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**ENLARGING EU FOREIGN POLICY
THE ROLE OF NEW EU MEMBER STATES AND
CANDIDATE COUNTRIES***

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The accession of the states of Central and Eastern Europe to the EU in May 2004 was frequently perceived in the EU-15 as strengthening the Atlanticist element in Europe. The Atlanticism of the new member states is tempered by CEE governments who are trying to ensure that the EU and the US act together on the most important issues in international relations.
- The importance attached to the assumed Atlanticist dimension of the last wave of enlargement has been overestimated. The new member states have not proven to be the “Trojan horses of the US in Europe” as some senior political figures predicted prior to accession in May 2004. On the contrary, the new member states were instrumental in repairing the transatlantic rifts over Iraq.
- Poland is likely to remain the most committed Atlanticist, along with the Baltic countries. The smaller Central European countries such as the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia, are likely to voice their support for US policies more cautiously, giving greater regard to the opinion of the major EU players.
- The degree to which the foreign policy of the new member states will remain associated with idealistic goals is difficult to predict. But it can be assumed the longer the CEE countries are members of the EU, the more pragmatic their foreign policy will become.
- During the first year of membership, the new member states took some strong stances on foreign policy issues such as the Czech Republic on Cuba or in case of Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary on the issue of (not) opening the accession negotiations with Croatia.
- Poland and the Balts have had mixed results in their attempt to shape the EU’s relationship with Russia. Their push for a more comprehensive EU-Russia policy is mainly driven by domestic considerations. However, such an assessment needs to be balanced with the fact that with no real EU-Russia policy Poland and the Balts have acted similarly to France, Germany or Italy who also tend to pursue national rather than European interest in this respect.
- Poland has played an important role in engaging the EU in Ukraine, especially during the electoral crisis in 2004. However, to what extent Poland remains committed to pushing the other member states to recognize Ukraine as a candidate country is not clear yet.
- The diversity of the EU’s new neighbours implies that it is difficult for the new member states to agree on which third states should be prioritised in terms of CFSP and to set a common front. Such diversity makes it difficult for CEE member states to propose a convincing plan to its EU partners for dealing with these new neighbours.
- Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey are likely to have strong stakes at shaping the EU foreign policy in the future, particularly by getting the Black Sea region higher on the EU agenda.
- The main dividing line across “New Europe” is likely to run between Poland and the Baltic states on one hand and the smaller Central European Countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia) on the other, with the first group being more Atlanticist, more committed to push for a hard stance on Russia and recognition of the European aspirations of the countries in the EU near abroad. The second group is likely to keep a lower profile and “Europeanize” its foreign policy more quickly.

1. Introduction

A year has already passed since the ten countries of Central and Eastern Europe joined the European Union. This period allows us to make the first reflections as to how the new member states have been behaving as full-fledged EU members. While a lot of attention has been paid to the integration of the newcomers into the core policies of the Union, especially economically, what is often neglected is how the new members contributed to shaping the external relations of the enlarged EU.

This paper will look at the impact of the new member states in the area of the Common Foreign and Security Policy.¹ It will make reflections on the track record of those states in the period since they joined the Union. However, it will try to look beyond that and see what will be the likely path of their involvement in the domain of EU foreign policy in the future, with specific reference to the EUs “near neighbourhood“ and the internal dynamics of the integration process. It will try to give a broader picture of the region, with particular emphasis on points and areas that are relevant in this respect. It will also try to reflect to some extent on the positions of countries that are currently not EU members but which might become members in the future (candidate countries) and whose contribution to the way the EU acts in the world should be discussed and acknowledged even at this early stage.

Prior to the “big bang” enlargement, Wolfgang Wessels suggested that three main scenarios could explain the behaviour of the new member states in the area of CFSP. The first scenario has been labelled as *neutral* where the newcomers would act passively and more or less follow the lead of the strongest players in foreign and security policies, i.e. EU-15 heavyweights such as France, Germany and the UK. Another scenario was labelled as *pessimistic*, suggesting that the newcomers will not behave constructively in CFSP and would in fact pursue their national interests, even if this meant damaging the internal cohesion of the EU. The third scenario, marked as *optimistic*, assumed a very active involvement of the CEE countries in the shaping of CFSP, bringing in new impetus, visions and expectations and thus helping to enforce the external action of the European Union. This study will try to demonstrate that none of these scenarios can be applied to the group of new member states as such because in many aspects of foreign policy they simply do not act as a block. It will try to show that the elements of all the three scenarios can be traced in the behaviour of the new member states in EU foreign policy.

¹ The notion of CFSP is for the purposes of this paper viewed in a very general sense and will include a wide range of EU external activities such as enlargement. On the other hand it will not focus too much on ESDP – a specific element of CFSP.

One characteristic often quoted in connection with the likely behaviour of the new member states in CFSP was that the May 2004 enlargement would be a strongly “Atlanticist” one. This assumption was further reiterated by the fact that five out of the ten countries that joined the EU in 2004 almost acceded to both the EU and NATO simultaneously. Not long prior to the signature of the treaties of accession, most of the soon-to-be members of the EU showed their commitment to the United States during the Iraq crisis, by signing the so called “Letter of Eight” (Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic) and the “Vilnius Letter”. This action was quoted to have caused very deep and serious splits in what was soon to become the enlarged European Union, giving ground to an infamous division of the continent into Old and New Europe.

This paper will argue that the importance attached to the assumed Atlanticist dimension of the last wave of enlargement has been grossly overestimated. The new member states did not prove to be the “Trojan horses of the US in Europe” as some politicians in the old-EU liked to put it. The question remains to what extent this has been due to the recent rapprochement between the EU and the US and to what extent it was the enlargement that caused this rapprochement. This paper will argue that the divisions evident during the Iraq crisis are not likely to be long lasting in nature. Furthermore, future divisions within the EU are probably not going to run between the old and the new member states but will emerge (or in fact are already emerging) *within* the New Europe as well as they are already evident within the *Old* Europe.

Another point that deserves attention is the motives of the new member states with regard to EU foreign policy. These are often typified as being idealistic rather than pragmatic. It is not unreasonable to expect that the new member states would place greater stress on the role of values such as human rights, democracy, rule of law, etc. when dealing with third parties through CFSP. The experience that the new members of the EU went through during communist times and also during the transformation period make them more sensitive to these issues and their importance within EU foreign policy. Most of the countries we are referring to have direct experience of the strong impact of the EU’s inclusion of democratic principles and conditionality in its foreign policy agenda. For this reason they do not underestimate the role of these instruments in precipitating internal policy changes in countries outside the EU. However, the question remains to what extent this phenomenon will prevail once the newcomers understand that EU member states often act pragmatically.

Commentators have also discussed the geographical scope of the activity of the new member states in CFSP. It was expected that the newcomers would not be equally interested in all aspects

of CFSP, but that they would focus on the Eastern component of EU foreign policy. This has proved to be only partially true. This is because the new member states do not act as a unitary bloc. In fact, it is more appropriate to see each of the new members as having a foreign policy agenda in Eastern Europe that reflects a multitude of factors that are often specific to the history and aspirations of each state.

At this juncture it is necessary to highlight the point that the three elements (i.e. Atlanticism, idealism and geographical preferences) regarding CEE countries behaviour in CFSP cannot be treated in isolation but should be seen as being interlinked and complementary strategies and processes. In this respect, factors such as Atlanticism, idealism and the geographical focus of CFSP will be treated in this paper in an integrated manner where each of these factors is seen to condition the impact of the others.

2. Setting the stage – New Member States during accession negotiations, Convention and Intergovernmental Conference

Let us start with some general considerations relating to the involvement of the new member states in EU foreign policy. The first consideration is the negotiation of the CFSP chapter during the accession negotiations. It is hardly surprising that this chapter was usually among the first ones to be closed. This occurred for two main reasons. First, a relatively low portion of the *acquis* is devoted to the CFSP domain, which did not require an extensive process of adoption into domestic legislation. The most notable examples where the candidate countries had to adapt to EU requirements were related to the creation of political directors and European correspondents in foreign ministries, or putting a mechanism in place that would enable a swift imposition of sanctions vis-à-vis third parties. The other reason for relatively swift progress in negotiations was that since 1995 the candidate countries were often invited to join EU common positions and demarches, although their choice seemed at times rather arbitrary.² The few examples of non-alignment with EU common positions mainly related to problems of a technical nature (for instance Poland in the case of the EU's declaration on land mines could not subscribe to a common stance as it had not ratified the Ottawa Convention), or in cases where the issue at stake were more sensitive because it concerned an area of particular interest,³ or it concerned other

² The candidate countries were not invited to subscribe to EU common positions on the Middle East, the former Soviet Union or former Yugoslavia.

³ For example, Poland did not condemn the government of Belarus in 1998 after it had expelled EU diplomats as it was holding the OSCE Presidency at that time (see 'Bigger EU, wider CFSP, stronger ESDP,' Institute for Security Studies, April 2002).

candidate countries.⁴ Hungary was the only candidate country that supported all EU common positions, statements and demarches without reservations.

All the new member states (or earlier with the status of candidates or later acceding countries) had a chance to participate substantively in the discussions on how the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy will be framed in the future, including the work of the Convention and subsequently the Intergovernmental Conference. It can be argued that this particular area was of a strong interest to most of the new member states. Their positions on CFSP were not determined by the necessity of a detailed knowledge of the *acquis* and EU decision-making procedures. Although the representatives of most of the new member states kept a rather low profile in the Convention deliberations, it was in the area of CFSP and defence that they made their voices heard most.

This can be explained by several motives. One of the most important was certainly the preoccupation of the accession countries with ensuring a strong transatlantic link especially in the area of security and defence, ensuring the compatibility between ESDP and NATO, and ensuring that the USA as the major ally will get involved in any future debates relating to the shaping of European security. The relations between ESDP and NATO were one of the focal points and posed a serious problem especially for those countries that were about to join NATO after the invitation issued by the Prague summit of the North Atlantic Council in November 2002, just as the Convention was starting to debate these issues. Their representatives looked rather suspiciously at attempts to put NATO aside and enhance the role of the EU in the defence arena. The representatives of the then candidate countries showed a rather reserved approach to some of the progressive arrangements suggested in course of the Convention deliberations, such as inclusion of a mutual defence clause in the Constitutional Treaty. There were even greater reservations in candidate countries about the Convention's Presidium proposals for structured co-operation. This was perceived by many as a strategy for creating a European avant-garde in the area of security and defence. A self-constituted group of countries to be included in an additional protocol attached to the Treaty with an unclear guarantee of who could be admitted at a later stage caused much concern in Central and Eastern European capitals at the time. Such unease related to the fact that participation in structured co-operation would not allow most CEE countries to participate, because their military capacities were not sufficient and in many cases

⁴ Some candidate countries did not support EU statements on OSCE missions and the state of Russian minorities in Estonia and Latvia.

undergoing major restructuring. This led to frequently expressed fears that the CEE states could be left out of the core areas of further integration.

Equally, one must not forget that the Convention debates coincided with the escalation of the Iraq conflict which demonstrated deep and damaging cleavages in the EU, putting the EU candidate countries in a particularly uncomfortable position. Most of the candidate countries sided – at least rhetorically – with the US and its “coalition of the willing” which was strongly opposed by many important EU players, notably France and Germany. For this they earned some very critical remarks not only from Jacques Chirac but also from Commission President Prodi.⁵ From the perspective of the candidate countries, many clauses as suggested in the draft text of the Constitutional Treaty seemed to be aimed at institutionalising the divorce of Europe from the US in the security and defence fields, underlining the fact that the two sides of the Atlantic are likely to take different paths in the future. This was something that Central Europeans wanted to avert at any cost. However, they did not have enough power to do so, not least because according to the Convention rules of procedure they did not enjoy the same rights as the member states, in a sense they could not block the consensus among the existing EU members. They, however, found very strong supporters amongst the more Atlanticist members, namely the UK. Together they made a strong push at the IGC and achieved important amendments to the draft treaty which made the final draft of the mutual defence clause less “competitive” with Article 5 of the Washington Treaty and “structured co-operation” more inclusive and NATO interconnected. But in this sense, it could be argued that the crucial point was the British “yes” to the proposal for structured co-operation. The positions of the candidate countries were seen to be less important.

On the other hand, the candidate countries showed relatively strong support for some other progressive measures in CFSP, including the creation of the post of EU foreign minister as well as the European External Action Service. These two initiatives can be considered major improvements in the Constitutional Treaty in enhancing the coherence and efficacy of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. The objections of the candidate countries, if there were any, did not concern the concept of an EU foreign minister as such but rather his or her job description. After the draft Constitutional Treaty was adopted, some representatives claimed that the role of the foreign minister should be clarified, especially in relation to the President of the European Council and the College of Commissioners where he/she would act as one of the

⁵ Arguably, Prodi’s remarks were even more damaging, especially for the political elites of the acceding countries as the Commission was often perceived as the best friend of the candidates unlike many of the EU-governments.

Vice-Presidents. The intergovernmental conference subsequently made major improvements in terms of clarifying these points.

The motives of candidate countries for supporting this move may be explained by different considerations. The fact that most of the candidate states are small or at best middle-sized countries means they are not likely to view EU foreign policy as a way of projecting their own interests and ambitions. On the contrary – a stronger CFSP with a European foreign minister and its own diplomatic service might give them internally more influence over the way Europe acts on the world stage than they would have as separate actors in international relations, through the possibility of pulling together with more important players. The rather low profile of the candidate countries on many issues of international relations would allow them even to sacrifice more unanimity for QMV in EU foreign policy, because their stakes in many issues are not so strong and they do not necessarily want to keep their “red lines” like some of the major players. This assumption, however, proved somewhat disputable in the first year of EU membership, as will be explained later. A similar consideration would apply to the “anchoring” of the new post of EU foreign minister. Not surprisingly, many new member states would like to see this post attached more to the Commission rather than to the Council. The Commission provides for a much better way of influencing the policy processes by small and middle sized countries than the Council where there is a much greater risk of these countries being bullied by the larger member states. The truth is that the Constitutional Treaty does not yet provide for a definite answer as to whether the EU foreign minister will be acting more under the hat of the Council, being commanded by the member states, or in the Commission, acting more in the interest of the Union and being influenced by fellow commissioners. If the current political deal is that Solana would become the first EU foreign minister, the first scenario is more likely to prevail. Solana has been anchored in the Council for many years now and his way of running EU foreign and security policy will probably not change too much in the first years after the creation of the new post.

For similar reasons the new member states are supportive of the European External Action Service. As many of the diplomatic services of the new member states are under strong pressure from finance ministries to cut down their political representation in third countries, especially where there are no particular ties, the European Foreign Service might turn out to be an attractive alternative. Especially because it is supposed to recruit its employees from the Commission, the Council and also from the member states’ diplomatic services, which would enable the European foreign service to utilize the expertise of certain diplomats and maintain

existing links. A European foreign service may give CEE countries a greater opportunity to set the agenda than is the case at the moment in the Council, because of its scarce resources and the less pro-active role of the current High Commissioner for CFSP who does not enjoy the right of initiative.

But an important consideration will apply to where the future EU diplomatic service is anchored. At the moment, no definite scenario is on the table either – it could be under the Council, under the Commission, under both of them or it could be totally independent. The viewpoints of the new member states on this issue are not yet known, but it is certainly one of the things that politicians and foreign ministries in Central and East European capitals should start addressing very soon.

3. New Europe's Atlanticism – an ever lasting love?

As suggested earlier, the accession of the new member states of Central and Eastern Europe to the EU has often been perceived in the EU-15 as the one that will ultimately strengthen the Atlanticist element in Europe. Although it is difficult to provide a generally accepted definition of Atlanticism, in this paper it is perceived as foreign policy that tends to act in line with the position of the United States. In relation to membership in the EU Atlanticists prefer the EU and the US acting together in international relations rather than the EU adopting a different policy or acting on its own.

The main reason for the alleged Atlanticism of the new EU member states prior to accession demonstrated itself during the course of the Iraq crisis when most CEE governments sided with the Bush administration. Firstly, there were the leaders of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic who put their signatures along with representatives of the UK, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Denmark to the so-called "Letter of Eight" that appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*. Only later, did a similar initiative of the so-called Vilnius 10 group,⁶ (i.e. new members of NATO and/or states hoping to join the NATO in the CEE region) make a similar move. This made some EU leaders think that these countries will act as committed Atlanticists even after their accession to the EU (given the proximity of EU accession), putting good relations with Washington first and acting in support of the US no matter what the other EU governments think. It would be premature to assess only one year after accession the accuracy of this judgement. However, what is certain is that the picture in Central and Eastern Europe is much more complex than this simple

⁶ The Vilnius Group consisted of the following countries: Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

assumption of committed Atlanticism. Here one may identify two key reasons for expecting a more complex reality.

Firstly, it would be wrong to assume that the alignment with US foreign policy is absolutely unconditional and non-contested in the new EU member states. Nonetheless, all the CEE countries that recently acceded to the EU can be labelled at least as “instinctive Atlanticists”⁷, meaning that they strongly believe in the value of the transatlantic partnership and any situation which forces them to make a choice between Washington and Brussels puts them in a very uncomfortable position.

Secondly, the “instinctive” Atlanticism of the new member states derives mainly from their historical experience. The Central and Eastern Europe region has been for centuries dominated by different great powers. To a considerable extent all the countries in the region (with the exception of Hungary or Bulgaria), tend to view themselves as victims of the “concert of powers” up to World War I as well as of Western European pacifism prior to the outbreak of World War II. On the other hand, the United States is historically viewed very positively firstly as the champion of independent states in Central Europe (thanks to US President Wilson’s stance at the Versailles conference in 1919), and secondly because the United States honoured their commitments in the region, contributing to the defeat of communism leading to the end of the Cold War as well as supporting CEE countries joining NATO.

Nonetheless, despite the undoubted importance of these two key factors the degree of Atlanticism varies significantly across Central and Eastern Europe, depending on factors other than those that underpin “instinctive Atlanticism”. It would thus be a mistake to view the new EU member states of Central and Eastern Europe as a compact block who will always act in a unified manner in CFSP negotiations on the issue of future US-EU relations.

3.1 Security considerations and Atlanticism

Much of the evidence presented thus far supports the contention that differing perception of security threats determines the degree of each country’s Atlanticism. It has been suggested and demonstrated with regard to the involvement of candidate countries in the Convention that all the CEE countries see the USA and NATO as the best guarantees of their security. But the threat assessment arising from various international risks (i.e. “hard” or “soft” security threats) varies significantly across the region. For the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary,

⁷ A term used by the authors of „The Economist“

the perception of external threats is much less intense than that of the Baltic states or Poland, and most likely also for Romania and Bulgaria after their accession. For this reason it is easy to understand that the perceived importance for hard security in the Baltic region (including Poland) is much stronger than in Central Europe.

For the Baltic states (or Balts) this has to do with their complicated relationship with Russia that is still perceived as a threat for various reasons. Here brief mention may be made of recent moves towards authoritarianism, Russia's self-appointment as advocate of the rights of Russian minorities in Estonia and Latvia, economic and political pressure or soft security threats such as environmental hazards or trans-border crime. The recent developments show very little evidence that the EU could at the moment provide the Balts with strong leverage on Russia. Firstly, there is no consistent EU policy towards Russia and Putin deals with the major EU players separately. Often, some EU leaders even initiate these separate dealings, as a summit in March 2004 of France, Germany, Spain and Russia summoned by Mr Chirac demonstrates. Secondly, the perceptions on how to deal with Russia between the old-EU member states and the Baltic countries often diverge, a topic that will be treated in more detail in the next section. The old member states, and the big players in particular, hardly ever share the Balts' fears and concerns of Russia as a suspicious neighbour not to be trusted. Thirdly, the Balts do not have enough international weight to deal with Russia on their own – for Putin they are simply not partners. So they have to look to other states to get them on board when dealing with the Russian government. In this respect, from the Baltic perspective the US at the moment is seen to be a more reliable partner than the EU. Consequently, the Baltic states rely more on the US than on the EU in dealing with Russia. Unless EU policy towards Russia changes considerably in the coming years, one may expect an enduring Atlanticism in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The Russian question also plays a key role in Polish Atlanticism as well. A long-term motivation for Polish support of US military presence in Europe has been to counterbalance the Russian influence in the region and also because of the historical experience of Poles being sandwiched between the competing ambitions of Germany and Russia.

The strong Atlanticism in the Baltic countries and Poland compared to the other Central European counterparts might be explained by regional geopolitics as well. The Baltic Sea region, which includes some older member states, such as Denmark, Finland and Sweden, can certainly be considered as inclined to align more closely with the US rather than with France and Germany (representing “autonomism” as a counter concept to “Atlanticism”) on many foreign policy and

security issues. Denmark might be taken as a prime example, being a member of NATO but having an opt-out from ESDP and not having participated in the West European Union. Denmark also strongly supported the accession of the Baltic states into NATO.⁸ Although Finland and Sweden might adopt a low profile due to their non-alignment, it seems that both countries realize the importance of NATO for security in the region and most especially in the cases of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. Given the very good relations between the Scandinavian and Baltic neighbours, strong Atlanticism is likely to prevail in the whole Baltic Sea region.

The Baltic states and Poland, unlike their Central European counterparts, border on potentially much more unstable and vulnerable regions and states, such as authoritarian and unpredictable Belarus, (and to some extent still the Ukraine); and in the cases of Bulgaria and Romania – the Black Sea region or Western Balkans. For countries that are exposed to these unstable regions, it is understandable that they prefer closer alignment with the US who is seen as the most reliable source of “hard security”. As long as the EU does not demonstrate a firm commitment to engaging (militarily if necessary) in the so-called “EU close neighbourhood,” these countries will probably prefer to keep a closer dialogue with Washington rather than relying on the EU’s rather toothless foreign policy. Consequently, very much will depend on how actively the enlarged EU is willing to be involved in its close neighbourhood through policies such as ENP (European Neighbourhood Policy) and to what extent it will be able to deploy its soft as well as possibly hard power to stabilise the regions surrounding it.

3.2 Political elites and Atlanticism

The other point that has to be acknowledged in connection with the presumed Atlanticism of the new EU member states is that much will depend on the political constellation in the individual countries, namely the composition of the respective governments. In the CEE region there are countries, notably Poland and the Baltic states, where the pro-US orientation will not be questioned politically, at least not for the time being, regardless of who is in power. But looking at the other Central European countries (the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia), the picture may change from government to government. A good illustration of this phenomenon is the case of the Czech Republic during the Iraq crisis, which witnessed deep political divisions across the political spectrum as to how to respond to the proposed military strike and to what extent to engage in the US-led “coalition of the willing”, but also across the major ruling coalition party – the Social Democrats. As a result of complicated intra-

⁸ For further reference see Evaldas Nekrašas: ‘EU enlargement and the Baltic Sea region,’ Swedish Institute of International Affairs Conference paper.

governmental negotiations the Czech Republic eventually decided not to participate in the Iraqi Freedom operation. This decision was heavily criticised by the opposition Civic Democratic Party (ODS). It can be assumed that if the ODS were in power during the Iraqi crisis, the position of the Czech Republic would have been much more pro-American and thus Atlanticist.

A similar phenomenon could be observed in neighbouring Slovakia. An analysis by the Bratislava-based Institute for Public Affairs (IVO),⁹ drawing on a number of interviews with high ranking Slovak politicians, shows that the Iraq crisis marked steep division between very strong pro-US support within the governing coalition, while the opposition parties such as SMER (centre-left) or the Slovak Communist party were strongly opposed. On the basis of this observation, IVO classifies the attitudes of Slovak political elites in terms of their inclination to view the US-EU relations into three categories: those in favour of a stronger and more independent EU role on the world stage, those who favour the primacy of NATO as a source of stability and prefer a balanced partnership between the US and EU, and finally those who would prefer to keep a strong bilateral tie with Washington even at a cost of not acting along with the other EU member states. As in the case of the Czech Republic, such differences exist not only between political parties but also across parties as well.

Hungarian foreign policy and Atlanticism is reputed to be more consistent than that of the Czech Republic. This reputation is based on the strong co-ordinating role of the Prime Minister on issues regarding external relations and relatively high levels of apathy among the general public toward foreign policy issues. Nonetheless, the domestic political constellation has had an impact on the consistency of Hungary's Atlanticism. FIDESZ, although largely Atlanticist and a dominant right-wing party, has used in the past a more anti-American rhetoric than one would have expected, in its goal to attract more nationalist voters. This "nationalist" strategy is similar to Václav Klaus's opposition in the Czech Republic to the US strike on Iraq in early 2003.¹⁰

In contrast, Poland throughout 1990's demonstrated long-lasting and consistent support for US foreign policy over many issues, starting with the First Gulf War, Kosovo air campaign, Afghanistan and later Iraq. This attitude was never questioned by Polish political elites,¹¹ a situation that differs markedly with the political elites of the Czech Republic (over military actions in Kosovo and Iraq). Poland's pro-US stance remained constant despite the fact that the

⁹ Šťastný, Gábelová: 'Transatlantic Relations as seen by politicians in Slovakia', Institute for Public Affairs, 2004.

¹⁰ Significantly, his opinion was not consistent with the party he used to chair (Civic Democratic Party, ODS).

political scene had changed frequently during this period. And there is another explanation why Atlanticism is so deeply enshrined in the thinking of Polish political elites – the strong Polish diaspora in the US plays a very important role in lobbying Polish interests with US administrations. On the contrary, in the Czech Republic, Slovakia or Hungary relations with the US (and foreign policy in general) play a very minor role in general elections.

In Latvia and Estonia the pro-American (and, at the same time, anti- Russian) political consensus is quite robust across existing party lines. The one factor, which might change this in the future, is a greater enfranchisement and mobilisation of Russian speaking minorities. Thus in countries where the broad political consensus on an Atlanticist orientation in foreign policy is weaker, political actors in those countries can just use the fact they are in opposition as leverage on the ruling government, without this position having necessarily to reflect their long-term strategies on the desirability of siding with either the EU or the US.

It is possible to argue that the Iraq crisis was such a specific case of a transatlantic rift that it is not possible to draw general conclusions on the assumed “Atlanticism” of the political actors in CEE countries on the basis of their attitude to this issue.¹² Furthermore during the Iraq crisis, the new member states were in the final stages of accession into the EU, and were thus not eligible to vote or take part in the deliberations.¹³ This enabled them to take a slightly more independent approach, and their stances perhaps can even be perceived as a “revenge” for not being admitted to the deliberations at an earlier stage.¹⁴ This situation was a unique one and is not a reliable indicator of future behaviour.

However, the new member states have been instrumental in repairing the recent transatlantic rift over Iraq. The fact that Washington now understands that there are more friendly countries in the EU might lead the US administration to adopt a more open approach to the EU as such. This was clearly demonstrated during the visit of George Bush to Europe in February 2005. The highlight of his journey was the Bratislava summit with Putin. Significantly, even in Brussels, it was Slovak Prime Minister Mikulas Dzurinda who spoke for Europe with regard to Iraq. This can

¹¹ Although some experts tend to point out that some political parties have started to challenge the traditional bases of Polish foreign policy, including the strongly pro-Atlanticist orientation: e.g. Lepper’s Samoobrona (Self-Defence) Party. See, M. Zaborowski: “Poland - What Kind of an EU Member?” in *Reshuffling the European Chessboard*. Institute for Public Affairs, 2004.

¹² The analysis of IVO noted earlier shows that even representatives of parties who otherwise tend to favour a pro-US policy strongly contested the legitimacy of the action. Note for example ANO (J. Banáš, K. Glončáková-Golev), the Christian Democratic KDH party (V. Palko) and the HZDS (Sergej Kozlík).

¹³ The participation of the accession countries in the deliberations of the EU bodies happened only after signing the Accession Treaty on 16 April 2003.

also be viewed as a sign of understanding among the older EU members that the good relations of Central European states with Washington might work to the benefit of the EU. But once the CEE countries are members of the EU, depending on domestic political constellations, their positions in the Council regarding issues where relations with the US are at stake might differ, depending on who is in power. This situation might be similar to that of Spain immediately after the March 2004 elections, when there was a U-turn in the attitude of the new government on Iraq. Consequently, a country that was one of the strongest supporters of US military action decided almost overnight to pull out of Iraq.

Support of US policies, especially if they are viewed to be somewhat controversial from the European (i.e. EU) perspective, may not emerge just because the United States is viewed as the primary guarantee of CEE security. The countries in the region do expect the United States to offer something in return, exactly because sometimes they opt for policies that are not always popular with their respective electorates or with the other EU leaders. The most frequently articulated issue over the last year or so has been the inclusion of the new member states in the visa waiver programme which would enable the citizens of Central and Eastern European countries to travel to the US for a period of up to three months without visas. At the moment, only Slovenia enjoys this status. The visa waiver programme contains a number of conditions that all new EU member states fulfil – with the exception of a refusal rate that is not supposed to exceed 3%. The argument of most of the governments in the region is that with EU membership, the CEE countries do not pose significant security concerns for the US administration in terms of possible large-scale trans-Atlantic migration. Moreover, the move is seen largely in symbolic terms as the minimum that the United States could do in return for the CEE allies strong supporting on the Iraq issue.

But their efforts are not likely to be successful in the short-term. Inclusion in the list of countries to which the visa waiver programme applies would require a change in legislation by Congress. This would be difficult, not least because of increased concerns over national security among both Democrats and Republicans. There were even proposals to abolish the visa waiver programme completely, reintroducing visas for all the countries currently on the list.¹⁵ The issue was touched on during the visit of George Bush to Bratislava in February 2005 but his message

¹⁴ The accession countries were not invited to join the European Council meeting on 28 February 2003 that adopted a common position on Iraq. It was decided that the accession countries would be immediately informed on the conclusions after the summit.

¹⁵ This idea was eventually turned down. However, citizens of countries participating in the visa waiver programme will in the future have to carry passports containing biometric data.

was rather ambiguous with uncertain promises being made. Nonetheless, it is clear that the governments in Central Europe will continue to raise this question in bilateral relations with the US.¹⁶ If the United States resists embarking on a road toward lifting the visas, such US intransigence might lead to a cooling of bilateral relations with Washington and less enthusiastic support for its policies. Moreover, the new member states might – if they feel their voice is not heard – try to use the EU as leverage to achieve a change of policy in Washington in this respect.¹⁷

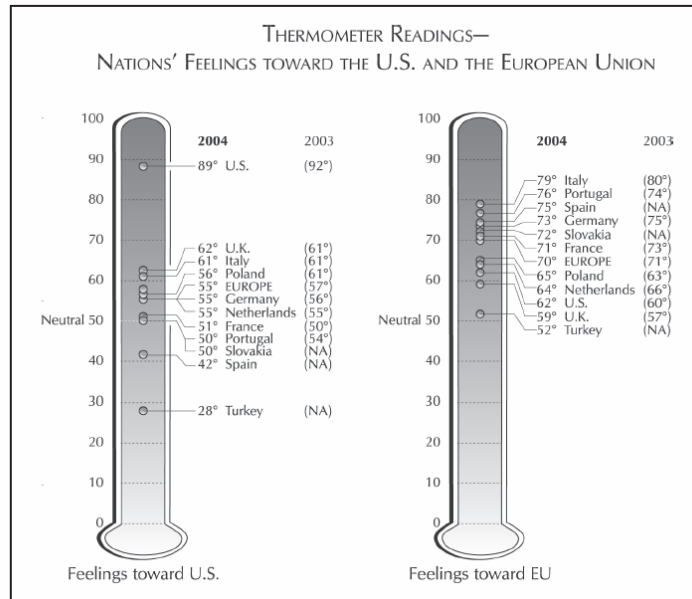
3.3 Public opinion and Atlanticism

Another point that ought to be considered in connection with the Atlanticism of the EU newcomers in CFSP is public opinion in these countries. In all of the accession states, in relation to Iraq, an overwhelming majority of the populations in the region opposed military intervention in Iraq. But Iraq is not the only example. The recent Transatlantic Trends Survey published by the German Marshall Fund of the United States shows that in many ways, the new member states are not necessarily more Atlanticist than the old members. Although the last year survey (2004) included only Poland and Slovakia from the group of the new member countries, it can still provide very useful guidance on attitudes in Central and Eastern Europe in general.¹⁸

¹⁶ The issue was for instance discussed during the visit of Marek Belka (Polish Prime Minister) in Prague in September 2004 where he agreed with the Czech Premier Stanislav Gross that they would coordinate their efforts to achieve the ultimate goal of lifting US visa for the citizens of Poland and the Czech Republic.

¹⁷ This provision is already included in the so-called Hague programme for Freedom, Security and Justice, highlighting the future agenda for policy concerning visas, asylum, immigration and internal security in the EU.

¹⁸ Transatlantic Trends is comprehensive survey of American and European public opinion. Polling was conducted in the United States, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, and the United Kingdom and, for the first time, Slovakia, Spain, and Turkey. The survey is a project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States and the Compagnia di San Paolo, with additional support from the Luso-American Foundation, Fundacion BBVA, and the Institute for Public Affairs (IVO). Findings and further analysis are available at www.transatlantictrends.org

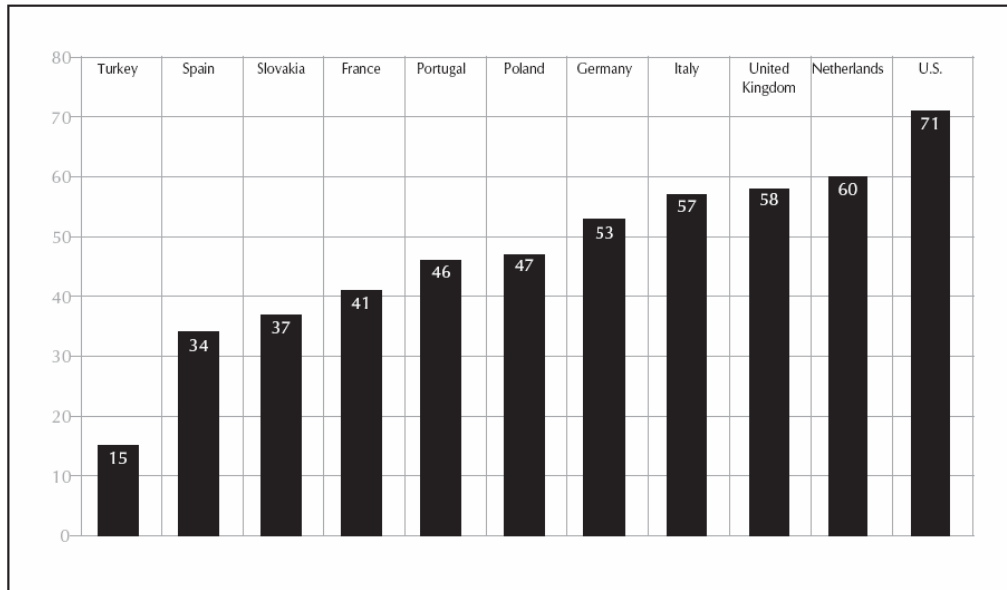


Source: *Transatlantic Trends Survey 2004*.

For instance in the thermometer readings, it shows that the “warmth” of feeling towards the US in Poland is 56°, but still lower than for instance in the UK (62°) or Italy (61°). Moreover for Poland this figure represents a decline of five points since 2003.¹⁹ On the contrary, Slovakia (50°) can be found at the very opposite end of the spectrum, with only Turkey (28°) and Spain (42°) exhibiting significantly lower degrees of sympathy towards the United States. On the other hand, looking at sympathy towards the EU, Slovakia ranks much higher with a score of 72° (even higher than France) and Poland with 65°. Therefore the Polish public feels (9 points) warmer toward the EU than the US. An Atlanticist index, developed from the Transatlantic survey places Poland in the middle of the countries surveyed, with a score of 47 which is lower than Germany (53), Italy (57), UK (58) or the Netherlands (60), while Slovakia is at the bottom of the table with a score of 37.²⁰

¹⁹ A special type of survey question that measures the attitudes of citizens in selected countries towards the US and EU using the convenient and easily understandable format of a thermometer reading.

²⁰ Ronald Asmus, Philip P. Everts, Pierangelo Isernia: “Across the Atlantic and the Political Aisle: The Double Divide in US-European Relations”. “The Atlanticist Index” was based on questions such as the sympathy to the US, desirability of the US global leadership, NATO’s essentiality, the share of common values between the US and EU or the importance of having allies when acting militarily. Published by the German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2004. More information is available at www.gmfus.org



Source: Asmus, Everst, Inermia: "Across the Atlantic and the Political Aisle: The Double Divide in US-European Relations". 2004

According to a similar survey undertaken in the Czech Republic by the STEM agency (December 2001), 75% of Czech population was in favour of coordinating Czech foreign policy with the EU. Coordination with US foreign policy was favoured by 37% of respondents. Moreover, when answers to these survey questions were combined a majority (over 50%) of the public regarded Czech foreign policy as following the right direction because there was no blanket decision of coordinating with the US.²¹

To look at the public opinion in the region more broadly, use can also be made of the latest Eurobarometer survey, undertaken in October/November 2004.²² Examining public perceptions of the United States in promoting world peace and stability, the survey shows that only three countries out of the 30 surveyed view the role of the US positively, all of them being new member states or accession countries: the Czech Republic, Lithuania and Romania. A similar scenario would apply to perceptions of the US in the global fight against terrorism. While a majority of the public of the new member states view the US role positively, there is in contrast a negative view of the US among a majority of the publics in most of the EU-15 member states with the exception of those belonging to the traditional supporters of US policy, i.e. the UK and the Netherlands. The role of the EU in promoting peace in the world and the fight against terrorism is viewed most positively by Lithuania, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, which show the highest positive assessments in the EU. Most of the other newcomers are scattered around

²¹ See, Věra Řiháčková: 'Czech Republic: Europeanisation of a hesitant Atlanticist?' EUROPEUM, Prague, 2005.

²² http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb62/eb62firsten.pdf. This is one of the most recent comprehensive bi-annual surveys of various EU-related issues, undertaken in 25 EU member states as well as candidate countries.

EU average, with only Poland viewing the positive role of the EU in these domains rather sceptically.

On the other hand, this Eurobarometer survey also suggests that the populations of the new member states are much more receptive to the idea of having a genuine CFSP. Public support for CFSP is strongest in Slovenia (81%), Poland (78%) and Slovakia (75%), but also in the Baltic states it is above the EU average (Latvia and Lithuania at 71%, Estonia at 70%, the EU average being 69%). Only Hungary and the Czech Republic demonstrate less enthusiasm for a genuine CFSP, with 69% and 59% in favour respectively. The picture becomes more mixed when an examination is made of attitudes towards European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). An interesting observation is that all the new member states are overwhelmingly in support of ESDP, as opposed to some of the old member states, with support ranging between 88% in Slovenia to 84% in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Estonia, with only Lithuania exhibiting a lower level of support (but still quite high at 81%, i.e. at the same level as France).

One has to be cautious in interpreting these findings for two reasons. First, the high level of support in the CEE region might also result from a lower level of familiarity with what CFSP/ESDP actually entail, including for example a more complicated relationship with NATO or with the United States, or the necessity for increasing defence spending, or the willingness to engage militarily beyond EU borders. Secondly, it is questionable to what extent public opinion is really shaping government stances in foreign policy. Over the past few years, mass surveys have shown large support amongst EU citizens for a genuine CFSP, and yet the member states have not been able to move forward significantly on this issue. More generally, national governments are rarely under strong electoral scrutiny with regard to foreign policy issues. In fact, the example of Iraq shows that the governments of countries such as Italy or Spain adopted very firm pro-American positions, despite strong opposition within public opinion.²³ Therefore the fact that public opinion in Central and Eastern Europe might not be more Atlanticist than in old EU-15 does not necessarily exclude the fact that the governments in the region will keep a stronger pro-US profile.

To summarise the discussed observations, the presumed Atlanticism of the new member states is likely to bear two main consequences in the near future. First, most CEE governments will try in

the foreseeable future to ensure that the EU and the US act together on the most important issues in international relations. Second, the degree of their willingness to support the US in situations where there are divergent opinions with the EU will vary across the region, as it varies within the EU-15. Poland is likely to remain the most committed Atlanticist, along with the Baltic countries. The smaller Central European countries such as the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia, are likely voice their support for US policies more cautiously, giving greater regard to the opinion of the major EU players.

4. Geographical priorities in the activity of the new member states

The area in which we might expect to see the most diverging stances of the new member states vis-à-vis CFSP is arguably the geographic focus in which these countries would like the EU foreign policy to evolve most. EU foreign policy is obviously a complex phenomenon, with many different countries pushing for privileged relations or close engagement of the EU in various parts of the world. It can be argued that each enlargement brought about a new dimension to the external action of the EU – the accession of the UK brought closer ties with the Commonwealth countries, Spanish and Portuguese accession increased the focus on Latin America, and the accession of Finland and Sweden fostered a Nordic dimension. With the entry of countries from Central and Eastern Europe, it was assumed that these countries would push the Common Foreign and Security Policy eastwards. But the term “East” in itself does not say much. It is not any precisely defined area, and it would be more accurate to describe the goals of the newcomers as wishing to develop a consistent EU policy towards neighbours who are outside the EU, especially those in the East as opposed to the neighbours at the southern shore of the Mediterranean.

The focus on neighbours is understandable for several reasons. Firstly, none of the newcomers have more “global” aspirations with the possible exception of Poland, whose control of one of the occupation sectors in Iraq can be considered as a sign of stronger foreign policy ambitions. But even Poland can at the very best aspire to be a regional leader but hardly ever it behaves as such, it does not aspire to become a regional speaker on issues such as the Middle East peace process (arguably it does so on other issues such as Ukraine). Moreover, the regional leadership of Poland is strongly contested in neighbouring countries, especially in the Czech Republic and

²³ This is not to suggest that the foreign policy positions of a government have no electoral consequences. It is undoubtedly true that the Iraq issue played at least some part in general elections in Spain (March 2004) and the UK (May 2005) and in the April 2005 regional elections in Italy. Only in Denmark did the incumbent pro-US government not suffer electorally because of an

Hungary. Secondly, all of the newcomers, again with the exception of Poland, are relatively small countries, a fact that obviously influences their foreign policy goals. During the transition to democracy, apart from the primary goals of joining the EU and NATO, the foreign policies of these countries were focused mostly on achieving and sustaining friendly relations with their neighbours. With membership of the EU, the CEE “neighbourhood” remains the main focal point but the focus shifts to countries remaining outside the EU. And precisely because the CEE countries are rather small, acting through the EU becomes a very convenient tool for these countries to achieve their goals. There is the hope that the 2004 accession states expertise with the EU’s new neighbours (being “old” neighbours for CEE countries) will be acknowledged by the other EU partners and they will be allowed to take the initiative and give a new impetus to pre-existing relations between the EU and these countries.

In this respect one important point has to be borne in mind. There are many new neighbours and they constitute a rather heterogeneous group. They stretch from Russia in the North (although Russia is *stricto sensu* not a new neighbour due to the previous Finish accession, but the inclusion of the Baltics certainly gives EU-Russian relations a different dimension) to Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro in the South. These new neighbours are very different in many respects: they include countries that will soon join the EU such as Romania or those who are expected to join at a later stage, e.g. Croatia. They also include countries whose eventual accession is beyond doubt, at least politically, such as Serbia and other Western Balkan countries.²⁴ But the group also includes the Ukraine where recent developments shed some more optimism and the EU will soon have to tackle the issue of how to respond to European aspirations within the Ukraine. Belarus is a particular case in that relations between the EU and this failed state are practically frozen and nothing much can be achieved as long as Lukashenko stays in power. Finally, Russia is a very special case in many respects, not least because of its size, economic importance and the fact that it is still – if not a superpower – at least a very important actor on the world stage.

Thus, the diversity of the EU’s new neighbours implies that it would be very difficult for the new member states to agree on how third states should be prioritised in terms of CFSP. Such diversity makes it difficult for CEE member states to propose a convincing plan to its EU partners for dealing with these new neighbours.

unpopular stance on the Iraq issue. However, all of these electoral outcomes can be most appropriately explained in terms of domestic political factors.

²⁴ But the future of EU enlargement is strongly contested in some member states, not least in France which will hold a referendum on any enlargement, taking place after 2007.

4.1 Russia – will the Balts be able to prompt a common EU voice?

As has been already suggested, Russia represents a very special case in relation to the EU. Not only is it by far the largest neighbour of the EU, it is economically and arguably strategically the EU's most important regional partner. It is quite evident that there is at present no common EU stance as to how to deal with Russia. On the contrary, it seems that the EU's dealings with Russia are a sum of bilateral diplomacies rather than a consistent front. A few recent examples where certain old EU member states (France, Germany and Italy) took very specific and independent positions vis-à-vis Russia underscore this point. At times it seems as if some of the old-EU leaders were competing for Putin's attention. Perhaps the most striking example is that of Berlusconi when during the Italian Presidency in 2003 he openly spoke in favour of Russia joining the EU or showing understanding for the tough stance of Putin on Chechnya. The question remains whether there is any real substance behind these gestures. However it is certainly the case that many of the EU-15 member states' relations with Russia lack strong tensions and they do not want to see a hardline approach that some of the new members would like the EU to adopt.

Looking at how to deal with Russia from the perspectives of the new member states, there is no doubt that this is a number one issue for the Balts and very important for Poland as well. Russia still poses a risk for the Balts in various respects – ranging from cultural pressure to geopolitical, economic and political threats. The cultural pressure stems mainly from a continuous raising of the question of Russian minorities in the Baltic states at various fora, including OSCE or EU-Russia summits. This is particularly sensitive in the case of Latvia where the Russian speaking minority constitutes close to 40% of the total population,²⁵ and in the past there has been pressure from Russia to turn Latvia into a bi-communal state. Estonia has a large Russian speaking population as well (28%),²⁶ which leaves Lithuania the only Baltic state where the Russian minority is not a contentious issue in bilateral relations.

But there is some strong evidence that Russia is exerting economic and political pressure on the Baltics. All the Baltic states are heavily dependent on Russian energy supplies, as well as on the willingness of Russia to pay for transit costs through Baltic pipelines.²⁷ There is a strong fear of

²⁵ According to CIA world fact book, the Russian proportion of Latvian population was 29.6 % in April 2005. But a distinction has to be made between those who claim Russian nationality in surveys and the overall number of Russian speakers (including migrants from other parts of ex-USSR). Were this figure to be used the total number of Russians in Latvia would increase to 40%.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ For example, Russia stopped shipping oil through the terminal in the Latvian port of Ventspils allegedly claiming that the operating company (Ventspils nafta) was charging fees at "uneconomic" levels. Some analysts believe this was a way of exerting

the extent to which Russia can influence politics in the three countries, through use of intelligence, blackmail and espionage, as demonstrated by the impeachment of former Lithuanian President Rolandas Paksas in April 2004 for alleged links with Russian organized crime and secret services.

Apart from these issues, there is a worrying uncertainty over the borders with Russia. Lithuania until recently remained the only country in the Baltics that has signed a border treaty with Russia, although it is still awaiting ratification by the Duma (the Russian parliament). Estonia followed suit only in May 2005. Although the ratification was awaited in Duma in course of this year, Russia withdrew its signature from the Treaty. Such a move followed the decision of the Estonian parliament to attach a preamble to the ratification act, claiming the legal continuity of the Estonian state with the period preceding the Soviet occupation of Estonia, thus disputing the current border demarcation (although without legal effect). There is no agreed border treaty between Russia and Latvia. The border question is understandably one of the issues that make the Baltic countries suspicious of Russia's intentions, an idea until recently fostered by very strong Russian opposition to NATO's enlargement to include these three Baltic states.

The situation has certainly changed after the twin "accession" of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia to NATO and the EU in 2004 and it is clear that Russia is now perceived to be a less imminent threat. But there is a certain frustration among the Baltic leaders arising from the inability of the EU to speak with one voice to Russia and address the enduring concerns of the Balts over both internal developments within Russia as well as with what can be seen as revived Russian imperialism.

This has been demonstrated on several occasions where the three Baltic states have tried to guide the EU's attention to issues concerning Russia. Salient examples include the "Rose Revolution" in Georgia, the "Orange Revolution" in the Ukraine, Putin's dealings with Chechnya or criticism of Russia's reversion to authoritarianism after the Beslan attacks. However, the Balts were not very successful in convincing their EU counterparts that a tough line had to be taken on Russia on these issues. This is due to several factors. Firstly, the Baltic republics are newcomers and small states, therefore they carry relatively little weight in the formulation of EU foreign policy. Secondly, they are still weakly represented in key EU institutions dealing with EU foreign policy – namely in the Council secretariat and the Commission where they do not hold any top posts

pressure to sell the remaining shares (not already in Russian hands) in the company to Russian buyers (Source: Financial Times, 20 February 2005).

(apart from the respective Commissioners or members of cabinet).²⁸ Thirdly, as was highlighted earlier, many old EU member states hold particular relations with Russia that they are unlikely to sacrifice for the sake of intimidating Russia through automatically accepting the Balts' arguments.

But it can be expected that the Balts with the support of the Poles will continue to raise the Russian card in the EU, in which they are also likely to be joined by some of the countries in EU-15 who prefer a hard-line approach to Russia, such as the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries. Although it might be difficult for the Balts to shape the common position in the Council or to influence the Commission agenda, one body that they can use as leverage in this respect is the European Parliament (EP). Here we could witness a strong activism of Baltic and Polish MEPs on issues relating not only to Russia but on other issues that have direct implications on EU-Russian relations, such as Georgia or the Ukraine. The deliberation on the report of EU-Russian relations, tabled before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the EP by Cecilia Malmström in April 2005, shows a large number of amending proposals made by Baltic and Polish MEPs who are attempting to give the report a much tougher line than is evident in the draft.²⁹

One of the points that occupy the minds of the Baltic leaders is that Russia should admit responsibility for the events following the liberation of Eastern Europe from Nazism, leading to a forceful occupation of the region by Stalin. In this they have been joined by the demands from Poland for Russia to admit some responsibility for the Molotov – Ribbentrop pact of 1939. For this reason, the Presidents of Lithuania and Estonia refused a Russian invitation to mark the Sixtieth anniversary of the end of WWII in Moscow on May 9, 2005, although the President of Latvia, Vaira Vike-Freiberga accepted. But Vike-Freiberga during an official visit to Sweden underlined that although she agreed to join the aforesaid celebration in Moscow, she still believed a re-evaluation of the post-WWII era by Russia was necessary. It is also quite interesting to see what tactics Putin used in this respect – in order to lure the Baltic leaders to attend the anniversary, he implicitly promised that the border treaties that Latvia and Estonia desire could have been signed in May 2005. Such implicit promises came to nothing.

However it is important not to portray Baltic interests as being so clear-cut in nature. It must be acknowledged that the three Baltic states do not have the same priorities and goals in relation to Russia and in fact there is not much co-ordination among them. Lithuania has probably best

²⁸ 'Evident' crisis in EU-Russian relations in Rzeczpospolita, retrieved from http://www.gateway2russia.com/st/art_275177.php

managed to tackle bilateral relations with Russia.³⁰ The mutual relations between Moscow and Vilnius embrace fewer points of conflict emanating from their mutual history. Their mutual border was recognized at a relatively early stage and a treaty was signed in 1997 (albeit not ratified). Furthermore, the absence of a huge Russian minority takes some tensions off bilateral relations between the two capitals. Thus, the most controversial issue has been the settlement of the status of the Kaliningrad exclave where Lithuania is the principal transit corridor for travel between mainland Russia and the Kaliningrad oblast. While this issue was dealt with mainly through the EU, Lithuania could hide behind various Commission reservations. It was the Commission in fact, who refused to contemplate the idea of retaining a visa free regime, or a transit corridor, through Lithuanian territory – an idea Russia favoured.³¹

Estonian politicians seem to keep a rather low profile in relation to its Eastern neighbour, and it seems as if political representatives are a bit afraid of intimidating Russia. Recently Estonian Prime Minister Juhan Parts rebuked Latvia for its outspoken criticism of Russia because such criticism was viewed as being potentially damaging to Baltic-Russian relations.³² On the other hand, the decision of the Estonian Parliament to attach the aforesaid preamble during the ratification of Russian-Estonian border treaty speaks for the opposite – this was a purely symbolic gesture without any practical effect, and speaks for the belief that Russia would eventually give up, perhaps issuing a similar clause during the ratification in Duma. Perhaps the strongest Estonian voices in relation to Russia may come from the European Parliament from MEPs such as ex-foreign minister Toomas Hendrik Ilves.

Latvia remains the most vicious of the Baltic states from the Russian perspective. And it is at the moment pushing the hardest to get the EU to recognize Soviet aggression against the Baltic states after WWII and to make the EU speak to Russia with one voice. In this respect, Latvia has been partially successful – it secured the support of Tony Blair and George Bush. The latter spoke in favour of the Baltic states position at the NATO summit in February 2005. In addition, the stopover of George Bush in Riga on his way to Moscow for the Sixtieth anniversary of the Allied victory over Nazism was an important diplomatic success for Latvia. On the other hand, it

²⁹ See the draft report at http://www.europarl.eu.int/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/PR/560/560592/560592en.pdf and amending proposals at http://www.europarl.eu.int/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/AM/562/562208/562208en.pdf

³⁰ See “Bearish”- City Paper interview with Edward Lucas, the *Economist*'s correspondent in Moscow.

³¹ The issue of transit through Kaliningrad was finally settled in November 2002 by the EU-Russia agreement on the so-called Facilitated Travel Document (FTD) for multiple or single entry visa or Facilitated Rail Travel Document (FRTD) for single journey by train, issued by the Lithuanian consulate. Another problem was that a lot of the Kaliningrad region residents were not in a possession of an international Russian passport but only an internal one. For this reason, a transitional period was agreed allowing the Lithuanian authorities to issue FTD on the basis of internal Russian passports until December 2004.

³² Ahto Lobjakas: Baltics: 'Latvia Spearheads Effort to Force Russia to Confront Its Past,' RFE/RL, 2005.

underlines the thesis that when the Baltic states (and in this case particularly Latvia) do not feel their voice is being listened to in Brussels, they turn to Washington where they are more likely to be successful – and this again illustrates the Atlanticist inclination of these countries.

Although Poland does not have such strong concerns regarding Russia as the Balts, Polish leaders still see Russia as a risk. This perception is based less on Russia's *internal* political and economic activities and more on renewed imperialist tendencies of Russia in treating its neighbours. Undoubtedly both factors are linked. Consequently, Poland wants for mainly geopolitical reasons to get as many countries out of the Russian sphere of influence as possible through promotion of the benefits of a pro-Western and pro-European orientation. That is why Poland is also supportive of the EU's new neighbourhood policy and calls for recognition of the choice of countries that chose to follow the lead of the EU. The ultimate aim is, however, to minimise Russian influence on Polish affairs.

It is beyond doubt that it will be very difficult to build a genuine common EU stance on Russia in the near future, despite the fact that it would benefit the Balts very much as their capacity to have an influence within the CFSP framework will grow the longer they are members of the EU. But the recent shift to *realpolitik* where the bigger states ostentatiously ignore their EU partners and pursue their self-interest is unfortunately very likely to apply to EU-Russian relations, perhaps more than to any other region. It cannot be expected that Russia will be too enthusiastic about the emergence of any significant pro-active EU presence along its borders – the *status quo* is extremely convenient for Russian politicians as it enables them to play EU members against each other and this gives them a much stronger negotiating role than they would have otherwise.

But it is also possible that we might witness the Baltic states pushing the EU to engage more closely in other parts of the former Soviet Union, namely in the Caucasus, Ukraine and Moldova. Firstly, this is because of the deep-rooted conviction that the other former “brotherly nations” have the right to opt out of the Russian sphere of influence and chose a pro-European path just as the Balts did. Secondly, there are pragmatic reasons, where the Balts favour more opposition to Russia's pervasive influence. This stance is underlined by the fact that many of the old-EU states are not ready to view Russia as interfering with the internal business of small neighbouring countries. Thus it makes perfect sense for the Baltic countries and Poland to encourage a more pro-Western stance among Russia's small neighbours. Ideally these small states would eventually join the EU.

4.2 Poland – paving the way for the Ukraine to join the EU?

Even before Polish accession to the EU, it was obvious that the Ukraine is a priority country for Warsaw. The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs was very active in the formulation of its position on how the EU should deal with the Ukraine after the 2004 enlargement. In January 2003 it circulated its own vision of the new neighbourhood policy in a non-paper (i.e. discussion paper). This document brought forward a number of broad as well as concrete proposals, including, *inter alia*, the establishment of a European Democracy Fund enabling NGOs to implement EU-funded projects, strengthening democracy and the rule of law in neighbouring countries or use of the European Investment Fund to help the SMEs in the region. Although the non-paper does not refer specifically to the Ukraine but covers other countries such as Moldova or Belarus, it makes special recommendations such as EU recognition of the “European choice”. Furthermore it advocates that the existing Partnership and Co-operation agreement should be upgraded to a standard association agreement.

Apart from long-standing historical, social, political and economic links between the two countries, there seems to be an overwhelming political consensus in Poland that the Ukraine should be given the right to join the EU. Prior to the European Parliament elections in June 2004, none of the eight major political parties in Poland opposed the European aspirations of Ukraine, including the two populist parties that are sceptical about the EU – Self-defence (Samoobrona) and the League of Polish Families. According to the League, the Ukraine would be a natural ally of Poland in the EU and would obviously increase its weight in the club.³³

The positions of the main Polish political parties show that there are at least two reasons why Poland should strive for the EU accession ambitions of the Ukraine to be recognized. Firstly Poland generally sees its role as pushing the EU neighbourhood policy to the East rather than to the South. The argument here is that there has to be a clear differentiation between the southern neighbours of the EU (i.e. Mediterranean countries of the southern shore) who are not European and recognition that Eastern neighbouring countries are European. Some political parties, most notably the Law and Justice party, even believe that the Ukraine rather than Russia should be the main focus of the European neighbourhood policy³⁴. The second argument in favour of the Ukraine has to do with geopolitics – the Ukraine is seen as a buffer between Poland and Russia that is important because of a deep-rooted perception that Russia is a potential threat. If the right

³³ Taras Kuzio: ‘Poland lobbies EU for Ukraine’, Eurasian Daily Monitor, 2004.

³⁴ Russia, however, is *stricto sensu* not part of the European Neighbourhood Policy, although some of its instruments (e.g. the New Neighbourhood Instrument to become one EU financial instrument for the neighbouring countries) will be applicable to Russia as well

of the Ukraine to join the EU is not recognized, there is a risk that it will tighten its relations with Russia and will remain in its “sphere of influence”.

The willingness of Poland to retain “special” relations with Ukraine was self-evident even in the period of the run-up to accession. Poland strongly lobbied the European Commission to retain a visa-free regime for Ukraine and later to impose visas on Ukrainian citizens only at the date of accession. It should be noted in this respect that the Czech Republic and Slovakia had introduced such visa regulations as early as 2000. In the end, Poland agreed to introduce visas for Ukrainian citizens six months prior to accession. However, Poland managed to extract some important concessions from the Ukraine. Poland undertook to issue free visas to Ukrainian applicants and in return the Ukrainian government agreed to retain a visa free regime for Polish citizens. This issue demonstrates how important bilateral relations with Ukraine are for Poland – for other former CIS countries such as Russia and Belarus visas were introduced at an earlier stage partially because of a failure to conclude re-admission agreements.

Poland was also concerned with the EU not being willing to grant market economy status to the Ukraine.³⁵ This, had the practical consequence of setting quotas on steel imports from Ukraine to the EU at 185,000 tons in 2004, far below what Poland itself was importing from the Ukraine before the accession.³⁶ The Polish focus on the Ukraine was thus strong from the very moment of accession. Obviously, the events of December 2004, leading to a re-running of the second round of the presidential elections in Ukraine and final victory for the pro-European presidential candidate Viktor Yuschenko, gave a completely different dynamic to Polish policy. The instrumental role of Poland in dealings with the Ukraine can be demonstrated by the fact that it was the Polish President Aleksandr Kwasniewski, along with the EU foreign policy chief Solana and Lithuanian President Adamkus, who were entrusted by the EU to travel to Kiev after negotiations following the first (second round) presidential elections were contested leading to a dangerous political deadlock. It shows that EU leaders are able to recognize the leading role of Poland. However, it also shows an apparent lack of interest in the Ukraine among the leaders of the EU heavyweights, a situation that contrasts sharply in how these leaders normally deal with Russia.

The victory of the strongly pro-reform and pro-EU candidate in the Ukraine obviously shed a completely changed the European aspirations of this Eastern European country. Although this

³⁵ The recognition as a market economy is essential for the admittance of a country to World Trade Organisation (WTO). Russia was granted the status of market economy already in 2002.

issue was in the past played down by many top EU politicians, not least by former Commission President Prodi,³⁷ it is clear that it will be very difficult to maintain this rhetoric from now on. Interestingly enough, the Ukrainian factor was evident in the December 2004 European Council decision to launch accession negotiations with Turkey. The point some countries, and notably Poland, are making now, is that once we agree that Turkey can become a member of the club, the EU cannot possibly say no to Ukraine. This has led to a lack of opposition from Poland to open accession negotiations with Turkey. This is because if Ukrainian accession were not at a consideration, the attitude to eventual Turkish accession would probably be much more reserved due to Vatican unhappiness about such a development.

The events of December 2004 showed firstly the reluctance of some old-EU member states to give Ukraine a green light immediately, partially because of fears of antagonising Russia. But it turns out that Putin might not have a problem with Ukrainian aspirations to join the EU – it seems that for Putin Ukrainian membership in NATO is much more problematic.³⁸ Putin accepted the Yushchenko victory in the re-run elections in January 2005 without any reservations, despite showing indisputable support for Yanukovych ahead of the elections.

The visit of Yushchenko to Brussels in February 2005 did not leave anyone in the EU in doubt that for the new Ukrainian president there are no alternatives to the aspiration of full membership. Not even the fact that the EU and Ukraine were able to move ahead with European Neighbourhood Action Plan quickly. Yushchenko spoke openly of his ambition to start accession negotiations in 2007. But again, there is an inter-institutional cleavage: while the European Parliament called very openly to acknowledging candidate status for the Ukraine and applauding Yushchenko during his speech, the reaction from the Council was much more lukewarm. Jean-Claude Juncker as the incoming Council president “warned against offering Ukraine the prospect of full membership” (*The Times*, December 10, 2004). The Commission has kept a rather low profile in the debate so far, but it clearly would like to move ahead with the Ukraine in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).

What is going to be the future of the Ukrainian card in the EU and how active Poland and perhaps some other new member states will be in this process remains to be seen. However, recognition of the possible candidate status of the Ukraine now depends on the internal political

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Prodi was alleged to say that Ukraine “will never become a member of the EU”. He consequently claimed that the media misquoted him.

³⁸ Taras Kuzio: “Orange Revolution exposes EU’s deficient Ukraine policy”, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 2004.

development in the EU as well as on the progress of the reform process in the Ukraine itself. The complications with ratification of the EU Constitutional Treaty in some member states, underlined by the recent rejection of the Treaty in France and the Netherlands, will lead the EU to rethinking its strategy towards further enlargements (i.e. after Bulgaria and Romania) beyond 2007. And it is highly unlikely that if the ratification process fails the EU would be willing – at least for the time being – to give a green light to Ukrainian wishes to commence negotiations on EU membership.

4.3 The Central European countries – pulling South rather than East?

The geographical focus of the remaining new member states – the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia - is not as clear-cut as in the case of Poland and the Baltic republics. To some extent, they are interested in the Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) but not to the same degree as Poland and the Baltic states.

Russia does not pose an imminent threat to the CEE countries even though it is still sometimes viewed with suspicion; because of internal political developments rather than as a security threat to the Central European region. Bilateral relations with Russia are for the most part normalised where recently the focus has been on the settlement of Russian debts. Although the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia are still quite dependent on Russian energy supplies (crude oil and natural gas), this dependency especially in the cases of Slovenia and the Czech Republic is much less than for other countries in Central and Eastern Europe.³⁹ Since the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary or Slovenia do not share a border with Russia this eliminates many contentious issues. Historical legacies are also much less controversial than in case of the Baltics and Poland. Russia has never been a dominating power in the CEE region except during the Cold War period. Although there were Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia and Hungary during the Communist era, they pulled out very soon after the democratic changes at the beginning of 1990's. Slovenia is a very special case in this respect, because it was part of Yugoslavia, and so Russia exerted very little influence over this country and which had much closer links with its Western neighbours such as Italy and Austria than with the former Soviet bloc countries.

In relation to the Ukraine and perhaps other countries falling under the ENP, the picture is somewhat different. Two of the Central European countries – Hungary and Slovakia – share a common border with Ukraine, and there are certain cultural as well as economic links – given by

³⁹ The Czech government intentionally kept Russian bidders out of the privatisation of Unipetrol, the state-owned oil refining company.

the presence of a Hungarian minority in the Western region of the Ukraine (Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia or Trans-Carpathia) as well as the historical links of Slovakia to this region (which was in the interwar period part of Czechoslovakia) and the presence of a Ruthenian minority in Slovakia. But these links are much weaker and far less important than in case of Poland. Still, these two countries are likely to support a viable neighbourhood policy in relation to the Ukraine in particular. But to what extent the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia will push along with Poland for recognition of the candidate status of the Ukraine is not very clear. On the other hand, as the Ukraine is so dominant in terms of Polish foreign policy priorities, the other countries in the region may try to fill the gap and take the initiative in fostering links with other states in the East, such as Moldova, Belarus or the Caucasus states. But there is very little evidence at the moment to prove that this will indeed be the case. Furthermore, after the accession of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, the level of support for seeking closer relations with Moldova and the Caucasus states will increase.

The region that draws much more attention from the perspective of the Central European countries is South-Eastern Europe or the Western Balkans. There are both general and specific explanations for this interest. In general terms, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia enjoy special relations with the Western Balkan countries in many respects. In the case of Slovenia relations are perhaps strongest. Since Slovenia was once part of Yugoslavia it has very good knowledge and close links to the South-Eastern European region. But there are also more pragmatic explanations – Slovenian companies and enterprises have invested heavily over the last decade in many ex-Yugoslav countries,⁴⁰ and for this reason the prosperity of the region and eventual accession into the EU is undoubtedly in Slovenia's self-interest. Despite the fact that there were some contentious issues particularly in relation to Croatia, concerning the dispute over territorial waters in the Adriatic, this is not likely to pose any huge obstacles to support of the Croatian bid for EU membership (an issue to be examined later in this paper).

Hungary's interest in the region is determined by two particular factors: first is the presence of Hungarian minorities in Serbia (Vojvodina/Western Banat), the other one is a thousand-year historical link with Croatia. The minority issue has always been an important element behind Hungarian foreign policy thinking. The assurance of privileged treatment and the well being of the Hungarian diaspora will be one of the focal points for Hungarian priorities in CFSP. The degree to which the issue is important for Hungary was demonstrated during the Convention and

⁴⁰ In 2000, Slovenian FDI in the four countries of ex-Yugoslavia: Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro amounted to about 65% of overall Slovene foreign investment.

the IGC, where the Hungarian delegation was very successful in pushing through the inclusion of a special reference to minority rights among the values of the EU in the Constitutional Treaty. In practical terms, the question intensified with the accession of Hungary into the EU. Consideration had to be made prior to accession of the large number of ethnic Hungarians living outside the EU, and practical problems such as having to possess a visa when travelling to Hungary. The question of a large Hungarian minority, who live in Slovakia (estimated around 450,000 ethnic Hungarians), was settled by the simultaneous accession to the EU and for Romania (with about 1.5 million ethnic Hungarians) this will probably happen in 2007. Thus the largest remaining Hungarian minority dwelling outside the EU relates to the approximately 290,000 ethnic Hungarians (2002 estimate) living in the Vojvodina region of Serbia.⁴¹

The other strong motive for the Hungarian focus on Western Balkans is the long-standing historical and cultural links with Croatia. Since the 12th century Croatia was joined to Hungary by virtue of a dynastic union that combined the Hungarian and Croatian crowns. Croats have always enjoyed autonomy (even after the establishment of Dual monarchy in 1867) and privileged treatment compared to other nationalities living under the Hungarian crown. Croatia has been traditionally viewed as one of the least complicated of Hungary's neighbours, partially because of the absence of a large Hungarian minority.

In case of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, links to the Western Balkan region can also be explained mainly by historical and cultural motives. This stems from the fact that the Southern-Slavic nations - Croats, Serbs, Slovenes and Bosnians who lived in Austria-Hungary often went to study in Prague which was the main centre of Slavic education in the Empire and there was a very lively intellectual exchange especially during the national revival in the nineteenth century. Today Croatia remains the most popular destination for Czech and Slovak tourists during the summer. Moreover, during the conflict in Yugoslavia Czech and Slovak diplomats were very active in the search for peace. Two examples illustrate this activism. First there was the appointment of the ex-minister of foreign affairs Mr Jiri Dientsbier as the special UN envoy for human rights in ex-Yugoslavia. Second, there was a Czech-Greek peace initiative that tried to avert military action during the imminent humanitarian crisis in Kosovo in 1999.

The strong interest of the Central European states in the Western Balkans relationship with the EU was clearly evident when the EU Council of Foreign Ministers decided not to open accession negotiations with Croatia on March 17, 2005. The decision not to open the accession

⁴¹ Source: Government Office for Hungarians Abroad, <http://www.htmh.hu/english.htm>

negotiations in accordance with the original timetable was due to alleged non-compliance and co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal for ex-Yugoslavia (ICTY) – a position based on the opinion of its chief prosecutor Carla del Ponte. The main sticking point was seen to be the failure of the Croatian government to organise the surrender of General Ante Gotovina to the ICTY.⁴² The decision of the Foreign Affairs Council was strongly opposed by Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia and Austria. The Hungarian Prime Minister Gyurcsány even accused those member states that were most strongly opposed to the opening of negotiations, namely Britain, the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden, of not treating all EU candidates in the same way. However, success for the Central Europeans came when the European Council in April 2005 agreed, with the proposal of Austria and Slovakia, to re-evaluate the progress of Croatia by May 2005,⁴³ thus leaving the option for the issue to be reopened in the summer of 2005. Nonetheless the prospect of this happening seems to be very unlikely since del Ponte has repeatedly claimed that Gotovina is within reach of Croatian authorities. Moreover it was made clear during the Luxemburg Presidency that failure to settle this issue would make the launch of accession negotiations impossible.

The stance taken by the Central European states has to be understood not as a justification of the attitude of Croatian authorities towards the Hague Tribunal but within the broader context of EU policy towards the Western Balkans. The leaders of the states who support opening accession negotiations with Croatia believe that it is necessary to give a positive signal to the other aspirants that accession might become a reality. They also fear possible negative consequences of any decision that would lead to a drop in public support for EU integration not only in Croatia but all right across the region.⁴⁴ On the other hand, the proponents of delaying accession negotiations argue that the EU has to show the other countries in the region that without full co-operation with the ICTY in the Hague, the prospect of joining the EU becomes highly unlikely. This stance relates particularly to the two most wanted war criminals – Karadzic and Mladic whose surrender is required from Serbia. And it seems that in this respect the Serbian authorities have understood the message conveyed by the recent decision of the Council.⁴⁵

⁴² Carla del Ponte claimed that the Croatian authorities were not ready to surrender the alleged war criminal, General Ante Gotovina or at least indicate where he is hiding. The Croatian government claimed that General Gotovina is no longer in Croatia.

⁴³ The European Council also agreed to set up a team consisting of J. Solana, enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn and the representatives of the UK, Austria and Luxembourg, to evaluate the extent to which the Croatian authorities are co-operating with the International Tribunal on War Crimes and present a report of their findings.

⁴⁴ After the decision to postpone the start of negotiations, support for EU accession dropped to an unprecedented (low of) 38% in Croatia. Source: Transitions Online and Eurobarometer.

⁴⁵ Another explanation for the tough stance of Carla del Ponte is that the mandate of the Tribunal is due to expire in 2010 and the most wanted war criminals (Gotovina, Karadzic and Mladic) still remain at large.

5. Idealism versus pragmatism in foreign policy – an enduring cleavage between Old and New Europe?

In this section consideration will be made as to whether there will be an enduring cleavage between the so-called ‘old’ (EU-15) and “new” member states in terms of pursuing idealistic rather than pragmatic goals in foreign policy making. The concept of idealism in foreign policy in this respect is viewed as an emphasis on issues such as human rights, rule of law, democracy, or more generally respect of obligations under existing international law as opposed to an approach that neglects some of these concerns for the sake of keeping good and friendly (not least economic) relations with the governments of third countries.

The hypothesis examined here is not meant to suggest that the EU-15 have not pursued idealist goals in its foreign policy. On the contrary, the EU has consistently used its economic bargaining power to promote human rights, rule of law, democracy and conditionality in a number of countries, including the new member states before accession. It is beyond doubt that many of these ideals helped tremendously in transforming the societies of Central and Eastern Europe to become market economies, with standard democratic political systems and a high degree of human rights protection and legal enforcement. Without the EU’s insistence on the so-called Copenhagen criteria, it is likely that the transformation process would have taken much longer. And the same is happening, or at least beginning to happen, in countries that aspire to EU membership in regions such as the Balkans, the Caucasus or more recently the Ukraine. But the other side of the coin is that this policy is applied only in relation to countries where the EU can clearly apply its “carrot and stick” tactics. States that aspire to membership, or at the very least the economic benefits of closer ties with the EU, are in effect compelled through specific eligibility criteria to develop European institutions of law, democratic politics and respect for human rights.

If we, however, take a broader look at EU policy towards countries and regions that do not currently enjoy preferential treatment by the EU, the picture becomes much more mixed. Such a mixed picture applies especially to CFSP – a domain that is still under the command of member states. Since the other areas of external action, such as trade agreements, humanitarian aid or enlargement, are mainly developed and implemented by the Commission, this framework provides for less involvement by member states, and consequently the opportunities for certain member states who have a strong interest in a particular region or a country to set the agenda at the EU level is much weaker.

The presumed idealism in foreign policy of the new member states stems from their own transformation experience. All of these countries widely acknowledge and accept the strong influence that the principles of democratic conditionality and related issues in foreign policy can exert over in precipitating domestic changes and reforms. And this would apply not only to political elites but also to vast portions of the populations in Central and Eastern Europe. Many of the political elites in the new member states are former dissidents who were persecuted under communism, and have a deep empathy for those who still suffer under authoritarian or undemocratic regimes. Some of the leading proponents of idealism in foreign policy in the last fifteen years came from Central Europe; examples include Václav Havel or Lech Walesa, who held top constitutional posts in the Czech Republic and Poland respectively. Thus, the emphasis of projecting these issues into EU foreign policy from the perspective of new member states is understandable for historical reasons. There are some very good examples of this idealist orientation despite the relatively brief involvement of CEE countries in CFSP.

The most recent one relates to the deliberations of the Council of Foreign Ministers in January 2005 over the issue of lifting diplomatic sanctions against Cuba. EU foreign ministers had imposed sanctions on Cuba in 2003 after Fidel Castro arrested about seventy-five dissidents in March of that year. In the autumn of 2004 Spain proposed a partial lifting of these sanctions after Castro's administration released fourteen of these political prisoners. There seemed to be an overall consensus emerging among the member states that diplomatic relations should be, at least partially, restored. Spanish proposals went even further, arguing that the representations of EU member states in Havana should stop inviting Cuban dissidents to their embassies. This was seen as a necessary pre-condition expected by Castro's regime for restoring diplomatic relations with the EU. In fact by 2004 some of the member states had already stopped inviting dissidents and Havana in response had started to gradually restore diplomatic relations with these countries.

But there was very strong opposition from a handful of member states, headed by the Czech Republic and supported by Poland. The Czech Republic made a very bold move, threatening to use its veto over any decision of the Council that did not make restoration of diplomatic relations with Cuba conditional on further improvements in the situation of the dissidents. For this reason the Council agreed to re-evaluate the lifting of diplomatic sanctions within six months. Furthermore, the Czech Republic insisted that it would keep inviting dissidents to receptions at the Czech embassy in Havana, a policy viewed as giving strong moral support to Cuban

dissidents and their families. In the Czech press, the issue was called the Czech Republic's "first foreign policy victory since joining the EU".⁴⁶

One may wonder why the Czech Republic was so vehement on this issue, arguing strongly against anything that might be viewed as a conciliatory gesture towards the last dictatorship in Latin America. Apart from the general background outlined above, there were other particular factors that played an important role in the Czech case. First, the existing links between the Czech Republic and Cuba from communist times still resonate in Czech society.⁴⁷ But perhaps more important is the extent to which the Czech political class and Czech NGOs took the issue of supporting the Cuban democratic movement seriously. There are a number of examples to demonstrate this since the late 1990s. The Czech Republic has drafted several anti-Cuban government resolutions in the United Nations Human Rights Commission since 1999, taking the initiative from the United States who was previously the main critic of the Cuban regime. Leading Czech politicians, including Václav Havel, have consistently spoken out against Castro's regime. Two members of the Czech parliament were even arrested during their trip to Cuba in 2001 while on a mission aimed at supporting Cuban political dissidents. This occurred after a third Czech initiated UN resolution had been passed in the UN condemning Cuba. The release of the Czech parliamentarians had to be negotiated directly with President Castro by Mr Pithart, President of the Czech Senate. And last but not least there is the strong influence of NGOs most notably headed by the *People in Need Foundation*. This foundation runs one of the biggest projects in Cuba aimed at helping dissidents and their families to overcome the consequences of political persecution. For these reasons, the Czech Republic has become the leading European country on the issues of human rights in Cuba. From this perspective, the Czech position during the key Council decision of January 2005 is understandable. But it seems that promotion of democratic change has indeed become one of the focal points of Czech foreign policy. In 2004, a new unit of the Czech foreign ministry charged with promoting democratic transition has begun to monitor and evaluate the development of human rights and democracy in other parts of the world. This unit works in close association with NGOs co-ordinating and running programmes related to the restoration of human rights and democracy in various countries such as Cuba, Belarus and Myanmar.

⁴⁶ The Prague Post, February 8, 2005.

⁴⁷ Czechoslovakia was one of the leading trade partners of Cuba before 1989; many Cubans studied in Czechoslovakia and much of the infrastructure in Cuba has been designed and constructed by Czech and Slovak engineers.

A clear strategy of putting the human rights and democracy on the foreign policy agenda can be sensed in relation to the countries encompassed by the EU's near neighbourhood policy (ENP) and this is particularly true vis-à-vis Russia, and to a lesser extent Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. It is not surprising that the Balts are the main critics of Russia's reversion towards more authoritarian practices. Chechnya has become the most important issue on which the Balts have consistently criticised Russia on alleged human rights abuses. An astonishingly harsh criticism came not only from leading political figures in all three Baltic states, but also from Baltic citizens. Interestingly the criticism has also been directed towards the alleged ignorance of the international community, including such organizations as the OSCE.⁴⁸ But for the Balts, this is quite a tricky game as they are themselves often criticized for their treatment of Russian speaking minorities. Given Russia's pervasive influence among all of its smaller neighbours it is not surprising that the Baltic states, with relatively large Russian speaking populations, have developed relatively stringent minorities policies. Unfortunately for the Balts these strict minority policies have the effect of undermining their democratic idealism strategy.

Another example that demonstrates the rather sensitive issue of adopting an appeasing stance towards undemocratic regimes is the question of lifting the arms embargo on China. In this case, although opposition came mainly from some of the old member states, notably the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark, reservations were also expressed also by new member states, including Latvia, Poland and the Czech Republic. But unlike the question of Cuba, it is very much doubtful whether they were led by the same motives as Sweden and Denmark who opposed the lifting of the embargo mainly because of concerns over human rights abuses in China. The question of China is more complex for a variety of reasons. One important consideration relates to ensuring economic opportunities for European companies in China and more specifically promoting European defence industry interests in the Chinese market. Therefore firm opposition to the proponents of lifting the arms embargo (mainly France) would undoubtedly lead to complications in future relations with fellow EU member states. It is, however, rather striking that the new member states, especially the Balts and the Poles, did not oppose the lifting of the embargo because of strong opposition from Washington. Thus it is interesting to examine this issue in terms of the Atlanticism of the EU newcomers. On this particular issue, there does not seem to be evidence that the US is exerting pressure on the new member states to block the

⁴⁸ Estonian President Lennart Meri boycotted the OSCE summit in Istanbul in November 1999, stating that the OSCE should be acting rather than celebrating after the renewed outbreak of atrocities in Chechnya. The Estonian Premier Mart Laar voiced perhaps the strongest criticism of Russia at this OSCE summit.

lifting of the embargo; moreover CEE states have not shown much 'independent' enthusiasm for this course of action.

At the same time, this point demonstrates that foreign policy idealism is not something specifically related to "New Europe" but we can see it in EU-15 as well. Apart from the old member states who opposed the lifting on the arms embargo to China, we can raise the example of the Netherlands which in late 2004 in their capacity of EU presidency criticised the developments in Russia after the Beslan attacks mainly because of idealistic motives .

The Iraq issue discussed earlier also provides some interesting evidence of an idealistic approach to foreign policy. It was suggested that all the new EU members supported, directly or indirectly, the US-led coalition of the willing. But it cannot be assumed that their support for US policy on Iraq stemmed from the same considerations that prevailed within the US administration, even at the level of argumentation. While the US leadership has consistently claimed that the main motive for overthrowing of Saddam Hussein related to his attempt to seize weapons of mass destruction, thus posing a threat to world peace. For Central European states a much more important motive for siding with the Americans was the fact that the regime of Saddam Hussein was inhuman, dictatorial and was well known for using terror against its own citizens. This idea resonated very strongly when the Czech position was debated in the Czech parliament and most especially in the Senate.⁴⁹

Finally, signs of an idealistic approach to foreign policy may be detected in attitudes towards further enlargements. Most of the new member states are in favour of extending the EU beyond its existing borders, and this is true not only of political elites but also of citizens.⁵⁰ However on this point, it is much more difficult to argue that the prevailing motivation of the new member states is based on economic considerations or wishes to bury the artificial division of the Old Continent. It is true that one element in this type of argument is that the EU should not become fortress Europe, by building prosperity inside the Union and not caring about what happens beyond the Union's borders. But there are pragmatic reasons as well, that tend toward pushing the external border of the Union further away, thus eliminating many risks emanating from it. Geopolitical considerations have always been very strong in Central Europe and the idea of the region being a buffer zone still prevails.

⁴⁹ See Král and Pachtá: 'Czech Republic and the Iraq Crisis: Shaping the Czech Stance,' EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, January 2005.

⁵⁰ According to Eurobarometer 62, published in December 2004, citizens of the new member states are the most supportive of further enlargement, with support ranging from 63% in Hungary to 78% in Poland. This contrasts sharply with public attitudes in most of the old EU-15 member states. A similar positive pattern of support for enlargement exists in candidate countries (i.e. Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia and Turkey).

Furthermore, it may turn out that in many respects, the countries that hope to join the EU in the future are likely to become direct competitors to the 2004 enlargement states – due to entitlements for regional and structural aid with accession and their substantially lower labour costs. Moreover for those 2004 accession states that want more integration in certain fields (thereby joining the “EU core”) further enlargement poses certain dangers, i.e. maintaining both the speed and uniformity of the integration process. And finally the evidence presented with regard to widening the EU illustrates that new member states support for future enlargement is for the most part predicated on specific and pragmatic considerations. In the case of Hungary it is the issue of Hungarian minorities in the neighbouring countries. For Poland the focus is on the Ukraine because it is a potentially large and powerful partner in the EU. Thus the apparently idealistic approach of the 2004 accession states towards further EU enlargement in reality contains many practical considerations. Such pragmatism is more likely to dominate the longer these countries are members of the EU. Long term membership is likely to prompt the realisation that the EU is not only about nice idealistic goals of European reunification but also about the daily bargaining over “bread-and-butter” issues (a process that will become ever more difficult with an increased number of member states).

Thus predicting the degree to which the foreign policy of the new member states will remain associated with idealistic goals is both difficult and complex. Idealism in foreign policy during the 1990’s based largely on the actions of prominent dissident figures is likely to fade away. As senior communist era dissident figures begin to retire from public life in the CEE countries a new generation of more pragmatic policy makers are coming to the fore. But to some extent, foreign policy idealism may remain more associated, at least for some years to come, with Atlanticism rather than with the domestic legacy of dissidents. It seems that George W. Bush’s doctrine of “spreading freedom in the world” might still find some ground in the more Atlanticist new members. They may try to use similar arguments in pursuing specific foreign policy objectives.

6. Candidate countries and CFSP

The final part of this paper will try to highlight some issues that may arise with further enlargements in the area of EU foreign policy.⁵¹ The accession of the three potential candidates – Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey will also be very important in shaping CFSP.

⁵¹ Although Croatia is a candidate country as well, it will not be dealt with here as the focus of this analysis is on the Black Sea region. For various reasons, it can be assumed that Croatia will align with the Central European states (Hungary, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia) because of its interest in the Western Balkans.

The geographical location of the three countries of the Eastern Balkans and Asia Minor puts them in a specific position and pre-determines them to be strong players in the region that is of a crucial importance for the EU in the future. In fact, Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey are a crossroads for several regions where the EU is already engaged: the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Middle East.

Turkey will play a key role among the candidate countries for a variety of reasons: not solely because of its size giving it substantial voting power in EU institutions but also due to its role as a regional power and the size of its military which could make it a very important asset in ESDP.⁵² Turkey has often been viewed as a very Atlanticist country. Its strategic alliance with the US is often regarded as one of the key elements of Turkish foreign policy.⁵³ On the other hand, a certain shift in the attitudes towards the US can be detected recently. The AKP (Justice and Development) party of Prime Minister Erdogan has taken a much more hard-line stance, especially over Iraq, where the Turkish parliament voted against the stationing or movement of US troops through Turkey. The Transatlantic Trends Survey referred to earlier suggests that Turkish public opinion is the most anti-American of all the countries surveyed. Therefore there is no guarantee that Turkey will be another “Trojan” horse of the US in Europe. On the contrary, after joining the EU, it may seek to be a reassuring voice in CFSP aligning itself more with the autonomists rather than the Atlanticists. But as the AKP government clearly is more nationalist and traditionalist, much will depend on domestic political developments in Turkey.

Turkey will probably be instrumental in developing closer ties between the EU and the Caucasus region, because of its historical and economic ties and not least because of its position as an energy hub through which oil and gas supplies from the Caspian basin pass to Europe (e.g. the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline). And this is also where one of the main problem lies, namely Turkey’s complicated relations with Armenia. At the moment, relations are frozen and it seems obvious that normalisation of relations will become one of the litmus tests in the EU accession negotiations. The key issue will be recognition of the Armenian genocide in 1915 and the deeply rooted conviction among Armenians that Turkey is an enemy and not to be trusted. This is linked to the fact that Armenia is still looking towards Russia as the main guarantor of its security, which gives Russia substantial influence, especially after the “loss” of Georgia. On the other hand, a strong Armenian diaspora in France has the potential to use the issue of unsettled

⁵² Turkish military forces under NATO command account for 27% of NATO’s total strength in Europe.

⁵³ S. Everts: ‘An Asset not a Model: Turkey, the EU and Wider Middle East,’ Centre for European Reform, 2004.

history to block Turkish accession. Thus, the normalisation of relations between Armenia and Turkey is crucial in many respects.

As for the Middle East, it has often been argued that Turkey could be crucial in acting as an example to Muslim countries that Europe is not hostile to Islamic societies and cultures. In this respect Turkey could act as a bridge to the whole Middle East region. But this potential impact may be rather limited, due to Turkey's complicated relations with Iran, Iraq and Syria, i.e. countries where EU diplomacy is already quite active. The strong links between Turkey and Israel also pose questions regarding the extent to which Turkey can act as an interlocutor with Arab countries in the region. On the other hand, as in the case of relations with the US, recent Turkish-Israeli relations have cooled with Prime Minister Erdogan being quite critical of the Sharon government. Undoubtedly Turkey has a lot of vital interests in the Middle East, ranging from water resources to the Kurdish issue. For this reason it is likely to be a very assertive player and unlikely to submit to any decision that could undermine its own concerns and interests. In any case, it is rather difficult to estimate at the moment what impact Turkish accession might have on CFSP. A lot will depend on internal developments in Turkey as well as on what the Middle East and Black Sea regions are going to look like in some fifteen to twenty years, and obviously on the outcome of the accession negotiations which do not automatically guarantee a full membership. With the complicated political developments in Europe these days, the Turkish accession seems to be very much off the table for the moment.

The impact of the accession of Bulgaria and Romania on CFSP is easier to predict, as both countries will join the EU soon, probably in 2007. Considering first the issue of Atlanticism, it is quite likely that these two countries will follow the pattern of the other new member states in supporting US led policies, perhaps even more enthusiastically. Both countries strongly supported the US position on Iraq. In order to ensure a swift process of accession into NATO, both Bulgaria and Romania sent contingents to Afghanistan and Iraq and have demonstrated themselves to be the most loyal allies of the US in Eastern Europe. Such a stance obviously complicates their relations with some of the older EU member states. From the transatlantic perspective, the US administration views Bulgaria and Romania as being very important because of their stake in the Black Sea region.⁵⁴ Both countries are viewed as prime examples of how successful democracies in the region are clearly heading for EU membership, in contrast to some more troublesome parts of the Black Sea region, especially along its Northern and Eastern

⁵⁴ For further reference to the importance of the region for the US, please refer to the Jackson testimony before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the US Senate, March 8, 2005.

shores. Because of close links with the US, Bulgaria and Romania are perceived to be supportive of US policies in many respects, including support for pro-reform movements in various parts of the region. In addition, Bulgarian and Romanian accession is likely to lead to EU involvement in so-called “frozen conflicts”,⁵⁵ and confronting the fears of perceived Russian interference amongst its smaller neighbouring states.

The question remains to what extent the approach of Bulgaria and Romania will be based on a pro-active policy and to what extent it will remain US-driven. It is quite clear that Romania and Bulgaria on one hand and Turkey on the other may be trying to pull the EU in different directions. Turkey may be tempted to cosy up to Russia in terms of traditional nineteenth century spheres of influence thinking, especially if the current trends in foreign policy making based on nationalism and anti-Western sentiments endure. Movement by Turkey in this direction would be undoubtedly bolstered if EU negotiations proceed badly. Romania and Bulgaria might call for greater involvement of the EU in the region and use its soft power to turn the Black Sea region into a safe neighbourhood for the wider EU, a strategy very likely to be actively supported by the Balts and the Poles. Certainly, Russia will remain an important actor in the region and EU involvement will be determined to a large extent by the nature of EU-Russian relations. Given the virtual absence of a systematic EU policy towards Russia at the moment, Bulgarian and Romanian activities might complicate things further where the Black Sea region could potentially become – *cum grano salis* – another Iraq for CFSP. Needless to say, this would be very unfortunate and damaging for the credibility of EU foreign policy.

As for more particular issues, it is quite likely that Romania will try to shape EU policy towards Moldova – many Moldovans possess Romanian citizenship, and the two countries are often considered to be culturally and linguistically one nation. In the case of Bulgaria, it is likely to align with countries that are active in the Western Balkans. International cooperation in the Western Balkans region is already well developed and this cooperation is enhanced by a significant NGO presence.

7. Conclusion

This paper has shown that the track record of the new member states in the CFSP during their first year of membership is not as clear-cut as is sometimes assumed. The new member states have not and are not going to automatically side with the US on many issues regarding foreign

⁵⁵ These include for instance Transdnistria, Southern Ossetia, Abkazia or Nagorno Karabakh.

policy, because of different domestic considerations, varying degrees of public support for alliance with the US and because of different threat perceptions. As the geographical interests of the new member states will vary significantly, a united “New Europe” push towards particular regions and issues cannot be expected. Finally, although in the recent past the political leaders in the new member states tended to act with what could be broadly described as an idealist approach to foreign policy, this phenomenon is not likely to endure either, because with membership of the EU, these countries are starting to realize that European integration is very much a pragmatic project – a characteristic that also applies to the domain of foreign policy.

Given that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are not going to act as a homogenous bloc in shaping CFSP, certain dividing lines can be drawn across the region. These dividing lines are determined by the combination of three factors. The main dividing line will run between the three Baltic republics and Poland on one hand and the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia on the other.

The first group will be characterized by a strong emphasis on making CFSP compatible with US policies, not only in terms of defence (demonstrated by a strong focus on NATO) but also on other issues, such as policy towards Russia, the Ukraine, or the Black Sea region. These countries will also prioritise EU external action in the East, namely finding a common EU stance towards Russia, offering incentives to the Ukraine to keep its pro-European path chosen during the Orange Revolution and possibly to encouraging democratic changes in other parts of former Soviet Union. And because of their motivation in keeping Russia out and as far away as possible from Central and Eastern Europe, they will be prepared to commit themselves to helping the countries surrounding Russia to emerge from the Russian sphere of influence and to tie them more closely to the EU. For this reason, the Baltic republics and Poland will use the rhetoric of democracy (as opposed to authoritarian rule), rule of law and the right of countries to choose their own destiny as an integral part of their foreign policy activities.

Poland is in a particular position because it is in terms of foreign policy priorities strongly linked to the Baltic states but remains anchored in Central European Co-operation initiatives (e.g. Visegrád and the Central European Initiative) a situation that makes it a bridge between the two groups. This certainly underlines its aspiration to remain a regional power and to speak on certain occasions on behalf of the CEE region, a fact which is only accepted with reservations, or not accepted at all, by Poland’s Central European neighbours.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are often perceived as one bloc but the reality is more complex. Firstly, there is no consistent co-ordination among them on foreign policy issues. These countries often chose to work through different channels. For example, Lithuania has aligned with Poland to steer the EU policy on the Ukraine after the Orange revolution, a move that is understandable for historical reasons. Estonia seems to be trying to keep a lower profile and co-ordinate its activities with Finland, which has a considerable influence in Brussels, given its size. Latvia, who seems to be lacking strong allies in the EU, is left to pursue perhaps the most Atlanticist course, which is apparently understood in Washington and was underlined by the stopover in Riga of President Bush on his way to Moscow on May 6-7, 2005. This demonstrates that the Balts, given their relatively small size and particular concerns, are aware of the necessity of having strong allies to be able to contribute to EU foreign policy. Furthermore the Balts have seen the merits of working through the European Parliament.

The situation in the remaining Central European states is considerably different. For them, the issue of developing a strong and coherent policy towards Russia is far less important, because Russia is viewed as much less of an external or domestic threat. They are more likely to exert pressure in the EU to focus on the Western Balkans where they have strong stakes (albeit for different reasons). Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia adopted a particularly hard line on the issue of (not) opening accession negotiations with Croatia. The Atlanticist commitment of Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia is not equally intense as there is no uniform consensus among national political elites that siding with the US is always the best option. Moreover public opinion is less Atlanticist in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia than in the Baltic/Poland group, which gives the governments in these four countries even more leeway to “Europeanize” their foreign policy. The new member states idealism in foreign policy was perhaps best demonstrated by the Czech position on Cuba, but this phenomenon is likely to be an exception rather than the rule and will probably diminish as the main proponent of this policy - Václav Havel – has retired from active politics. In general, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia can be described as being more “relaxed” in terms of foreign policy, giving them more flexibility in shaping their positions or balancing out different groupings inside the EU. However such a relaxed stance gives them less leverage in shaping decision-making within the EU as a whole.

In conclusion, it is not possible to give a definite answer to Wessel’s contentions as to what scenarios the new EU member states are going to follow in CFSP. This is because the 2004 accession states cannot be viewed as a compact bloc. It seems that in the Czech Republic,

Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary future foreign policy strategies are likely to exhibit patterns consonant with both the *neutral* and *optimistic* scenarios. These countries have kept quite a low profile on most foreign policy issues discussed in the Council since accession, with the notable exception of the Czech Republic on the Cuban issue. Such a low profile strategy helped to repair the transatlantic rifts over Iraq. In the case of Poland and the Balts, these countries have been more active in attempting to shape the EU's relationship towards Russia. The impact of Baltic and Polish policy in this regard has been rather mixed. It maybe assumed that their push for a more comprehensive EU-Russia policy is mainly driven by domestic considerations and this is particularly true in the case of the Balts. Such a situation is suggestive of a *pessimistic* scenario. However given the virtual non-existence of any common EU policy towards Russia, they cannot be blamed for this as other EU member states, notably France, Germany and Italy, have behaved in a similar way. Thus, we can trace elements of *neutral*, *optimistic* and *pessimistic* behaviours and strategies among the new member states in their attempts to shape EU foreign policy. Whether any of these scenarios will eventually predominate or whether future developments will continue to exhibit a combination of all three behaviours and strategies remains to be seen.

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