

# 9

## Security and Securitization in Central Europe

*Vít Strátecký*

### 9.1 Introduction

Immediately after the Communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe crumbled under the massive public movements, the states of the region started the emancipatory processes aiming at their 'return to Europe'. The crucial challenge of these states' internal transformations was naturally accompanied by the endeavours to re-establish political, economic, and security links with the West, and to secure future development by participating in Western institutions. The specific historical experience urged the countries of the region to prioritize the security guaranteeing organizations. The painful experience with the decades-long Soviet rule transformed into a powerful narrative in which it was essentially the US economic and military power that eventually prevailed and, more importantly, led to the democratization of Europe. This narrative to a large extent determined the Central European (CE) countries' future security orientations. Indeed, the transatlantic cooperation was preferred as it was seen as a way to balance the potential Russian influence but also secure the countries' development at least partially independently of European powers. Despite the differences among CE governments concerning individual actions led by the United States (in Iraq) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (in Afghanistan), the countries' membership in NATO could be perceived as the accomplishment of the mission they set out for themselves. However, the legitimization of the transatlantic preference required a continuous reinventing of the potential Russian influence. Recently, these concerns shifted from the original military area to energy resources dependency.

In general, the orientation on NATO enlargement brought two effects. Firstly, the countries to a large extent presented themselves as the future linchpins of the North Atlantic Security Community in Europe. Secondly, they were strongly perceived as such by most of the former Cold War era NATO member states. The concept of New Europe was established particularly with regard to security issues. Nevertheless this chapter will maintain

that the image of New Europe as a homogeneous political bloc is rather unsustainable. Despite sharing largely similar historical experiences, when we move beyond the general expectations, we can see that the countries' security policies display noticeable differences. The analysis will be divided into three parts. The first part will focus on the notion of Atlanticism that has remained influential in the forming of the security policies of all the CE countries. The chapter will first briefly conceptualize Atlanticism and then it will assess its role in the decision-making processes related to major international security challenges. The second part will investigate the issue of energy security with a special emphasis on the securitization of the dependency on Russia. Both previous themes, the cultural and ideological structure of Atlanticism and securitization of a particular energy dependency, imply a strong role of perceptions in the formation of the CE security landscape. Therefore, the third part will aim at shedding some light on the threat perceptions in CE countries. While the idea is to further elaborate on the issue of regional heterogeneity, the analysis will focus on both the official and societal perceptions. In doing so the chapter will attempt at capturing the differences both inside and among the countries.

## 9.2 Atlanticism in Central Europe

Despite the fact that the Atlanticist orientation has remained influential in the forming of the security policies of all the CE countries, the analyses of these policies reveal noticeable differences. The principles of the Atlanticist foreign political orientation could be summarized as follows (Drulák *et al.* 2008). The Atlanticists emphasize the importance of transatlantic relations at both the bilateral and the multilateral level. More precisely they endeavour to strengthen their country's relations with the United States and attempt to reinforce their country's position in Europe. They are anxious about the European Union (EU) playing a more important role in providing security guarantees in Europe and in stabilizing its neighbourhood, as a stronger EU might lead to the withdrawal of the United States and consequentially to the decline of their interests in Europe. Thus, the Atlanticist community views the processes of building a common security and defence policy very reluctantly and promotes further enlargement of the EU and other Eastern policies instead. According to them the US presence in Europe is crucial for balancing the possible Russian threat that is defined geopolitically and historically and perceived rather variously depending on the political situation at the time and the agendas at stake (Hynek and Strítecký 2009).

This common face of Atlanticism covers a wide range of policies that provide different contents to the general Atlanticist label. The concept of Atlanticism has received various meanings since the end of the Cold War. It has come to be understood as a logical (or even ideological) choice reflecting a specific set of historical experiences that these countries have had with

the United States over the past century. This canonical view has stressed the leading role of the United States in toppling both of the totalitarian regimes that cankered Central Europe during the larger part of the twentieth century and included the strategic calculation of many countries in the region in which it was assumed that their national interests in Europe would be better preserved via an active American engagement in the region that would balance the influence of other major European powers (Asmus and Vondra 2005).

More promisingly, Atlanticism has also developed into a useful analytical category in the field of foreign policy analysis (Drulák *et al.* 2008; Hynek and Střítecký 2009, 2010a, 2010b). In this regard the historical background has become mitigated and the term has come to refer to the formative and decision-making processes setting up foreign political priorities and informing the particular steps on the basis of norms, values, and behavioural patterns shared by the political and administrative elite (Hynek and Střítecký 2010a, 2010b). From this perspective Atlanticism can also be assumed to represent a form of political hegemony (Cox 1983: 162–75, 1987: 7) providing a cultural but mainly ideological basis for the decision-making processes.

### 9.2.1 Atlanticist manifestations

The previous lines have contextualized the issue with the phenomenon of the new Atlanticism that is both externally and internally recognized as an important foreign and security policy element. Contrary to the expectations derived from the historical commonalities, the roles of Atlanticism differ significantly over the region, and similarly its content mutates sometimes irrespective of the overall ideological expectations. The chapter will investigate national attitudes towards the two most visible recent projects of the US foreign policy – Iraq and Afghanistan. Even if they are included in one category here, these cases obviously have many differences between them. The Iraqi issue unleashed the most critical transatlantic crisis in post-Cold War history, which gave birth to the above-mentioned New Europe metaphor. However, this crisis also transformed into the internal European breach epitomized by the then French president Jacques Chirac's infamous remark that the CE countries' behaviour was 'irresponsible and childish' as they 'missed a good opportunity to keep quiet', which hit some sensitive nerves in Central Europe and even evoked reminiscences of the Brezhnev Doctrine (BBC News 2003)

The Iraqi issue could be perceived as a test of how real the Atlanticist determination on the part of the political elite of the CE countries actually was, since the war in Iraq was to a large extent unilaterally driven by the United States and had at best an inconclusive international legitimacy (Kagan 2004; Tucker and Hendrickson 2004). Similarly, the massive public discontent in regard to this issue spread from Western Europe and influenced the situation in the CE region. The issue of Afghanistan was apparently less contentious

Table 9.1 Central European Atlanticism

Country	Consensus	Engagement		Motivation
		Iraq	Afghanistan	
Czech Republic	Low	Material Support	Participation	Followership
Hungary	High	Material Support	Participation	Alliance politics
Poland	High	Participation	Participation	Pride and profit
Slovakia	Low	Material Support	Participation	Catch up politics
Slovenia	High	Non-participation <sup>1</sup>	Participation	Alliance politics

Source: Own assessment.

as regards its legitimacy, but unlike the Iraqi agenda it has become a long-term political issue that stretched into the current days. While the initial support for the operation from many diverse sources remained largely consensual, Afghanistan became a contentious topic over time. The legitimization of the engagement took various shapes as it followed the larger strategic changes. Generally, as it was one of the primary focuses of the US foreign and security policy and was supported by the robustness of the agenda in NATO, an engagement in Afghanistan became synonymous with an engagement in US-led foreign missions in general. From this perspective Afghanistan might constitute another Atlanticist manifestation.

Table 9.1 summarizes the situation along three principal themes. The first theme, *consensus*, is used to show the level of internal political agreement over the respective national policies within the context of the above-mentioned manifestations. The analysis is based on the shifts in governmental positions following political changes. It should be noted that the results reflect not only the actual positions towards Iraq and Afghanistan but also the context surrounding the events. The second theme, *engagement*, approximates the actual attitudes to further clarify the national policies.<sup>2</sup> Finally, the third theme, *motivation*, addresses the diverging legitimizations of the policies to show the distinct features of CE Atlanticism.

### 9.3 Consensus

The situation is quite clear in Poland. The level of consensus there can be illustrated just by the observation that even the former Communists who are now members of the Labour Party urged for the guarantees of article V following NATO membership (Zaborowski and Longhurst 2003). Indeed, Polish adherence to US strategic plans was even coined 'instinctive Atlanticism' (Zaborowski 2004: 7), as this phrase stressed the nearly automatic pro-US choices of Polish foreign policy. Poland gradually reached the position of a 'protégé' or of a 'cherished partner' of the United States

(Zaborowski and Longhurst 2003) while building a special relationship with it that led to the 'supply-driven leadership' which was offered by Donald Rumsfeld to this regional champion of US values (Hynek and Střítecký 2010a: 181). Without any major internal controversies Poland actively supported both Iraqi and Afghan operations.

In the case of Hungary the government originally cautiously supported the US invasion of Iraq but the Hungarian contingent was removed after a little more than one year of deployment due to the growing domestic discontent that reached more than three quarters of the society (Manchin 2003). However, contrary to the usual regional patterns, it was the social democratic Prime Minister who unsuccessfully strove for the prolongation of the mission but still managed to find support for Hungary's donation of 77 tanks and sending of 150 troops under the auspices of NATO to the training centres outside of Baghdad (John 2006: 68). As regards Afghanistan, Hungary gradually developed into one of the most generous contributors among the ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) countries while all the relevant political parties with the exception of the far-right extremists supported the relatively massive Hungarian engagement in Afghanistan (Marton and Wagner 2011). The strength of the political consensus apparently allows for the carrying through of the policy even if public support for the Afghani operation is only slightly higher than support in the case of Iraq (*ibid.*: 196). Also, Slovenian foreign political attitudes reveal a decent level of internal consensus (Krašovec and Lajh 2009; Šabic and Brglez 2002). The political representation managed to manoeuvre through a specific period when the debate over Iraq coincided with the EU and NATO membership referendums (Green 2003). The participation in the ISAF mission later confirmed the country's consensual orientation on foreign missions (Defencemanagement.com 2010).

On the other hand, the successors of Czechoslovakia evince signs of deeper internal struggles over security policies. The Czech political representatives reacted to the US request during the Iraqi crisis with hesitation. Most symbolically, the Czech representation was unwilling to clearly express whether or not the country was part of the Coalition of the Willing (Hynek and Střítecký 2010a). This Czech 'fence-sitting stance' was designed by the ruling centre-left coalition led by the Social Democratic Party. In contrast, the rightist opposition argued several times that the country should publicly declare herself as a part of the Coalition of the Willing. Similarly, the Afghan issue became heavily politicized and the discomfort of the Czech Left even led to the unprecedented rejection of the foreign mission plan in the House of Commons in 2008 (Střítecký 2010). The gap in the security policy's positions was also heavily widened by the Social Democratic opposition to the plan for the third pillar of the US missile defence (in contrast with the usual Polish consensus on such issues) (Střítecký and Hynek 2010a).

Slovakia's strong Atlanticist commitment was one of the crucial features characterizing the period of its catching up with the West after the period of isolation connected with the nationalist government that ruled Slovakia until 1998 (Bútorá and Gyárfášová 2008). This primary attitude was still valid during the Iraq crisis (Ondrejcsák 2006: 78). Nevertheless, another U-turn came in 2006 when the Social Democrats, who strongly criticized the exclusively pro-American policy in the cases of Kosovo, Iraq, and missile defence, came to power (Bútorá and Gyárfášová 2008: 16–17). In less than a year after the election Slovak troops left Iraq. Even if the Social Democrats supported the strengthening of the Afghan mission both while in government and during their period as an opposition party after 2010, their challenge to the Atlanticist orientation remains strong, and hence Slovakia qualifies as a low consensus country in [Table 9.1](#).

### 9.3.1 Engagement

The data about engagement show a similarity in the case of Afghanistan. Poland attempted to take the position of regional leader while organizing a major CEE (Central and Eastern Europe) regional conference for combating terrorism already in November 2001. The Polish forces joined the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom while the direct engagement in the frame of NATO ISAF reached 2,600 troops and became the seventh largest direct engagement. In 2008, Poland took over responsibility for the Ghazni province located in the highly unstable southeast of Afghanistan (Kulesa and Górká-Winter 2012). Following the change of strategy under the Obama administration, Poland strongly supported the US request for additional troops and openly criticized other countries for announcing the withdrawal of their own troops from Afghanistan (Kulesa and Górká-Winter 2012: 214–15). The attitude of the political elite was remarkable given the fact that since 2007 more than 70 per cent of the population continuously opposed the mission while roughly 50 per cent stood strongly against it (Felixiak 2010).

Hungary also gradually developed into one of the most generous contributors among the ISAF countries. After originally providing only medical personnel and a few officers, in 2005 the Hungarian government decided to take over the formerly Dutch Provincial Reconstruction Team in the unstable Baghlan province in the south, where the deployment reached 355 troops in 2010.

Until 2008, the Czech engagement mainly included often-deployed field hospital and pyrotechnical specialists complemented by small groups of meteorologists and military policemen. Besides that, the Czech Special Forces (like their Polish counterparts) joined the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom several times (Střítecký 2010). However, a great change in the Czech engagement came with the establishing of the PRT (Provincial Reconstruction Team) based in the Logar province near Kabul in 2008

that followed the experience gained by the Czechs while they supported the German PRT in Faizabad and Badachstan (Hynek and Eichler 2011: 228–9).

Slovakia strengthened its presence in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of its troops from Iraq. Until June 2008 only roughly 70 Slovak troops operated in Afghanistan but the number has increased to over 300 troops since then, and these are deployed mostly in the Southern provinces of Uruzgan and Kandahar. Finally, the Slovenian presence also grew steadily since Slovenia joined ISAF in 2003. Since 2006 the Slovenian contingent, which numbered 90 troops at the end of 2010, operates in the training centre and PRT in Herat (Defencemanagement.com 2010).

The case of Iraq reveals different types of engagement. As mentioned earlier, Poland achieved a position of 'supply-driven leadership' while sending out 2,600 troops (including 1,500 combat troops) to Iraq. The country's substantial involvement provided the opportunity for the United States to delegate to Poland the command of a multinational division responsible for one of the four Iraqi districts (the Central South district) (Kavalski and Zolkos 2007). The other three countries of the region supported the mission but with some hesitation. Following appeals from Washington the Czech government eventually provided a fully equipped field hospital and small police-training unit numbering less than 300 personnel. However, the Czech representation did not clearly formulate its attitude towards the Coalition of the Willing (Hynek and Střítecký 2010a). Slovakia formed a chemical protection unit operating mostly in Kuwait in cooperation with the Czech specialists (Korba 2003). The Hungarian government cautiously supported the US activities by deciding to send 300 soldiers in a non-combat capacity and provided the Tazsar Air Base as a civilian training centre for the Iraqis (John 2006). Finally, although it joined the Vilnius group, which was formed after the Letter of the Eight (BBC News 2003), Slovenia remained rather critical of the Iraq mission, invoking its missing legitimacy (Mouritzen 2006: 140).

### 9.3.2 Motivation

Political elites from Hungary and Slovenia dominantly legitimize the choices informed by Atlanticism on the ground of alliance politics. This idea is based on a common burden-sharing in which the smaller state should compensate for the overall guarantees by actively engaging in foreign missions and operations (Marton and Wagner 2011: 193–5; Slovenia and ISAF 2010). While engaging relatively strongly in Afghanistan both countries also paid greater respect to the EU's foreign and security policy. Indeed, the Hungarian 'balanced atlanticism' (Kiss 2006: 105) also implies a strong commitment to ESDP/CSDP (European Security and Defense Policy/Common Security and Defense Policy) initiatives and operations (Rózsa 2002; Kiss 2006) that could be explained by the minority issue agenda as well as by the proximity to the Balkan wars.

The other three countries show some specific features in this respect. As regards Slovakia, its strong Atlanticist commitment was one of the crucial features characterizing its period of catching up after 1998, when the foreign policy came to be fittingly labelled as 'nurturing atlanticism' (Gyárfášová 2008). Indeed, the analysis has suggested that the strong Atlanticist commitment characteristic of the post-Mečiar normalization should not be understood separately from the 'catching-up' period, which was unique among the CE states. This specific period ended with the intermezzo of the new political representation, which was rhetorically critical of several US foreign political moves. Although the rhetoric of the current opposition disrupts the consensus, the foundation of the Atlanticist commitment remains strong. Consequentially, the Slovak elite have only hesitantly followed the development while finding legitimization in strengthening the European pillar of the transatlantic community (Bilčík 2002).

The Czech position towards the European foreign and security policy is rather similar as the Slovak one. However, the low level of consensus among the Czech political elite has appeared to encapsulate rigid Atlanticist positions, especially when the elite was backed by the rightist government. While the Czech Republic behaved vaguely as a fence-sitter during the Iraqi crisis, the centre-right government did not even try to stimulate a debate regarding the purpose and goals of the transformation of the Czech engagement in Afghanistan into the PRT. The position of the centre-right governments could be described as fully and blindly complying with NATO official discourse. The officials never reacted to the omnipotent critical reflection of the development in Afghanistan and very sensitively twisted the oppositional appeals to state that they allegedly targeted the Czech NATO membership (Hynek and Eichler 2011: 230–8). In that sense this approach resembles the Czech attitude towards the third pillar of US missile defence, where the Czech representatives mechanically transferred US discourse to the Czech situation, as opposed to Poland, which developed a strong national legitimization for the project (Hynek and Střítecký 2010a). Hence the Czech Atlanticism shows strong signs of followership combined with the phenomenon of post-decisional politics, in which it is assumed that the accepted external decision should not be discussed internally (Hynek and Eichler 2011: 238; Střítecký and Eichler 2012).

Poland is the only CE country that has national ambitions that apparently surpass the regional border. It is apparent that that size does matter in this respect, especially if the political representatives actively construct its political role. Given its size and population, Poland has different ambitions and externally represents a more prominent partner than the other regional partners (Cottey 1995; Osica 2003). Its manifestation of regional pride has been outlined above under the theme of consensus. Indeed, Poland has been actively building its deserved position of the proud 'special partner'. However, the reference to the economy-inspired concept of 'supply-driven



leadership' nicely indicates another manifestation of Polish Atlanticism that is connected with the Iraq War. The Polish participation in Iraq seemed to be substantially driven by the expected tangible gains connected with post-war reconstruction (Fawn 2006). The then Polish Prime Minister Leszek Miller was frank in expressing his hopes that the special relationship with the United States would translate into 'technical and economic partnerships' (RFE/RL Newline 2003). With immediate material issues at stake, the instinctive Atlanticism partially turned into the profit-oriented one (Rhodes 2004). As is already known with hindsight, these hopes have come to nothing, as some had predicted right away (Šedivý and Zaborowski 2004). Since the assumed benefits remained illusive, Poland began to relinquish the idea that the orientation towards the United States and closer cooperation with European allies outside NATO are mutually exclusive. In fact, Poland contributed to the first European territory-based ESDP missions, which had started before the Polish accession, and later contributed significantly to the next two African missions, EUFOR RD Congo and EUFOR Chad/RCA. According to Chappell (2010: 236), Poland, through this engagement, complied with the role of a reliable ally, showing that the Polish troops could be deployed anywhere in the world regardless of particular Polish defence interests. Although this perspective might apply, it overlooks the previously mentioned expectations related to the Iraqi operation that have not been fulfilled. Hence the shift to the ESDP and the European allies could be also driven by an Atlanticist feeling of disappointment. This claim could be further supported by the Polish activities following the election of President Obama, who revoked the plan to build the third site of US ballistic missile defence in the Czech Republic and Poland, which constituted the Polish top priority (Hynek and Střítecký 2009, 2010a), as well as introduced a much more accommodative policy towards Russia (Hynek *et al.* 2010). Recently, in the context of its approaching EU presidency, Poland resuscitated the Weimar group,<sup>3</sup> which also consists of France and Germany, and suggested several ways to strengthen the CFSP (Dickow *et al.* 2011).

#### 9.4 Energy security in Central Europe

Energy security is a topic that gained prominence after the oil crisis between Russia and Belarus at the end of 2008 and especially the gas crisis between Russia and Ukraine at the end of 2009. Especially the latter crisis had a deep impact on some countries of the region, particularly on Slovakia. The commencing Czech EU presidency became heavily involved in its settlement (Střítecký 2010: 164–7). However, the crisis did not influence only the countries more seriously hit by its consequences but, as [Table 9.2](#) shows, it led to an increased perception of Russia as a threat around the entire region. The overall situation regarding threat perception and import dependency is summarized in [Table 9.2](#).

Table 9.2 Russian threat perception and energy import dependency (in per cent)

Russian threat perception/dependency on Russian imports	Russian threat perception (2007)	Russian threat perception (2009)	Dependency on Russian imports (2009)	
			Oil	Gas
Czech Republic	57	72	56.08	79.2
Hungary	N/A	76	98.49	83.29
Poland	75	79	78.38	82.26
Slovakia	53	71	97	99.55
Slovenia	N/A	N/A	0 <sup>4</sup>	48.71

Sources: Carriere-Kretschmer and Holzwart (2009); Eurostat (2011).

From a regional perspective the Czech Republic is often considered as the most successful country in the sense that it is able to mitigate its dependency on Russian supplies. As regards oil, Czechoslovakia (later the Czech Republic) was fully dependent on the oil delivered through the Russian Druzhba pipeline only until the mid-1990s. By that time the Czech government decided to build an approximately 350-km-long pipeline from the Bavarian city of Ingolstadt to the refineries of Kralupy and Litvinov (IKL) (Nosko and Lang 2010). This pipeline was then connected to the Trans-Alpian Pipeline (TAL) that distributes oil from the port of Trieste. The pipeline became operational in 1996 and its used capacity roughly equals that of the Druzhba pipeline. This project was widely debated since the investment reached the (for that period) astronomical amount of CZK 12 billion (roughly current EUR 500 million),<sup>5</sup> but even in those times the arguments emphasizing diversification prevailed (Dančák and Závěšický 2007). Indeed, the IKL pipeline deliveries enabled the Czech Republic to neutralize the cut-off that came during the height of the negotiations over the missile defence instalment in the Czech Republic (Střítecký 2010).

The other important gas dependency-mitigating decision was connected with the contract concluded by the then state-owned Transgas company and the consortium of the Norwegian producers Statoil, Saga Petroleum, and Norsk Hydro in 1997, which ensured annually about 20 per cent of the gas consumption for the next 20 years. Additionally, there is currently a plan to build a 166-km-long pipeline connecting the Czech network to the German Ostsee-Pipeline-Anbindungsleitung (OPAL) pipeline and also to the Nord Stream pipeline (Nosko and Lang 2010). As has already been mentioned elsewhere, the issue of energy security became the top priority of the Czech presidency. It made up an essential part of all three of the 'E' priorities – energy, economy, external relations (Střítecký 2010). Last but not least, the level of securitization of the energy policy will be an issue again

in 2012–2013, when the government selects the victorious consortium that will build another block to the Temelin nuclear power plant.

Like the Czech Republic, Hungary made several steps to increase the diversification of its supplies already in the mid-1990s that mitigated but did not eliminate the impacts of the 2009 crisis. Most importantly, apart from expanding the gas storage capacity the government decided to build a new gas interconnector to Austria. In this way, Hungary has been able to replace a third of the supplies delivered through Ukraine since 1996. The situation further improved after the EU accession, which facilitated the construction of cross-border interconnectors. While the Hungary–Romania connection is already operational, the links to Croatia and Slovakia should be constructed soon. As far as the domestic debate is concerned, the Hungarian conservatives have tended to securitize Russian supplies, even if it was Horn's social-liberal government that outmanoeuvred the Russian company Gazprom when it came to the privatization of the distribution network (Deák 2006: 47). Interestingly, this governmental decision contrasts with the situation in the Czech Republic, where the Russian capital was allowed to enter the gas sector.

Despite showing the strongest regional perception of the Russian threat, the Polish success in mitigating dependency and promoting diversification has been limited. Poland is able to produce roughly one-third of its gas for consumption domestically, but with the rest it is highly dependent on Russian supplies (Nyga-Łukaszewska 2011). The crucial decisions regarding an increase of diversification came only recently. Although the project of constructing a pipeline from the Norwegian coast failed, the Polish state-owned gas company has focused on the construction of the LNG (liquefied natural gas) terminal Świnoujście, which should become operational in 2014. The terminal should process the gas from Qatar (Nyga-Lukaszewska 2011).

An interesting chapter in Polish energy security considerations was Poland's severe critique of the Nord Stream project. Polish officials raised many issues in this respect, including the project's geopolitical impact on the Baltic states, Ukraine, and Belarus; distortions in market conditions caused by the higher prices resulting from the immense costs of the project; and even ecological damages to the Baltic Sea environment. In reaction to the Russian–German plan Poland also introduced plans for the project Amber, which would connect Russia and Germany via all three Baltic states and Poland (Whist 2008).

Unlike the other part of the former federation, Slovakia did not carry out any particular steps to mitigate its dependency on Russian supplies in the past, even if the figures show that in terms of oil and gas Slovakia's dependence on Russia is the highest in the region. Slovakia's vulnerability resulting from its dependence on only one supplier and only one pipeline became apparent during the 2009 gas crisis. The Russian cut-off following the disputes with Ukraine severely hit the Slovak gas sector and

consequentially the entire Slovak economy. According to the post-crisis analyses the temporary shutdown limited or even stopped production in 770 enterprises while the economic loss reached EUR 1 billion. The Ministry of Finance also calculated that the nearly two-week crisis would have led to a 1–1.5 per cent decline in gross domestic product (GDP) growth for 2009 (Duleba 2010). Several steps taken during the critical period anticipated the post-crisis long-term measurements based on contracts with Western suppliers that would be able to cover a potential disruption of the Eastern supplies for a few weeks. Additionally, the reserves were increased to roughly a third of the annual consumption. However, the crucial diversifying effect should be established by the cross-border pipelines, among which the most effective one could be the Slovak–Hungarian interconnector, which should become a part of the south–north corridor connecting various pipelines in Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Poland. Importantly, this project is meant to connect the LNG terminals built on the Croatian and Polish coasts (Nosko and Ševce 2010).

Furthermore, Slovakia also holds the position of the largest natural gas transporter within the EU, transporting two-thirds of the gas arriving in the EU via Ukraine. Although this position could be economically interesting in terms of transit fees, it also caused Slovakia to have a deeper dependency on Russia. It should also be noted that Russia has recently prepared several projects that aim to allow Russia to bypass Ukraine and Belarus (and hence Slovakia) when supplying Western Europe with gas (most notably NordStream; Nosko and Ševce 2010). This Russian strategy also applies for oil as Russia is seriously considering closing an obsolete Druzhba pipeline. Plus, the proposed projects that have the potential to solve the lack of supplies for the well-developed Slovak refineries are far from being concretely realized. The realistic options include modernization of the Adria pipeline leading to the Croatian coast and connections to the TAL pipeline via the Czech Republic or Austria (Duleba 2010).

From several points of view Slovenia represents a specific case within this group. Apart from importing 100 per cent of its oil products, the country is also fully dependent on gas supplies arriving mostly from Russia via Austria but also from Algeria via Italy. The gas crisis of 2009 brought a short-time drop of the supplies by one-third, but the gap was balanced by the gas stored in Austrian facilities. Nevertheless, the gas situation belongs among Slovenia's essential security concerns. Slovenia has expressed interest in participating on the dominantly Russian–Italian South Stream project that has been perceived by most of the CE countries as a counter-project to the EU-backed Southern Corridor, including the Nabucco gas pipeline, the Italy–Greece–Turkey Interconnector, and the Trans-Adriatic and White Stream pipelines (Stier 2011). It should be noted that all of the above-mentioned projects remain highly uncertain, since generally the pipeline map east of the EU border remains highly uncertain as well. Finally, it should be mentioned

that due to its limited needs and natural conditions, Slovenia, unlike the other countries in focus, has a promising potential to improve its situation by applying renewable energy resources (EREC 2009).

## 9.5 Threat perception in Central Europe

The other chapters in this volume investigate whether Central Europe could be considered as a region. From the security perspective one of the essential features binding the states together could be a common threat perception (*cf.* Buzan, de Wilde and Waever 1998; Adler and Barnett 1998; Lake and Morgan 1997). The following part does not want to answer the question but it does aim at investigating the national threat perceptions. The analysis will be based on two data sets. The first summarized data set comes from the evaluation of the national security strategies.<sup>6</sup> The idea is to show and compare official assessments as they appear in the strategic documents. The second data set, summarized in [Table 9.3](#), is based on the extensive research conducted by Eurobarometer for the European Commission (DG Home Affairs) in June 2011 (Eurobarometer 2011). This research focused on the societal perceptions of predefined threats that in fact to a large extent comply with those indicated in the strategies.

*Table 9.3* Societal perception of internal security (percentage of population)

<b>Countries</b>						
<b>Threats</b>	<b>Czech Republic</b>	<b>Hungary</b>	<b>Poland</b>	<b>Slovakia</b>	<b>Slovenia</b>	<b>EU</b>
Economic and financial crises	38	52	22	40	45	33
Terrorism	14	5	9	11	3	25
Poverty	16	51	21	36	30	24
Organized crime	39	20	13	24	31	22
Corruption	38	27	11	31	47	18
Illegal immigration	10	4	1	3	2	13
Petty crime	8	9	7	20	6	13
Natural disasters	22	20	16	46	17	11
Environmental issues/climate change	12	16	4	14	15	11
Cybercrime	16	3	3	5	4	10
Nuclear disasters	8	4	2	9	3	8
Insecurity of EU borders	6	3	1	3	1	6
Religious extremism	4	1	1	1	2	6
Civil wars and wars	5	1	4	3	1	4

*Source:* Eurobarometer (2011).

The data based on the analysis of the national strategic documents show substantial similarities among the countries' official attitudes. These similarities could to a large extent be attributed to the transpositions of EU and NATO strategic documents. The notoriously illustrative moment could be the threat of (international) terrorism that is present as one of the top threats in all the security strategies, even if none of the countries in focus have been a subject of a serious terrorist threat or even an attack. Similarly, all the countries' strategic documents mention the issues of WMD (weapons of mass destruction) proliferation and neighbourhood instability, which are the main concerns of both EU and NATO strategic documents. An overwhelming consensus in terms of common threat assessment could also be found in the cases of threats to energy supplies and cyberspace. All the countries also recognize the danger of organized crime and corruption while they also appear to be securitizing migration through its potential negative aspects. The Czech Republic and Slovenia are the only countries of the region that do not seem to be seriously concerned about demographical issues while another group of three countries – Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia – officially recognizes the danger of nationalism/extremism. The Czech and Polish strategic documents further underline the vulnerability of critical infrastructures. Quite interestingly, Slovakia and Slovenia share concerns regarding the activities of foreign services while Slovenia is the sole strong regional proponent of the concerns related to climate change.

Contrary to the strategic documents, societal perceptions reflect this reality when the terrorist threat is perceived as rather low in all the countries, and the low perception is below the average of that in the EU (Bureš 2010). An initial analysis reveals that there is a similar perception regarding the threat of cyber attack, which is included in all the strategic documents, but its societal perception is rather low in all of the countries with the exception of the Czech Republic (16 per cent), where the figure is above the EU average (10 per cent). In contrast to terrorism, however, in this case low societal perception could be explained by the lack of recognition of this kind of 'new' threat as, for example, the discussions on the alleged attacks in Estonia or Georgia resonate mostly within the expert community. Moreover, a quick look at the results for other countries shows that, for example, only 2 per cent of Latvian society recognizes this threat (even though Latvia neighbours Estonia) while Bulgarian society does not recognize this threat at all (0 per cent). On the other hand, though, the Germans (27 per cent) or the Dutch (22 per cent) seem to be much more familiar with the nature of this threat.

Apart from the apparently adopted threats, all the documents display a high securitization of migration, even if with the exception of the Czechs, who approximate the EU average, none of the societies seem to take the issue seriously. The securitization is quite apparent as none of the countries suffer significantly from illegal migration. In this sense it is also quite interesting that Poland views emigration (especially economic emigration)

as threatening. Although all the strategic documents mention economic instability at least within a security context, only the Hungarian and Polish strategies include explicit references to economic instability as to a threat. That said, it is quite interesting that only one-fifth of Polish society (22 per cent) seems to be afraid of the economic crisis, even if the EU average is around a third (33 per cent). In contrast, though, a substantial group of Hungarians feel threatened by it (52 per cent), and the figures for the Slovenians (45 per cent), Slovaks (40 per cent), and Czechs (38 per cent) are only slightly lower. Also, the Polish security strategy was the only one to explicitly mention the collapse of the European integration as a threat.

The issue of corruption also deserves specific mention, as Polish society does not seem to recognize corruption as a major threat (11 per cent). This position contrasts with the concerns of the Slovenians (47 per cent), Czechs (38 per cent), Slovaks (31 per cent), and Hungarians (28 per cent) in regard to this matter. In fact, Slovenian society is the second most concerned with corruption in the EU (after Romania – 56 per cent). Surprisingly enough, the Polish figure is even below the EU average (18 per cent), and it is actually closer to the figures for Denmark and Finland (both 2 per cent) than to those for other regional players. It is also quite remarkable that the Czech and especially the Hungarian strategies do not explicitly mention nationalism/extremism among the threats. Finally the figures reveal that like the other EU members, the Central Europeans are not seriously concerned about religious extremism and wars.

## 9.6 Conclusion

This chapter attempted to investigate the issues of security and securitization in Central Europe while starting with the assumption that the security policies of the countries in focus reveal remarkable differences that often appear to be overlaid by simplifying labels and fancy metaphors. The overview of the security sectors began with an analysis of various manifestations of Atlanticism representing the crucial regional foreign political orientation. Although the ideological Atlanticist structure reaches hegemonic dimensions in all the countries, the actual political decisions differ in various respects. After examining the role of Atlanticism in the region, the chapter turned its attention to the widely debated issue of energy security, which was limited here, precisely in line with the Atlanticist understanding, to the relation between the security of supplies and dependency on Russian resources. Given this topic it seems to be apparent that the current energy supplies crises created some so far unfinished dynamics within the energy sectors. Finally, the chapter focused on the diverging threat perceptions of both the elites and the societies. Although some of the figures could be generally expected, some of the other positions, be they administrative or societal, revealed interesting counter-intuitive conclusions.

In a nutshell, despite being often considered as a monolithic bloc in terms of security, the CE states display various differences that serve as a foundation of diverse regional dynamics. This issue could be gaining importance as, apart from the security perspective, the future development appears to be less clear at the outset of the second decade of the twenty-first century than at the time of its birth. Thus, Central Europe constitutes an interesting subject for investigations targeted both inside and outside of the region.

## Notes

1. Due to the upcoming referendum on NATO membership that raised domestic political turmoil, Slovenia did not support the Iraqi operation during the initial, politically critical stage. Slovenia participated later while mostly supporting the training of the Iraqi security forces.
2. In case of Iraq the evaluation of engagement is connected with the first phase of the war that was characterized by the highly tense international political situation and hence can nicely illustrate the level of determination.
3. Weimar group or Weimar triangle refers to an informal cooperation between France, Germany, and Poland in foreign and security issues that started in the late 1990s.
4. Slovenia does not import crude oil (Oil in Slovenia 2009, [http://www.iea.org/stats/oildata.asp?COUNTRY\\_CODE=SI](http://www.iea.org/stats/oildata.asp?COUNTRY_CODE=SI), accessed 18 March 2012).
5. The annual state budgetary expenditures reached about 500 billion CZK (current EUR 20 billion) (Czech Republic GDP, <http://www.datosmacro.com/en/gdp/czech-republic>, accessed 16 March 2012).
6. The assessment is based on the following documents: *National Security Strategy of Hungary* (n/a), [http://www.mfa.gov.hu/NR/rdonlyres/61FB6933-AE67-47F8-BDD3-ECB1D9ADA7A1/0/national\\_security\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.mfa.gov.hu/NR/rdonlyres/61FB6933-AE67-47F8-BDD3-ECB1D9ADA7A1/0/national_security_strategy.pdf) (accessed 6 March 2012), *National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland* (2007), <http://merln.ndu.edu/whitepapers/Poland-2007-eng.pdf> (accessed 6 March 2012), *National Security Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia* (2001), <http://sova.gov.si/en/media/resolution.pdf> (accessed 6 March 2012), *Bezpečnostná stratégia Slovenskej Republiky (Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic)* (2005), <http://www.mosr.sk/data/files/833.pdf> [4] (6 March 2012), *Security Strategy of the Czech Republic* (2011) [http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/en/foreign\\_relations/security\\_policy/czech\\_security\\_strategy\\_reviewed.html](http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/en/foreign_relations/security_policy/czech_security_strategy_reviewed.html) (accessed 6 March 2012).

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