

Project Proposal

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In connection with a shift in the U.S. foreign policy known as the American pivot to Asia, Europe begins to feel it is losing its position as a U.S. foreign policy priority. Although the Asian pivot is a natural process from a U.S. grand strategy standpoint, and it is a result of shifting U.S. priorities when they move the focus from Europe and the Middle East to Asia after two decades of peace building and peace keeping operations in both regions, some European leaders still resent the idea of not having a U.S. presence in Europe. In this debate, one of European regional players has a lot to offer to the United States and should be on its mind in the future. In relation to the still ongoing events in Ukraine, the Visegrad group (V4) takes on the importance, not only in terms of economic and social, but also as a model for security cooperation.

All four countries, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia have undergone important reforms and traveled a long journey to become full members of the European Union and Transatlantic structures. The Transatlantic integration process of the V4 countries was possible also because of the effort by the United States in the post-Cold War period to accept new countries as NATO member states. Nevertheless, the United States should more actively appreciate the involvement of the V4 countries in the international operation. Slovakia may present an example, while it engaged in operations prior to entering NATO. Furthermore, Slovakia has a huge advantage in being the only V4 member that neighbors all the other members of the V4, plus Ukraine.

The cooperation within the V4 region as well as partnerships with other countries serve as a great example for other regions in Europe, namely among the Western Balkan countries. The Western Balkan region is a part of the top foreign policy priorities in all four countries. The Western Balkans is also included among European foreign policy priorities of the United States. Given the period after the Cold War, when all the V4 countries underwent the extensive reforms in the rule of law and developed a functioning market economy, they often take the lead in the discussions on the issue of security sector reform or European and Transatlantic integration.

Relevance of the V4 countries increases. There are many projects that are aimed at both internal and external cooperation between V4 and other countries. One of the examples is the V4 battle group which should take effect in 2016. This project will be implemented in relation to the Slovak presidency of the V4 which is a great opportunity to take the lead in these talks. However, the V4 countries should raise the awareness of its activities beyond the borders of the region and to our Transatlantic partners. Related to that, the lack of closer relations with the United States was also mentioned during the Assessing Conference of the Slovak Foreign Policy of 2013. The research project will aim at examining the areas in which the U.S. and V4 cooperate today, namely international security and energy security, and it will sketch those in which there is a great potential but still a gap in cooperation and therefore the outcome of the project will be valuable for the V4 group as well as for the United States as a bilateral platform for further discussions.

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