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BOOK REVIEW: SECURITY, FOREIGN AND EUROPEAN POLICY OF VISEGRAD GROUP

Dominika Trubenová*

CABADA, L. - WAISOVÁ, Š. et al.: Bezpečnostní, zahraniční a evropská politika Visegrádské skupiny. [Security, Foreign and European Policy of Visegrad Group]. Praha: Togga, spol. s.r.o., 2018. 309 s. ISBN 978-80-7476-139-3.

The current functioning of the world, especially the ever-changing international environment, requires an adequate and rapid response from the public, especially concerning professionals, based on research and work on current issues. The book from a team of authors headed by **Ladislav Cabada** and **Šárka Waisová** is considered to be very beneficial in that respect.

The monograph as a whole after the first couple of pages already appears pleasant to read with well-organized structure and a rich list of sources, which implies a truly beneficial work in the research of the issue of the Visegrad Group, especially when it comes to the current topics such as migration, cybernetics and the environmental agenda. The monograph is also expected to be a useful study for future follow-up work and research, confirming its importance and relevance.

To map a complex topic such as the Visegrad Group and its security, foreign and European policies, it is more than expected to include a higher number of authors in the research team. The team from all four V4 countries presupposes a well-developed monograph, given that the individual authors are true experts on the subject and have been dedicated to it for a long time and thus have enormous potential for developing quality outputs. The presented monograph, as well as the selection of authors themselves, is the result of long-term collaboration and interviews, while at the same time trying to maintain the

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traditional mechanisms of academic debate that have resulted in a well-designed and homogeneous text with no visible errors.

In my opinion, the style of writing a monograph is very well set and chosen so that it is not only suitable for the professional public, but also for casual readers who are interested in the subject. Similarly, a well-structured content that is logical and follow-up is appropriate for a suitably chosen style. The author managed to summarize the topic both in theory and enrich it with the practical part, namely direct application, or analysis of the Visegrad Group countries in selected directions, such as migration, environmental and cyber security. From this point of view, it is equally positive that the authors agreed to conceptualize the monograph so that it would be an actual contribution to the research of this topic, and not purely a summary of historical connotations and already known facts.

The list of resources used is extensive and very rich, not only for the work itself, but also for the needs of the reader in case of interest to expand their knowledge also through the resources of this monograph. The authors used both professional articles and various internet sources, which just underlines the topicality of the work.

If we look at the structure itself, the team of authors divided the monograph into two comprehensive parts, namely the part devoted to the security policy of the Visegrad Group and the second part covers the topic of foreign and European policy V4. The parts themselves are adequately divided into smaller subchapters, each bearing its distinctive name and orientation. Even on the division of the monograph, it is possible to see the quality of the work of the authors and their expertise and orientation in the set issue.

The monograph begins with a shorter introduction dedicated to the Visegrad Group itself, stating that "*the Visegrad Group is one of the most prominent regional clusters operating in contemporary Europe, especially from the perspective of Central European political science*" (p.11), which underscores the merits of addressing the issue of the Visegrad Group and, in particular, extending this issue to current topics.

In the first part of the monograph, I appreciate that it starts with the theoretical definition of the security environment as such, and subsequently on this basis, it develops concrete and especially current topics, namely migration, environmental and cyber security even in the context of individual Visegrad countries. The security policy itself and the cooperation of these countries is important for the authors, who say that "*the main motivation for security*

cooperation is to identify common features" (p.71), confirming the proximity of individual countries to policies and attitudes. This closeness of the countries is further confirmed by the authors in the following chapters of the monograph, for example, p. 107, where the authors themselves define the main actors of the V4 security policy. On the issue of migration elaborated by the authors in this first part of the book, in my view, one of the key claims is that "*the V4 states have always acted as a unit and represented opinions on migration policy*" (p. 107), as the authors confirm and beyond, when they agree that, on fundamental issues, states can agree and deliver a common position. In this monograph, it is desirable for authors to work with the states themselves, but also with a set of common features and factors.

The merits and importance of V4 cooperation can also be seen in the unfinished context of environmental policy, which today is becoming more and more important and not only within the Central European area, but also on a pan-European and global scale. Authors work with three "V4 circles of cooperation" and neighbouring countries, where it is divided into the Visegrad Group itself, the Visegrad Group and its neighbouring countries and finally the Visegrad Group and its wider surroundings. Such a division is an interesting approach to environmentalism, but in a positive sense, since this framed issue becomes more understandable and readable for the reader.

The second part of the book focuses on the foreign and European policy of Visegrad cooperation, where it elaborates on a number of key topics, namely European integration, the V4 countries' attitude towards the Western Balkans, V4 cooperation and the competition of other Central European integration. If we look at the individual parts in part, within the EU integration the authors agree that the accession to the European Union was a challenge for the V4 countries - their entry into the EU fulfilled the main objective of the group and consequently it was necessary to define new goals according to the authors. The direction of V4 in the integration process, as "*the V4 Presidency was important in the light of the Member States' work within the EU, which currently affects relations between states in the region, but also shapes the foreign policy of the Group and policy within the EU*" (p.169). As the authors further say, by joining the EU, the relationship within V4 and the whole concept of cooperation has been revitalized and successfully set its new direction for the future, which is confirmed by the active creation of common positions and documents confirming its viability.

"Cooperation with the Balkan countries was defined by the Visegrad Group and its individual members as one of the priorities, V4 is also a key advocate and supporter of the Western Balkan countries' accession to the EU" (p. 189). With this statement, the authors, very clearly and simply at the beginning of the part dealing with the relationship of the V4 countries with the Western Balkans, show the direction of the study, which I perceive positively, as this statement is further elaborated and substantiated by both facts and logical justifications of the individual authors from the team. The authors work with the interests of the individual V4 countries in the region and bring to the fore their missions within their membership of international organizations, i.e. NATO, the EU, the UN and the OSCE. V4 therefore justifies its approach to the Western Balkans mainly through EU and NATO membership, as it believes that promoting an open door policy for the region will only contribute to stability and security. At the same time, through this approach, V4 is building more co-partnerships with countries where it has interests.

Although the whole monograph works uniformly and "for" V4, a section dedicated to other Central European integration groups is a criticism and controversy of the authors on the merits of V4 collaboration, in which authors reflect on its importance and the challenges it faces. I think that in order to progress in research, it is necessary to ask such questions as well, i.e. how important the cooperation of the V4 is. At this point, what the authors is that they are dealing with the issue of the direction of individual countries at present with regard to internal policy setting but also, for example, the topic of migration. The authors conclude that some countries' attitudes may (but need not) be a future signal of efforts to end their cooperation.

The controversy of the West - East EU has always been an important issue for the V4 countries, and therefore this part of the monograph is more than welcome. The authors work on the basis of asking whether *"it is possible that historical references in Western and Western Europe, respectively Eastern Europe is so distinctive that they have the potential to divide the continent, even more than twenty-five years after the fall of the Iron Curtain"*(p.240). The team operates with logical explanations that after 1989, the direction of the Central European region seemed to be "a return to Europe", but the current events, also linked to the aforementioned migration, are also increasingly referring to the V4 region as the EU, and so on. Even on this basis, the authors themselves talk about a number of factors, which consequently logically lead to a *"very mixed output hypothesis"* (p.240). Thus, if the authors are particularly concerned with

the EU, it should be noted that for the V4 countries there are only two possibilities - to work together on the agenda with the other EU countries, or, as the authors say, use the veto right, but in that case, each country has its own responsibility, not in the name of Central European cooperation. In this text, in my opinion and judgment, it is indeed necessary to reflect in this direction, and the authors provide a calculation of both historical and present factors affecting the East-West polemic, which will probably always be a controversy.

Indeed, the collective book presented by authors from all the Visegrad countries is, in my opinion, a well-designed and up-to-date study with a factual and clear assessment, analysis and justification of the facts, a logical and clearly defined structure and a reasonably adapted style of what is monographs. The overall summary of findings and conclusions of the authors in individual parts only confirms the intention and aim of elaborating this monograph, namely to continue the long-term research on the subject, but at the same time bring new perspectives and enrich them with topics closely linked to Central European cooperation of the Visegrad Four as one most stable regional cooperation at all. The authors have indeed succeeded in summarizing the facts, analysing them and thus bringing interesting conclusions that have the potential to become the basis for future studies and analysis in the future.