	16,496	241.1	823.2	341.5	746.1	309.5
Slovenia	8,699	10,045	27,015	21,305	115.5	310.6	268.9	244.9	212.1

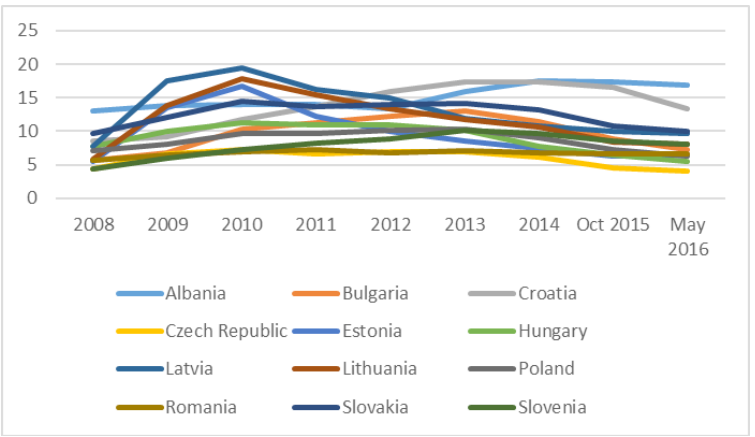
Source: World Bank (2017).

Table 4: GDP growth rate of Central and South-Eastern Europe NATO member states in percentages 2008–2016

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Albania	7.5	3.4	3.7	2.5	1.4	1.0	1.8	2.6	n/a
Bulgaria	5.8	-5.0	0.7	2.0	0.5	1.1	1.7	3.6	3.4
Croatia	2.1	-7.4	-1.7	-0.3	-2.2	-0.9	-0.4	1.6	2.9
Czech Republic	2.7	-4.8	2.3	2.0	-0.8	-0.7	2.0	4.5	2.4
Estonia	-5.3	-14.7	2.5	8.3	4.7	1.6	2.1	1.4	1.6
Hungary	0.9	-6.6	0.8	1.8	-1.5	1.5	3.6	3.1	2.0
Latvia	-3.2	-14.2	-2.9	5.0	4.8	4.2	2.4	2.7	2.0
Lithuania	2.6	-14.8	1.6	6.1	3.8	3.3	2.9	1.8	2.3
Poland	3.9	2.6	3.7	4.8	1.8	1.7	3.4	3.8	2.7
Romania	7.2	-6.3	-1.7	1.1	1.6	3.4	2.6	3.9	4.8
Slovak Republic	5.4	-5.3	4.8	2.7	1.6	1.4	2.4	3.8	3.3
Slovenia	3.3	-7.8	1.2	0.6	-2.6	-1.0	2.6	2.3	2.5

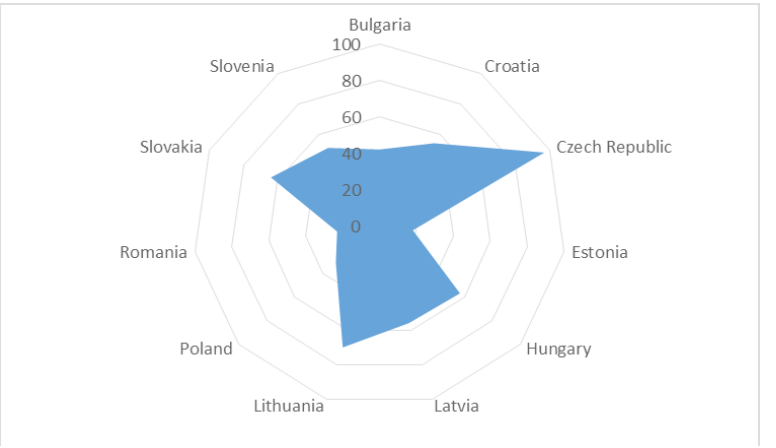
Source: Eurostat, National Accounts and GDP (2016).

Figure 1: Unemployment in Central and South-Eastern Europe NATO member states in percentages, 2008–2014



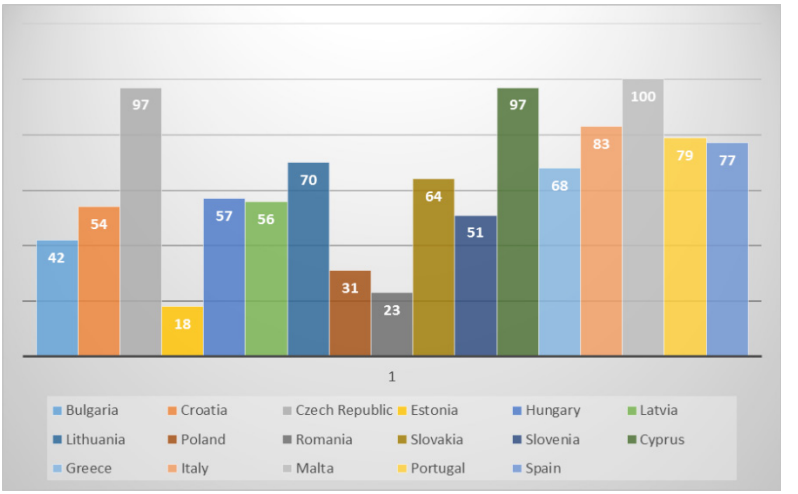
Sources: Eurostat, Unemployment (2016); Trading Economics (2017).

Figure 2: The dependence of studied EU member states on energy imports in percentages, 2008–2012



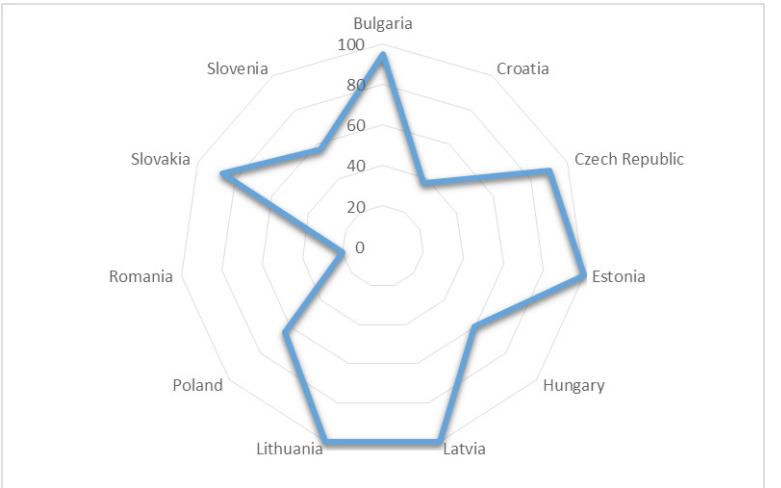
Source: European Commission (2014).

Figure 3: Dependence of EU member states from the region on gas imports in percentages (2008–2012)



Source: European Commission (2014).

Figure 4: Percentage of gas imports from Russia in total gas imports for the studied EU member states (2012)



Source: Clingedaelenergy (2014).

The Baltic states, Bulgaria and Slovakia are obviously most dependent on gas imports (overwhelmingly from Russia) and are therefore the most vulnerable. This position is especially delicate after the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis and the consequent deterioration in relations between NATO and the EU on one side and Russia on the other. The security of gas supplies from Russia for most of these states (except Romania and, partly, Croatia) does not only represent an economic issue: it also represents a national security issue. However, due to the low prices of natural gas and oil, Russia cannot afford not to sell; hence these low prices and sanctions are hurting its economy and depleting its foreign currency reserves. Poland is still an important transit state for Russian gas, despite the Nord Stream pipeline and the fact that it is anti-Russian oriented. Additionally, most of the states are working, more or less actively, on diversification of its supply routes. So, the "gas card" for Russia is working only to a point and only in combination with the willingness of Pragmatics from the region.

Table 5: Common denominators for studied states: a level of relevance for all states (Y = yes; N = no)

Common denominator	Albania	Bulgaria	Croatia	Czech Republic	Estonia	Hungary	Latvia	Lithuania	Poland	Romania	Slovakia	Slovenia
EU member since 2004 or later	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Negative GDP growth rate in 2008	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Negative GDP growth rate in 2009	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
Negative GDP growth rate split by annual positive GDP growth	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y
Sustained annual negative GDP growth rate 2009–2014	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Reliance on gas imports from Russia more than 50% in 2012	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y

Table 6: CSEE NATO and EU member states' leadership initiatives, recognized by ECFR Scorecard 2012–2015

	China	Russia	USA	Wider Europe	MENA region	Multilateral issues and crisis man.	Total
Bulgaria	0	2	1	0	0	2	**5**
Croatia	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Czech Republic	1	4	2	4	0	2	**13**
Estonia	0	4	2	3	0	7	**16**
Hungary	0	2	0	3	1	1	**7**
Latvia	0	2	1	3	0	3	**9**
Lithuania	0	7	1	4	0	0	**12**
Poland	1	8	4	7	2	2	**24**

	China	Russia	USA	Wider Europe	MENA region	Multilateral issues and crisis man.	Total
Romania	0	5	1	2	1	0	**9**
Slovakia	0	2	0	7	0	3	**12**
Slovenia	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Total	**2**	**36**	**12**	**33**	**4**	**20**	**107**

**Albania and Montenegro were not included in the research; hence only the EU member states that are bound to comply with the CFSP of the EU were studied.*

Source: ECFR Scorecards (2012–2015).

Table 7: CSEE NATO and EU member states' "slackers" received by the EU, recognized by ECFR Scorecard 2012–2015

	China	Russia	USA	Wider Europe	MENA region	Multilateral issues and crisis man.	Total
Bulgaria	1	1	0	0	1	3	**6**
Croatia	0	1	0	0	0	1	**2**
Czech Republic	1	0	1	0	3	0	**5**
Estonia	1	0	0	0	1	4	**6**
Hungary	1	2	0	0	0	2	**5**
Latvia	2	0	0	2	1	3	**8**
Lithuania	1	1	0	0	0	5	**7**
Poland	2	0	1	0	1	4	**8**
Romania	2	0	0	2	1	8	**13**
Slovakia	1	0	0	1	0	0	**2**
Slovenia	1	2	0	1	0	3	**7**
Total	**13**	**7**	**2**	**6**	**8**	**33**	**69**

**Albania and Montenegro were not included in the research; hence only the EU member states that are bound to comply with the CFSP of the EU were studied.*

Source: ECFR Scorecards (2012–2015).

Analysis of "leaders" and "slackers" 2012–2015

Analysis has shown that all of the analysed states together had 107 recognized leadership initiatives in the 2012–2015 Scorecards. Almost 40 per cent of all activities were tied to the largest and the smallest states in the region (Poland, 37.9 million inhabitants, 24 activities; Estonia, 1.3 million inhabitants, 16 activities). A particular initiative noted by the Scorecard cannot be quantified — that is, "weighed". Therefore, the number of initiatives is just an indicator of the initiatives' frequency and their geographical orientation, and not of their political and strategic importance or economic value. The EU member states from CSEE were mainly concerned with their own energy dependence, mostly on gas imports from Russia. The 69 recognized leadership initiatives (from a total of 107) devoted to Russia and the wider Europe region shows the importance and connectedness of CSEE EU member states to Russia and the region that lies between the EU and Russia. This is also an indicator of the studied CSEE states' vulnerability to potential problems, originating in their Eastern neighbourhood and Russia.

The reliance on gas imports from Russia influences the foreign policy of the Pragmatics group. Six out of seven "slackers" (a term officially used in the ECFR Scorecards for reprimands received by the state from the EU) noted in 2012–2015 Scorecards for the analysed states cited relations with Russia regarding energy issues (mostly gas supply). Gyarmati (2015: 22) emphasized that Hungary was a key supporter of the Russian-led South Stream pipeline project; hence it would avoid Ukraine as a problematic transit state and therefore increase the security of its gas supply. Hungary also questioned the rationale of EU sanctions against Russia and in November 2014 announced that it would stop the reverse flow of gas to Ukraine, which was dependent on it at the time.

Hungary's leadership initiatives ("leaders", five out of seven) were primarily oriented towards wider Europe and towards Russia. Hungary received "slackers" for pursuing its own "national interests" that did not necessarily coincide with the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU. The "slackers" are not so surprising if we consider the fact that Russia remains Hungary's largest trading partner outside the EU, and Hungary's Prime

Minister Orban maintains very good relations with Russia.

The situation on gas supply shows the importance of this issue for the aforementioned states, which were obviously willing to pursue their national security interests, even though they did not fully comply with the guidelines of CFSP. However, most "slackers" (13 out of 69) received by the CSEE NATO/EU states are not connected with Russia and wider Europe. The explanation can be found in the high level of solidarity among the states analysed when it comes to relations with Russia and their efforts to become less dependent on Russia. Russia cannot lose this market, especially since 2014, when the prices of oil have plummeted. On the other hand, these states did not receive "slackers" because they wanted to defy the CFSP. They were simply putting their national interests (gas supply) ahead of the particular EU policy. Almost half of the "slackers" received by the CSEE NATO/EU member states were in the area of multilateral issues and crisis management. The reluctance of these states concerning their (in)activity in the field of multilateral issues and crisis management can be explained by the lack of capability and financial constraints.

Poland has managed to diversify its foreign policy activities, although more than half of its activities, and the most important ones, were connected with wider Europe and Russia, respectively. Poland was actually the only analysed state that managed to have recognized leadership initiatives in all six areas. None of Poland's "slackers" were received for the relations with Russia and the wider Europe region. Poland's actions towards its eastern neighbours and Russia are heavily influenced by historical experiences and geography. Long borders with Ukraine, Belarus and Kaliningrad Oblast, respectively, make Poland the primary frontline state towards Russia.

Estonia, with a population of only 1.3 million, managed to have 16 leadership activities, mostly oriented towards the neighbouring states. Seven initiatives were recognized in the field of multilateral issues and crisis management. Two of Estonia's initiatives were oriented towards the United States. It is a little surprising that such a small state managed to be so involved in multilateral issues far from its geographical proximity. Estonia's "slackers" were received for those issues far away from its geographical proximity.

Lithuania devoted almost all of its leadership activities (11 of 12) in 2011–2014 to Russia and wider Europe. Therefore, we can conclude that Lithuania primarily focuses its foreign policy initiatives towards its neighbourhood. Lithuania received "slackers" only for activities that were not in its geographical proximity and of strategic importance.

Similar to Lithuania, Latvia had nine activities, of which five were oriented towards relations with Russia and the wider Europe region. Three were devoted to multilateral issues and crisis management, and one to the United States.

The Czech Republic showed 13 leadership roles during the analysed period. Four of these 13 leadership roles were oriented towards Russia. Another four initiatives were oriented towards wider Europe. The Czech Republic's other leadership initiatives were oriented towards China, the United States, and multilateral issues and crisis management, respectively. The Czech Republic did not receive a single "slacker" for its relations with Russia or the wider Europe region. Kratochvil (2015: 15) emphasized that Czechs have become increasingly critical of Russia with the intensification of conflict in Ukraine: "In October 2014, two-thirds of the population said that Russia posed a security threat to the country, twice as many as a year earlier. As far as sanctions are concerned, however, the Czech public remains divided."

Slovakia also oriented most of its (seven out of 12) initiatives towards the wider Europe region. Other initiatives were oriented towards Russia, and taken in the field of multilateral issues and crisis management, respectively. Despite its pragmatism, it is making efforts to diversify its gas supply and lower its dependence on Russian gas and its transit through Ukraine. It has also allowed reverse gas supply to Ukraine (Groszkowski 2015b). It has shown an incentive for gas integration with the Czech Republic and Austria. It is clearly led by its national interests.

Romania had nine recognized leadership activities, according to the ECFR Scorecard. Five of its activities were devoted to its relations with Russia. Two were devoted to the wider Europe region. Romania also managed to "collect" 13 "slackers".

Bulgaria showed five leadership activities, and its activities were tied to Russia, multilateral issues and crisis management, and the USA. Despite its pragmatism and interest in the South Stream pipeline, Bulgaria has already introduced an interconnector with Hungary, and should by 2019 introduce one with Poland (Groszkowski 2015b).

Croatia received two "slackers", first for relations with Russia on energy issues in 2014, the second for the issue of development aid and humanitarian aid. The period being analysed is one of the toughest economic periods faced by Croatia was since achieving its statehood, which is also the case with Slovenia. However, Slovenia managed to "collect" seven "slackers" from the EU. Slovenia has two main problems concerning its contribution and following the CFSP. It has its own national interests regarding energy supply (gas from Russia) (Russia Today 2015) and did not want to (or could not) spend more financial and material means to comply with the goals of the CFSP in the field of multilateral issues and crisis management.

Analysis of "leaders" and "slackers" from the ECFR 2016 Scorecard

Table 8: CSEE NATO and EU member states leadership initiatives, recognized by ECFR Scorecard 2016

State	Asia and China		Russia		USA		Wider Europe		MENA region		Multilateral issues and crisis management	
	TIS	HRS	SP	EP	TTIP	AIIB	UKR	EUWB	RR	RC	DHA	OTD
Bulgaria											1	
Croatia												
Czech Republic		1		1								
Estonia			1	1								

State	Asia and China		Russia		USA		Wider Europe		MENA region		Multilateral issues and crisis management	
Hungary												
Latvia			1	1								
Lithuania			1	1			1					
Poland			1	1			1					
Romania			1									
Slovakia							1					
Slovenia												

Abbreviations: Asia and China – TIS: promotion of common EU strategy on trade and investment; HRS: response to China's human rights situation. Russia – SP: maintaining a strong and united sanctions policy; EP: commitment to Eastern Partnership states. USA – TTIP: support for TTIP negotiations; AIIB: responding to the US upon joining AIIB. Wider Europe – UKR: support for Ukraine; EUWB – strengthening EU engagement in the Western Balkans. MENA region – RR: quelling regional rivalries in Middle East; RC – humanitarian response to the refugee crisis. Multilateral issues and crisis management – DHA: development and humanitarian aid; OTD: overseas troop deployment.

Source: ECFR Scorecard (2016).

Table 9: CSEE NATO and EU member states "slackers" received by the EU, recognized by ECFR Scorecard 2016

State	Asia and China		Russia		USA		Wider Europe		MENA region		Multilateral issues and crisis management	
	TIS	HRS	SP	EP	TTIP	AIIB	UKR	EUWB	RR	RC	DHA	OTD
Bulgaria										1		1
Croatia										1		1
Czech Republic												1
Estonia		1										
Hungary										1		
Latvia										1		
Lithuania		1								1		1

State	Asia and China		Russia		USA		Wider Europe		MENA region		Multilateral issues and crisis management	
Poland		1								1		1
Romania										1		1
Slovakia										1		1
Slovenia										1		

Abbreviations as for Table 8.

Source: ECFR Scorecard (2016).

The year 2015 was the most critical year so far of the present migrant crisis and saw continuation of heavily deteriorated relations with Russia due to the situation in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea. The activities in which "leaders" were recognized were mostly focused on Russia, in a positive sense for complying with the policies and decisions of the EU, and in a negative sense towards the official Russian policy and strategic interests of Russia. The states that were mostly engaged in these activities overlap with the group of New Cold Warriors. The second main area of activities in which the states from the region showed recognized leadership initiatives is wider Europe, here mostly meaning support for Ukraine (Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia).

When "slackers" received in 2015 by the CSEE NATO/EU member states are analysed, they are grouped around two areas: the MENA region, and multilateral issues and crisis management. Nine of eleven states received a "slacker" for handling the refugee crisis. The second issue on which the majority of the analysed EU states (except Estonia, Hungary, Latvia and Slovenia) from the region received a "slacker" was overseas troop deployment — i.e. contribution to multi-national operations. In the areas in which relations with Russia, wider Europe and the USA were analysed, no "slackers" were received.

The results from the Scorecard, though they should be taken with caution, show a continuance of the combination of determinants (geographical position, strategic situation, historical experience, as well as the overall size and capabilities of a particular state) and interests of a particular state

that define policies. The response to the migrant crisis of 2015 was certainly more a product of the latter than the former. Overseas troop deployment is a product of both. All of the studied states that showed leadership activity have confirmed the hypothesis that, regarding leadership activity, these were primarily oriented towards Russia and wider Europe. The results, among other conclusions, confirm that the Ukrainian crisis and its evolution, as well as future developments, hold a particular importance for the Visegrad Four. As Fawn (2013: 346) pointed out: "Ukraine is, by population and geography, larger than any single Visegrad country, and is also a lynchpin in future European security".

The Scorecard also shows a connection between negative economic results and the number of "slackers" received for particular states. States that have experienced long periods of negative economic growth have not been able (or willing) to participate in multilateral issues and crisis management actions (such as peacekeeping missions, humanitarian and development aid, etc.). If seven more "slackers" received for handling the refugee crisis are added (treated as the MENA region issue, albeit this is actually primarily a multilateral and crisis management issue), it shows even more clearly an inability and/or unwillingness to deal with certain issues.

Analysis of the Scorecard has also shown a difference between Slovenia, Croatia and Bulgaria, and the other studied states. The three mentioned had fewer than half of their leadership initiatives recognized (for Slovenia and Croatia, there were no recognized leadership initiatives at all) oriented towards Russia, contrary to the other NATO/EU members from the CSEE. We can conclude that the small number of "slackers" received for relations with Russia and the wider Europe, despite the dependence on gas imports from Russia, shows that the NATO/EU member states from the region are, with some modest exceptions, following the guidelines of the CFSP.

Conclusions

Some NATO member states from the CSEE, because of their geographical location and position that causes proximity and intense relations with wider Europe and Russia, as well as their reliance on gas imports from Russia, are in a sensitive position. If a state is almost totally dependent on gas imports from Russia, it has to consider its relations with Russia as a primary foreign policy and national security issue, despite the fact that it may have to follow official NATO and EU policies towards Russia. The pragmatism of the Pragmatics is born of need and opportunity, respectively, as is the hard anti-Russian stance of the New Cold Warriors, which are willing to expose themselves to possible Russian "gas blackmail"; hence they feel the most threatened by Russia, significantly more than the Pragmatics. Relations with Russia are still an important factor for all CSEE NATO/EU states because of Russia's geographical proximity and historical connections, despite the fact that most of the studied states are trying to reduce their vulnerability towards Russia. In these efforts, the Pragmatics are the ones who are trying to maintain good relations with Russia, to pursue their economic interests and ensure their better position for the increase of trade with Russia once the EU abolishes the sanctions. At present, the dependence on gas supply from Russia does not represent a key issue that is making the most dependent states most willing to comply, and vice versa. The answer to this aberration lies in the determinants of their geographical position and heritage, which cannot be changed or even slightly modified. Therefore, the Baltic states, despite being heavily dependent on gas supplies from Russia, are the ones (together with Poland) that are supporting the firmest stance towards Russia because of the situation in Ukraine, as well as against its provocations and possible hybrid warfare in the Baltic region. The Baltic states are also actively working on reducing their dependence on gas supply from Russia, by developing a floating LNG terminal, Independence, in Lithuania (Teffer 2014), while a site in Latvia (Skulte) is also being developed. These investments are promoted as activities that are in accordance with the Third European Energy Package. The development of LNG terminals (like the floating one in Lithuania, the terminal in Poland and a prospective on the island of Krk in Croatia) is one possible way to reduce CSEE states' dependence on Russian gas (Dickel et al. 2014: 27–39). It is also one of the most important prospective endeavours of

the ABC Initiative. Additionally, oil and consequently natural gas have been relatively cheap in the last three years, driving Russia into serious economic problems. Therefore, Russia at present cannot use gas supply as a means for waging "gas wars". Bulgaria is in a slightly different position, particularly due to its geographical location. It does not possess significant gas reserves. Bulgaria could profit from the South Stream project if it were ever to become functional. Historical relations with Russia and historical recollection are also not negative in Bulgaria as they are in Poland and the Baltic states.

It is obvious that differences in the stance towards Russia and the Eastern Partnership states exist among the studied states, which are demarcated in two groups. Differences can be observed in the orientation and the "toughness" of the stance towards Russia, as well as the relative importance that these issues have for particular states. The present refugee crisis and issues related to the role of national authorities in the EU are at the moment creating a wider gap than the stance towards Russia between the states of the Visegrad Group particularly and some other states from the region and the EU authorities. The Baltic states and Slovenia are also showing discontent when it comes to the EU authorities dealing with the refugees and quotas. Some NATO/EU member states from the region are simply not very interested in containing Russia and protecting their national borders with troops, and would probably want the sanctions to be lifted. This does not mean that NATO's unity and resolve to act are jeopardized, especially because the real military capabilities of the aforementioned states, compared to those of Russia, are almost negligible, thereby increasing the homogeneity of these states' positions and their reliance on NATO (primarily the USA) in security issues.

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