

Aneta BAŁ-PITUCHA

The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin
ORCID: 0000-0002-6672-6504

DOI : 10.14746/ps.2023.1.14

THE ROLE OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP IN THE EUROPEAN SECURITY SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION

The four Central European countries – the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary – have become an important area of regional development in many spheres – from the political, to the economic, to the social sphere. It can be said that these European countries have overtly been in the at the center of significant events on the continent of Europe. These events, certainly, have left a huge mark on the fate of many millions of citizens, and have also determined the dynamics of systemic, social or economic transformation activities. The transformations taking place in the immediate region of Europe, which began in 1989, primarily involved the domestic and foreign policies of the above-mentioned countries. These transformations also included relations with new neighbors and the process of European, as well as Euro-Atlantic, integration (Czarkowska, 2007: 63).

During the 30 years of V4's operation, numerous crises have appeared. The first came after the public return to the issue of Edward Benes's decrees which concerned, among others, the total confiscation of the property of Sudeten Germans, by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban. At that time, the heads of government of the Czech Republic and Slovakia cancelled their participation in the Visegrad Group meeting. Another crisis took place during the "negotiators' race" at the EU Summit in Copenhagen. This crisis has made everyone aware that each of the four V4 member states has its own internal priorities and will primarily take care of them in the structures of the Union. The years 1993–1998 were a kind of impasse, a consequence of changes in the internal and border policy of Slovakia, as well as the policy of the Czech government. The Group also failed to speak with one voice on the issue of EU sanctions against Russia during the crisis in Ukraine. Despite the above accents of stagnation and lack of agreement, the Visegrad countries recorded more successes than failures. It is indisputable to enter the structures of the EU and NATO, which is described as a kind of crowning moment of their aspirations. It should be emphasized, however, that membership in the structures of NATO and the EU is the result of the actions of individual countries and their individual decisions, and not the Group as a whole. Another success was their joint entry into the Schengen area, which took place as planned in 2007 and, in the case of air and sea border crossings, in 2008. Despite achieving the intended goals, the Visegrad Group set new goals for cooperation, engaged in current European problems and participated in dialogue at the EU forum (Jankowski, 2013: 7–12). The

last presidency of Poland in the Visegrad Group, which lasted from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021, brought measurable results in the form of numerous consultations, which mainly concerned the fight against the coronavirus pandemic, but also many other areas of cooperation, e.g. cultural or cross-border. In addition, the renewal of cooperation between the Visegrad Group countries, especially in such difficult historical moments as the migration crisis or the coronavirus pandemic, prove that they assume the role of a spokesperson for the interests of not only organizations or individual member states, but also the EU. In addition, work within the framework of other initiatives, such as the Three Seas Initiative which serves to strengthen links in the Central European region (between the three seas: the Adriatic, Baltic and Black seas), may prove to be a measure of closer cooperation between the V4 countries.¹

GENESIS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP

The most important determinants of the process of systemic transformation in the countries of Central Europe include above all: the intensification of the crisis of authoritarianism, opposition activity, economic inefficiency of the Eastern Bloc countries, the crisis of Soviet ideology, the impact of the process of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the positive consequences of perestroika, the growing social resistance and the intensification of nationalist tendencies (Stankiewicz, 2003: 208). In the 70s of the twentieth century, illegal, secret meetings were held between representatives of the opposition circles of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. These congresses gave rise to the guiding idea that, in the event of new political conditions and a new balance of power in Europe, these countries pledged to help and cooperate with each other in order to strengthen their position both in the region and on the international arena (Błażejewska, 2016: 86, 88).

The new political realities have allowed Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary to come closer together. In addition to the close proximity of the above-mentioned countries, the establishment of closer political relations was also caused by: shared historical experience, a similar level of civilizational development or the process of democratization. The tendency to develop regional cooperation was inspired by Zbigniew Brzezinski's idea, who in the spring of 1989 postulated the need to reactivate the concept of creating a union on the basis of a Polish-Czechoslovak confederation. It was a reference to the idea from the times of World War II (Buczma, 1991: 36). Brzezinski mentioned that in the changed situation, the far-reaching integration of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary may become a kind of factor in the political stabilization and economic reconstruction of this part of Europe (Malendowski, 1998: 69). Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary decided to strengthen their position on the post-communist international level, as part of the so-called "new regional" form of Visegrad cooperation. The pursuit of accession to the European Communi-

¹ The Three Seas Initiative is a form of cooperation that includes activities in the political, economic and infrastructural dimensions, as well as in the area of capital markets. It was established by twelve countries: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

ties and the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO) has become the priority (Deszczyński, Szczepaniak, 1995: 10).

On 12–15 February 1991, the second meeting of the presidents, prime ministers, and ministers of foreign affairs of the three countries took place in Budapest and Visegrad. On the last day of the meeting, Presidents Lech Wałęsa, Vaclav Havel, and Josef Antall signed the “Declaration on cooperation between the Republic of Poland, the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic and the Republic of Hungary in the pursuit of European integration.” It took place in Visegrad in the gothic hall of the castle, where the 1335 congress of the kings of Poland, Bohemia, and Hungary took place. This historical reference to the past was intended to sub-outline the importance of the event. The vision of creating closer cooperation became a fact through the creation of the Visegrad Triangle, which became the Visegrad Group after the break-up of Czechoslovakia. In the adopted declaration, the parties agreed on common objectives, among others: the full restoration of national independence, freedom and democratic principles; the elimination of all existing transformations of the totalitarian system, from socio-economic to spiritual and cultural; building parliamentary democracy, a modern state governed by the rule of law, respect for human rights and its fundamental values; the creation of a market economy; to be fully involved in the European political and economic system, as well as in the security and legislative system. Particular emphasis was placed in the document on European and Atlantic integration (Góralczyk, 1999: 5).

An important argument for the creation of the Visegrad Triangle in 1991 was the geographical location of the states. Once again, the area of Central Europe has become a buffer between East and West – between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Many experts argued that this situation could once again become a source of tension and an ideal space for a potential armed conflict between the feuding military alliances. Many experts argued that this situation could once again become a source of tension and an ideal space for a potential armed conflict between the feuding military alliances (Panek, 2014: 71). After the break-up of Czechoslovakia, the Visegrad Triangle officially became the Visegrad Group, often referred to as the V4. One of the main objectives mentioned in the declaration was to achieve regional security (Grajewski, 1996: 22–40).

During Vladimir Meciar’s rule, Slovakia clearly distanced itself from Europe. In addition, it maintained strained relations with Hungary and cut itself off from political cooperation with the Czech Republic. The character of V. Meciar’s rule took on a rather undemocratic style, and this meant that Slovakia was not taken into account during the accession negotiations to the structures of NATO or the EU. On the other hand, the end of V. Meciar’s rule reopened Slovakia’s prospect of cooperation with the West and enabled the revival of the Visegrad Group. In October 1998, the Prime Ministers of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary met in Budapest, as a result of which a joint declaration was signed. In the same document, the Prime Ministers stressed that Slovakia is the country integral to the Visegrad idea and promised its active support (Szczepaniak, 2002: 50). A positive aspect of the group’s activity after 2000 was the existence of the V4 as a whole in the structures of NATO and the EU. Slovakia joined the structures of the former in 2004. In the same year, the accession of Poland to the EU took place. After 1st of May 2004, many meetings were held at the level of the

president, prime ministers, and ministers of individual ministries. It is also important that cooperation continued, despite the forecasts of many experts who heralded its twilight (Wach, 2010: 220–249).

The Visegrad Group has never expanded its membership, even though many other countries have volunteered to join the organization. At the beginning of the 90s of the twentieth century, efforts to join the Visegrad Triangle were expressed, among others, by Romania and Bulgaria. Apart from these countries, Croatia, Slovenia and Lithuania have expressed their willingness to join the V4. However, the leaders of the Visegrad Group countries agreed that it would not be extended to new members. In return, however, a form of close cooperation was proposed within the framework of the “Visegrad+” formula, which would allow countries outside the Group to actively participate in Visegrad meetings. In 2001, a special project called “Regional Partnership” was established, which brought together the Czech Republic, Poland, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia as a kind of forum for consultation and cooperation, enabling the development of contacts between the Visegrad countries and other partners from the region (Pawlikowska, 2006: 6). To sum up, despite the fact that the Visegrad Group has achieved its goals, i.e. closer cooperation with the EU and NATO and, as a consequence, accession, its activity has not ceased. The voice of the V4 is still important in the forum of the EU or NATO, due to the membership of the countries that make up this regional organization.

THE VISEGRAD GROUP IN THE EUROPEAN SECURITY SYSTEM

The new political realities allowed Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary to become closer. In addition to the close proximity of the aforementioned countries, common historical experience, a similar level of civilizational development or the process of democratization also contributed to the establishment of closer political relations. The initial cooperation, however, still encountered many difficulties. Moscow was still trying to maintain its sphere of influence, the region was plagued by isolated asymmetric conflicts, the transition from a centrally-controlled economy to a free market economy – these were just a few of the challenges faced by countries seeking to develop their “young democracies” (Malendowski, 2013: 69). However, the countries of the Visegrad Group decided to strengthen themselves in the post-communist international arena within the framework of the “new-regional” form of Visegrad cooperation. It can be said that the international situation at the time forced cooperation. The threat from the east of the continent had not gone away, and national liberation movements in neighboring countries were also feared. It was finally beginning to be believed that cooperation in the economic and cultural areas would bring positive value. It was for this reason that the pursuit of accession to the European Communities and NATO was treated, as a political priority and “goal above goals,” and all activities were initially focused to achieve these goals. The motives for the cooperation of the Visegrad Triangle and then V4 countries in the field of security and defense were initially limited to the political plane. These countries, as is well known, significantly supported each other in the process of integration into Western European structures. On the other hand,

after joining the EU and NATO, they continued to consult each other and agree on convergent positions on issues raised both within the Alliance and the Union (Lorenz, 2013: 2).

Along with the evolution and improvement of the dimension of the Common Defense Policy and Security Policy of the EU, the idea of establishing a joint Battle Group of the Visegrad countries was born. In 2007, the defense ministers of the Visegrad countries declared their will to establish the Visegrad Combat Group, obtaining the approval of the Chiefs of Staff. It is worth mentioning that the initiators intended to invite Ukraine to participate in this formation as well. The only weak point in this vision was the lack of a concrete date for the readiness of the Battle Group, as well as the lack of a decision on which country could be the leading one (Marcinkowski, 2011: 5, 51).

The V4 countries had to cooperate in preparations for entry into the Schengen area. It was important to attract partners in the EU structures that would provide support during the adjustment period. The Visegrad Group has started cooperation with the Benelux countries, aimed at obtaining a similar status as experienced Western European countries. It is this acquisition of partners that is called "Visegrad+". The Visegrad Group intensifies efforts to strengthen the identity of Central Europe in the EU structures (Gizicki, 2017: 99, 100). In addition, it promotes regional cooperation between Central European countries. Common experiences from the totalitarian era are driving the V4 countries to look for ways to support democratization processes in Eastern Europe, including Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and also the Balkan states. It is worth noting that there is linguistic, cultural and, to a large extent, mental proximity between the V4 countries and Ukraine, Belarus and the Balkan countries. Historical experiences common to Central Europe and the Balkans may be helpful. An exemplification of the above argument can be the situation in Ukraine when the so-called "Orange Revolution" started, or at the time of Russia's aggression in 2014 (*The Visegrad Group*, 2021).

Another threat to European security is the war in Ukraine and the threat from the Russian aggressor. Although NATO remains the only security guarantor for the European Union, member states should develop common security strategies. In addition, it was pointed out that it is necessary to take measures to ensure the security of supply of energy resources for Central and Eastern Europe, as well as to develop a European energy strategy. The European Neighborhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership program, approved by the European Council as an instrument of political and economic rapprochement of Eastern European countries to the EU structures, were once again in the circle of interest (Agh, 2014: 116, 131).

Currently, the Visegrad Group countries are appealing to the EU regarding the migration crisis that is taking place on the border between Belarus and the EU. Representatives of the Four countries called on the EU institutions to immediately consider all aspects and possibilities of acting to solve the problem. The official letter states, among other things, that "we call for immediate consideration of a strategic response to these situations in order to increase the effectiveness of its actions and prevent any future attempt to use the phenomenon of migration as a weapon" (*Kraje Grupy...*, 2021). In this context, the activities of the Visegrad Group are part of the European security system. Their efforts make an important contribution to the security not only of the member states of the organization but also of the EU as a whole.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the Czech Republic's firm political stance have united a rather polarized Czech society. According to a Median agency survey from early March, 87% of Czechs strongly condemn the Russian Federation's aggression. The Slovak authorities have all the time been providing political, military and humanitarian support to Ukraine, which has been attacked by Russia. At the same time, the position of some opposition politicians (e.g., from Smer-SD, the Republic, ĽSNS) advocating, among other things, the preservation of Slovakia's neutrality is unclear. Hungary refuses to allow arms supplies to Ukraine, as well as their transit through Hungarian territory. This would be of particular importance if Belarusian troops entered Ukraine in an attempt to disrupt the allies' arms supply routes from Poland. At the same time, the Hungarians stress that they are helping Ukraine on a humanitarian level. Hungarian authorities stress that they will not agree to sanctions targeting the energy sector, as this would lead to higher prices in Hungary. In addition, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán (Fidesz) has indicated in an interview that it is not in Hungary's interest to damage relations with Russia. Importantly, it should be pointed out that the Hungarian government has not taken any independent steps against the Russian Federation, has not terminated agreements, sanctions, bans (Lewkowicz, Czarnecki, Hejj, 2022).

The problem of security of the European Union, including Poland and the other Visegrad Group states, is a constant element of political, social, economic and cultural activities. Ensuring security is one of the main areas of activity of states, international and supranational organizations. In addition, also, the increase in asymmetric threats, including primarily the activities of international terrorism, regional conflicts on ethnic and religious grounds, population migration, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, cause the weapons of mass destruction, make it necessary to create an integrated territorial defense system. Poland borders Russia through its proximity to the Kaliningrad region. This is a militarized area that came under Russian rule after the Potsdam decisions in 1945. Currently, the situation on the border with the Kaliningrad Oblast (in Poland it is called Obwód królewiecki) is stable, but Poland does not rule out offensive actions by Russia and an influx of migrants from the area. In this regard, in 2023, it is planned to build an electronic fence on the border with Russia's Kaliningrad region due to concerns that Moscow and Minsk will again take part in supporting illegal migrants to destabilize the European Union (*Ruszyła budowa...*, 2023).

PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP

It should be noted that the idea of closer cooperation had its basis in bilateral agreements during the communist period. It concerned mainly the development of foreign policy and the strengthening of mutual links. The aim was to be guided by equality, respect for sovereignty and not to interfere in internal affairs. Another argument is the lack of a discussion forum in the structures of the Warsaw Pact. The hegemony of the USSR did not allow it to go beyond its structures, thus it was not possible to model itself on the then well-functioning NATO. Due to the repression that affected Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, the Soviet bloc began to undergo political erosion (Gi-

zicki, 2013: 44). The indisputable successes of the Visegrad Group are its entry into the structures of NATO and the EU which are in a way the crowning achievements of integration aspirations. On the side of the benefits of the Visegrad Group's activities, the establishment of the Battle Group within the EU should be indicated as a kind of way to strengthen European defence capabilities. The Visegrad Group is a constructive force that strengthens the unity of the European continent (Lorenz, 2013).

Assuming the group's total achievements, its activity in the EU forum, the diversity of factors determining the Group's activities, two scenarios can be assumed. The first of these, of course, presupposes the further development of cooperation, which will be aimed at avoiding divergences, active dialogue and a "one voice" policy. The Visegrad Group was originally created for one purpose – to join the structures of the EU and NATO. Despite achieving the goal, the Group continued its activities, actively participating – already in the EU forum. The second scenario assumes the decline of the idea of Visegrad if such a strategy appears in the activity of the main political decision-makers in the Visegrad countries (Czyż, Kubas, 2014: 249).

A common position on the future challenges of the Visegrad Group has been their domain since 2004 when the main goal was successfully achieved. It is necessary to find areas and sectors of action where cooperation will bring mediocrity to all Member States, without failures and without a possible crisis. It seems necessary to develop a common vision of cooperation. It should be remembered that the international environment is marked by dynamism. The natural field of action for the countries of the "Four" is, of course, the EU forum, where they should act mostly with one voice and one thought. Member States as a community have a chance to build a strong coalition and push through decisions beneficial to all Member States. Together, they can also block the resolution of decisions that could be at least unfavourable to them. The potential for joint actions of the V4 appears especially in relation to those EU policies that involve the redistribution of income: agricultural policy, cohesion policy or in the case of negotiations on the EU budget based on the multiannual financial framework, foreseen for future budgetary periods. It is worth mentioning that the prospects for Visegrad cooperation depend on many factors, both external and internal. Unfortunately, many times the cooperation of the V4 encountered many difficulties, more than once the voice of the V4 countries was divergent, it was most often associated with a different understanding of the national interest, other strategies in post-specific foreign policies, whether in relation to the EU, Russia or even the Ukrainian problem (ibidem: 159).

There is no doubt that the future of the Visegrad Group will be created by individual politicians and governing teams in individual member states and their attitude to the Visegrad future. The prospect of the Group's cooperation will also depend on bilateral relations between the Member States themselves, especially Slovak-Hungarian relations, which, due to the problem of the minority living in Slovakia, have repeatedly entered a phase of greater tensions. The factors that affect the activities of the Visegrad Group include: the mechanism of annual, rotating presidencies in the Visegrad Group; permanent consultations; weak institutionalization which fosters greater flexibility; a mechanism for maximizing the use of common interests and continuity, and continuity in the implementation of the main priorities of cooperation independently of the country holding the Presidency of the Group; the functioning of the International Visegrad Fund as the

only institution within the Group; informal nature of decisions, weak institutionalization; relations with Russia, crises in Europe (situation in Ukraine, attitude towards Russia); Slovakia's membership in the euro area, etc. (por. *ibidem*: 219).

The optimistic scenario assumes the functioning of the Visegrad Group in two areas: regional – focused on the implementation of regional interests, and concerning EU issues (Walsch, 2014: 1). Regional cooperation should be focused on the implementation of interests in such areas as ecology, environmental protection, infrastructure development, cooperation between regional government units, science, education, culture, cooperation and support for underdeveloped regions. It is also worth emphasizing that such factors as a common cultural tradition, geographical proximity, mentality or Central European identity are still adequate and will certainly be conducive to cooperation between the V4 countries. These factors continue to represent the potential for cooperation, including within the EU. It is clear that States may have divergent interests in relation to particular issues. The most important value, however, was dialogue, which formed the basis for many successes. The second dimension of Visegrad cooperation is the one concerning EU affairs. These include, above all, the European integration of the Western Balkans, support for reforms within the framework of the Eastern Partnership, and the cultivation of a coalition of friends under the next EU financial perspective (*ibidem*: 38).

The future for the Visegrad Group should be seen in the creation of ad hoc political coalitions within the EU and in the framework of sectoral cooperation. Undoubtedly, the organization has great potential, in the opinion of many experts. It is still a living and active political entity that serves as an excellent example for other regional initiatives. Cultural and media initiatives are important for its durability and the consolidation of a positive and well-deserved image. In addition, the International Visegrad Day was established, which is celebrated on February 15 as a holiday commemorating the creation of the Visegrad Group (Błaziak, 2021).

There is also a pessimistic scenario for the Visegrad Group which assumes the decline of its activity if a strategy of confrontation emerges in mutual relations instead of a strategy of cooperation. It is envisaged that if there is no will to cooperate and develop a common position, and the sphere of politics determines the further fate of the grouping, its achievements will be crossed and the Group will go into a state of stagnation or its end. Some observers are looking for such symptoms today – they refer to the influence of the Russian factor on Visegrad cooperation, a unity-threatening outbreak of populism, individual incidents with anti-liberal tendencies, or the policy of the Law and Justice government focused on the fight for Polish interests in the EU. As a whole, the Central European region is facing various threats: terrorism, the migration crisis, Russia's policy, the nature of the policy of the ruling camps. When a strong, anti-liberal opposition was growing in the Group, imposing on politicians such as Jarosław Kaczyński or Viktor Orbán rhetoric calling for a cultural revolution and not submitting to Brussels' dictates, and thus aspiring to become leaders of the Visegrad Group, there were fears that a split could occur in the "four" (Czyż, Kubas, 2014: 251).

Among the factors that have weakened the cooperation of the "four" in recent years, Russia's policy towards the crisis in Ukraine and its actions have come to the fore, which unfortunately have also left their mark on the unity of Visegrad coopera-

tion. The group as a whole has never issued a single statement on the issue of relations with Russia, there has not been any meeting in the “Visegrad+” format with representatives of the Russian Federation – however, this country conducts bilateral relations with individual countries from the Visegrad Group. What is certain is that Russian President Vladimir Putin was met by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, whose government has been practicing a policy of “opening up to the East,” also known as the “doctrine of open winds,” as one of its main foreign policy tenets since Fidesz came to power in 2010. It departed significantly from the more normative approach of Poland for whom the Western orientation in Ukraine’s foreign policy is definitely important, treating it as a neighbouring and buffer state. Poland openly criticized Russia’s policy as the main actor in the Ukrainian conflict. The conflict in Ukraine has highlighted the considerable differences and rifts between the Visegrad Group countries in their approach to assessing the whole situation and Russia’s role, as well as in the perception of the reaction of EU members to the Eastern power. This translated into a problem with the formulation of a coherent position by the V4 partners as the situation in the Ukrainian state develops (Libicki, 2016).

The practice has shown that the Visegrad Group has proved to be a sustainable form of cooperation in the Central European region. The pessimistic vision turned out to be premature because since 1998 the effects of renewing this cooperation have been visible. Undoubtedly, the Visegrad Group is one of the most interesting forms of regional cooperation and the achievement of the most important goals has not ended its viability.

CONCLUSIONS

Originally, the cooperation of the countries within the Visegrad Group was to focus primarily on foreign and defence policy. In the following years, cooperation within the Visegrad Group also covered other areas. The states have begun a phase of coordination of the adaptation of their legal systems to the requirements of the law of the European Communities. Since 1993, attempts have also been made to intensify cooperation in the areas of safety, health, environment, labour and transport. Regular meetings of the relevant ministers began to be organized for this purpose, but cooperation was not effective. The reasons for this phenomenon should be sought in differences of interests and existing conflicts between states, for example about the Slovak-Hungarian conflict on the basis of nationality. Unfortunately, in the face of cooperation and economic integration with Europe, there has often been more competition than a common position and action. In the following years, the activities of the Visegrad Group slowed down, and finally, it was suspended.

Achieving the most important goal pursued by the V4 countries, i.e. obtaining membership in NATO and the EU, has become a fact, and therefore questions have often arisen about the further sense of its functioning. Slightly more precise were the objectives of cooperation between the V4 countries after joining the EU, contained in the adopted guidelines. The areas of cooperation within the Visegrad Group, in the EU and with non-EU countries and within NATO, as well as with international organizations are listed there. However, this does not mean that the further functioning of the

V4 may not make sense – one of the important spheres of cooperation is cooperation with the EU. Similar levels of economic development, similarities in the economic structure or wealth of the population, as well as the great importance of EU budget resources for economic and social development, and finally the issue of economic location are ideal conditions that make V4 countries very often have interests that converge with aspects of EU policy.

Despite many differences that emerged among the Visegrad Group countries, it proved to be a lasting form of cooperation in the Central European region. Initial optimism, dynamic cooperation, reorientation of foreign policies of the young democracies, and high hopes related to the visible effects of cooperation suddenly encountered factors hindering cooperation – so much so that commentators went so far as to say that “the Visegrad Group has not stood the test of time.” The pessimistic vision turned out to be premature, as the effects of the renewed cooperation have been visible since 1998. Undoubtedly, the Visegrad Group constitutes one of the more interesting forms of regional cooperation and the achievement of its most important goals, has not ended its vitality.

REFERENCES

- Agh A. (2014), *The fall of the Berlin Wall and European politics: Perspectives of new Europe in the early twenty-first century*, in: *Routledge Handbook of European Politics*, (eds.) J. Magone, London–New York.
- Błaziak P., *The discussion “Central and Eastern Europe – can it speak with one voice?” with the participation of the prime ministers of the Visegrad Group of Ukraine*, <http://www.forum-ekonomiczne.pl/xxvi-forum-ekonomiczne/dyskusja-%e2%80%9eeuropa-srodkowa-i-wschodnia-czy-mozemowic-jednym-glosem-z-udzialem-premierow-grupy-wyszehradzkiej-i-ukrainy> (21.05.2021).
- Błażejewska P. (2016), *Difficult beginnings of Visegrad cooperation in the era of political transformation*, “New Eastern Policy”, No. 1.
- Borkowski R. (2015), *The decomposition of the Visegrad Group as an effect of the Polish policy towards the Ukrainian conflict*, in: *The implications of the Ukrainian conflict for Poland’s foreign and security policy. Political, military, economic and social aspects*, (eds.) K. Czornik, M. Lakomy, M. Stolarczyk, Katowice.
- Buczma L. (1991), *Czecho-Słowacja wobec “trójkąta”, Warszawa–Praga–Budapeszt*, “Sprawy Międzynarodowe”, 11: 42.
- Crisis on the border with Belarus. The Visegrad Group countries are appealing to the European Union*, www.tvn24.pl (23.11.2021).
- Czarkowska E. (2007), *Soviet Union intervention in Hungary in 1956*, Toruń.
- Czubiński A. (2008), *Europe of the twentieth century*, Poznań.
- Czyż A., Kubas S. (2014), *The Visegrad Group countries: between the past and the present. Selected aspects of domestic and foreign policy*, Katowice.
- Deszczyński P., Szczepaniak M. (1995), *Visegrad Group*, Toruń.
- Gawron D. (2017), *Visegrad Group. Implications for unity and security within the European Union*, “Krakow International Studies”, No. 2.
- Gizicki W. (2013), *On the legitimacy of the existence of the Visegrad Group*, “Yearbook of the Institute of Central and Eastern Europe”, No. 1.

- Gizicki W. (2017), *Multi-level character of international relations in Central Europe*, in: *Multilevel international relations. Selected issues*, (ed.) W. Gizicki, Lublin.
- Gołębski F. (1994), *Visegrad Group – an attempt to implement the concept of multilateral cooperation in Central Europe*, “International Affairs”, No. 3.
- Góralczyk B. (1999), *Visegrad cooperation. Genesis, experiences, perspectives*, Warszawa.
- Grajewski A. (1996), *The Visegrad Group – birth and twilight*, “Political Review”, No. 32.
- Grajewski A. (1991), *Poland’s participation in regional groupings*, “Yearbook of Polish Foreign Policy”, No. 88.
- Jankowski D. (2013), *Towards effective unilateralism in the field of security policy: on the example of Poland’s activity in the Visegrad Group*, “National Security”, No. 27.
- Kaliningrad (2023), <https://www.gov.pl/web/rozwoj-technologie/zmiana-nazwy-krolewiec-zamiast-kaliningrad2> (22.05.2023).
- Kochnowski R. (2015), *Genesis of the break-up of Czechoslovakia*, “Studia Politicae Universitatis Silesiensis”, No. 1.
- Kraje Grupy Wyszehradzkiej apelują do Unii Europejskiej ws. kryzysu migracyjnego*, <http://tvn24.pl> (23.11.2021).
- Kubin T. (2014), *Visegrad Group – prospects for further cooperation*, “Athenaeum. Polish Political Science Studies”, Vol. 42.
- Lewkowicz Ł., Czarnecki Sz., Hejz D. (2022), *(Dis)unity of Visegrad Group countries in the face of Russian aggression against Ukraine*, Komentarze IEŚ 567 (79/2022), <https://ies.lublin.pl/komentarze/niejednosc-panstw-grupy-wyszehradzkiej-wobec-agresji-rosyjskiej-na-ukrainie/> (22.03.2023).
- Libicki M. C. (2016), *The Future of Information Security*, Institute for National Strategic Studies, <http://fas.org/irp/threat/cyber/docs/infose.htm> (22.04.2023).
- Lorenz W. (2013), *EU Battlegroup – a chance for a breakthrough in the cooperation of the Visegrad Group*, “PISM Bulletin”, No. 38.
- Malendowski W. (1998), *Military cooperation Polish with the Visegrad Group countries*, “Western Review”, No. 2.
- Marcinkowski Cz. (2011), *Armed Forces of the Visegrad Group countries in subregional formations for peacekeeping operations*, in: *Quality in the internal security efforts of the Visegrad countries from a European perspective*, (eds.) P. Majer, M. Sitko, Józefów.
- Panek J. (2014), *The Czech Republic and Poland on the threshold of modern times*, Toruń.
- Pawlikowska I. (2006), *Security concepts of Central European countries after 1989*, Toruń.
- Ruszyła budowa zapory elektronicznej na granicy polsko-rosyjskiej*, <http://www.gov.pl/mswia> (18.04.2023).
- Skolimowska A. (2015), *The European Union in search of a place on the international arena*, in: *Crises in the process of European integration and ways to overcome them*, (eds.) K. A. Woźtaszczyk, J. Nadolska, Warszawa.
- Stankiewicz W. (2003), *Determinants of political transformation in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe*, in: *Main problems of globalization, European integration and political transformation of Central and Eastern Europe*, (eds.) R. Bäcker, J. Marszałek-Kawa, J. Modrzyńska, Toruń.
- Szczepaniak M. (2002), *Revival of the Visegrad Group (1997–2001)*, “Western Review”, No. 1.
- The Visegrad Group in the face of Russian aggression against Ukraine*, <http://warsawinstitute.org.pl/grupa-wyszehradzka-wobec-rosyjskiej-agresji-na-ukrainie> (20.11.2021).

- Wach A. (2010), *Significance and role of the Visegrad Group in the years 1991–2007*, “*Stupsk Historical Studies*”, No. 16.
- Walsch Ch. (2014), *Fostering EU enlargement. Is the Visegrad Group a credible advocate?*, “*Donau-Institut Working Paper*”, No. 29.

ABSTRACT

The changes taking place in Central and Eastern Europe, which began in 1989, included primarily the internal and foreign policy of the four countries that make up the Visegrad Group, i.e. the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary. The transformations also concerned relations with the newly formed states after the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the course of European and Euro-Atlantic integration. The aim of the article is to indicate the role of the Visegrad Group in the European security system, especially in the face of the war in Ukraine or the migration crisis. An important element of the functioning of this regional organization is its cooperation with the EU or with other organizations. The research hypothesis is as follows: the future of the Visegrad Group makes sense and brings its members more benefits than losses. The article uses the analysis method. The key issue that needs to be answered will be the prospect of further activity of the Visegrad Group in the face of new threats. Will the member states of the Visegrad Group meet the challenges of the twenty-first century? Will they play an important role in shaping European security?

Keywords: Visegrad Triangle, Visegrad Group, European security, regional organization, cross-border cooperation

ROLA GRUPY WYSZEHRADZKIEJ W EUROPEJSKIM SYSTEMIE BEZPIECZEŃSTWA

STRESZCZENIE

Przemiany zachodzące w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej, które miały początek w 1989 r., obejmowały przede wszystkim politykę wewnętrzną i zagraniczną czterech państw, które tworzą Grupę Wyszehradzką, tj. Czechy, Polskę, Słowację i Węgry. Przeobrażenia dotyczyły także relacji z nowo powstałymi państwami po rozpadzie Związku Socjalistycznych Republik Radzieckich (ZSRR) oraz przebiegu integracji europejskiej i euroatlantyckiej. Celem artykułu jest wskazanie roli Grupy Wyszehradzkiej w systemie bezpieczeństwa europejskiego, szczególnie w obliczu wojny w Ukrainie czy też kryzysu migracyjnego. Ważkim elementem funkcjonowania tejże organizacji o charakterze regionalnym jest jej współpraca z UE czy z innymi organizacjami. Hipoteza badawcza brzmi następująco: przyszłość Grupy Wyszehradzkiej ma sens oraz przynosi swoim członkom więcej korzyści niż strat. W artykule zastosowano metodę analizy. Kluczowym zagadnieniem, które wymaga udzielenia odpowiedzi, będzie perspektywa dalszej działalności Grupy Wyszehradzkiej w obliczu nowych zagrożeń. Czy państwa członkowskie Grupy Wyszehradzkiej sprostają wyzwaniom XXI wieku? Czy odegrają istotną rolę w kształtowaniu bezpieczeństwa europejskiego?

Słowa kluczowe: Trójkąt Wyszehradzki, Grupa Wyszehradzka, bezpieczeństwo europejskie, organizacja regionalna, współpraca transgraniczna