



# Old and New Security Issues in Post-Communist Eastern Europe: Results of an 11 Nation Study

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It [Europe] is a single entity—though it is culturally, ethnically and economically immensely diverse. For the first time in its history, this entity has an opportunity to establish an internal order on the principle of co-operation and equality among the large and the small, the strong and the weak, on shared democratic values. This is also an opportunity to put an end, once and for all, to the export of coercion and wars.

Should Europe fail to grasp this opportunity, we could be heading for a new global catastrophe, a catastrophe far graver than previous ones. This time the forces of freedom would not face a single totalitarian enemy. They could well be drawn into a strange era of all against all, a war with no clear front, a war difficult to distinguish from terrorism, organised crime and other forms of wrongdoing, a war in which indirect and hidden forces would engulf the whole world. I don't mean to sound alarmist, but anyone with a modicum of imagination and some knowledge of what has—until recently—been going on, for example, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, must understand that this is not empty talk. (Vaclav Havel, 'The Charms of NATO', address in Washington after receiving the Fulbright Prize on 3 October 1997, printed in *New York Review of Books* 15 January 1998, p. 24)

THE ENDING OF THE COLD WAR following the extraordinary political events in Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s served to re-shape the political and military map of Europe. In the words of George Bush, it augured a 'New World Order' and this idea that there is a new set of security issues is also echoed in the speech by Vaclav Havel cited above. Since World War II the Iron Curtain divided Europe into two halves—into East and West, into communist and capitalist, into NATO and Warsaw Pact. The enemies were external—the superpowers. For the ruling communist elites the enemies were the West—especially the USA—while for many of the ordinary people, as well as the oppositional elites (e.g. the Catholic Church), it was the USSR which had imposed its rule on the region and used indigenous governments as puppet regimes. Yugoslavia was an exception since its ruling elites were threatened by both these superpowers. The break-up of the Warsaw Pact, the collapse of communism and the disintegration of the Soviet Union into different states dissolved this neat divide set up after World War II. For the countries of Central Europe, for half a century a military 'Buffer Zone' between East and West, it required some re-thinking of

security issues—who was now the enemy? As Havel points out, for him at least, the ‘enemy’ was no longer a great power or ‘communism’ but rather the enemy is likely to be co-national or a neighbour. The stability provided by the Cold War is replaced by the threat of confusion, disintegration and chaos. This is as much a question for the traditionally neutral Austria as for the newly emerging democracies of Poland, the Czech and Slovak Republics, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania. For the countries which had previously formed part of the USSR but are now for the first time fully independent these issues are also important.

However, the opening of borders and the opening of societies also threw up new security issues as states began to fissure and re-align, populations began to move once more around the region and ethnic minorities found new voices with which to put forward their claims. The opening of the societies and economies of Eastern and Central Europe also began a rapid process of transformation of cultures and social values. Throughout the Cold War many Eastern and Central Europeans had ‘idolised’ the Western and particularly the American way of life. Freedom, liberalism, democracy and access to consumer goods were the things that Central Europeans aspired to—especially the intelligentsia. Many continue to do so today. However, in spite of the fact that they aspired to ‘the Western way of life’ they lacked experience with Western values, trends and problems, and many have undergone a culture shock. For many people, Westernisation brought with it consumerism, feminism, Hollywood, neo-liberalism and the shrinking of the welfare state, notions of minority rights, mass media, rock’n’roll popular culture, drugs, organised crime and so on, which has caused considerable anxiety.

Central Europeans have long memories. The experience of being small states sandwiched between great powers, of frequent invasions and political interference from east and west, means that many continue to feel threatened by Russia on the one side and Germany on the other. The unification of Germany has resurrected some of these fears and the disintegration of Russia and the rise of Russian nationalism have the same effect. Since World War II the United States has tended to play a major role in European politics. It is now the only remaining superpower and a cornerstone of the European security system. Furthermore, it has maintained a high military profile in the region—most significantly as a major player in the war (and peace) in the former Yugoslavia. The United States is also perceived by many as the leading force behind the social and economic transformation that the region has been undergoing (Waever *et al.*, 1993, p. 3). The fear of great powers, of Russia, of America and Germany could therefore be said to be the ‘traditional threats’ facing East-Central Europeans.

Since the initial transformation period things have moved on rapidly and the differences between countries in the region have grown. Several elections have confirmed the position of democratically elected governments in Poland, Hungary and the Czech and Slovak Republics and these countries also have special associate membership status of the EU. The privatisation policies and successful economic transformation are making these countries increasingly ‘normal’ parts of Western Europe (Waever *et al.*, 1993, p. 2). However, war in the former Yugoslavia sent the new countries in the Balkan peninsula in a different direction, even diverging from one another, with relatively prosperous Slovenia looking more like one of the

Visegrad countries whilst Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia were crippled by civil war and territorial disintegration. The break-up of Czechoslovakia in 1992 showed that there were also peaceful means of bringing about the fission of post-communist countries. In Romania and Bulgaria the road to reform has been uneven and bumpy, but they too aspire to join the European Union in the second round of enlargement. Finally, Belarus and Ukraine have struggled to introduce political and economic reforms, so far not very successfully (Wallace & Haerpfer, 1998). In this process Ukraine has become more westward looking and Belarus more eastward looking in terms of strategic alliances and economic systems.

Other strategic alliances have been proposed or constructed but do not seem to carry the same political, economic or military weight: CEFTA (Central European Free Trade Area), CEI (Central European Initiative), CSCE (Council for Security and Co-operation in Europe), the Baltic Council and the Council of Europe are all examples (Cowen Karp, 1993). The European Union and NATO remain the dominant supra-national institutions.

A privileged group of Central and East European post-communist countries are being admitted to the European Union (Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia and Estonia) and a similar but smaller group was admitted to NATO in January 1999 (Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic). This represents a victory for politicians in those countries who would like them to become a part of the prosperous western half of Europe rather than the traditional east. However, whilst we hear a lot of statements by politicians about these matters, we know less about the subjective views of the populations in different countries and how these might correspond with recent or past history in their countries.

This re-alignment of post-Cold War politics has also meant a re-alignment of theories of international relations and security studies. The positions associated with 'realist', state-centred conceptions started to give way to a broader definition of security which could include a range of issues, including those such as economic, environmental and societal threats (see Waever *et al.*, 1993; Dorman & Treacher, 1995; Ullman 1995). In other words, there is a decline in the emphasis on state needs and an increase in the emphasis on human needs. In particular, Dorman & Treacher identify five main dimensions of security: political, economic, societal and environmental as well as the military-strategic.

Military security concerns the two-level interplay of the armed offensive and defensive capabilities and the states' perception of each other's intentions. Political security concerns the organisational stability of states, systems of government, and the ideologies that give them legitimacy. Economic security concerns access to resources, finance and markets necessary to sustain acceptable levels of welfare and state power. Societal security concerns the sustainability, within acceptable conditions of evolution, of traditional patterns of language, culture and both religious and national identity and customs. Environmental security concerns the maintenance of the planetary biosphere as the essential support system on which all other human enterprises depend. It is well understood that these dimensions do not operate within isolation from each other. They interact in a myriad of complex and often contradictory ways. (Dorman & Treacher, 1995, p. 5)

For the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the many economic, political,

environmental and social problems encountered during the transition from communism could be said to have overshadowed the problem of focusing upon one external enemy. The problem is that of a confusion of ideas and the lack of order which is well exemplified in the speech by Vaclav Havel, but also in the plethora of competing political parties which have only just started to align themselves into recognisable blocks. These fears were further fuelled by the war in Yugoslavia and by the growing instability in Russia. In addition to these threats, the unification of Germany with its new capital in Berlin represents for many in Eastern and Central Europe the re-emergence of a threat which had been neutralised by the Cold War (Waever *et al.*, 1993, p. 6).

The people of Central and Eastern Europe are thus confronted with a range of 'moral panics' and fears associated with new threats such as crime, the growing independence and recognition of national minorities, the influx of new migrants and so on, along with an array of visions for their countries. Membership of the European Union and NATO offers a very attractive vision for some of these countries searching for a future, a vision of prosperity, peace, progress and joining the 'West'. These supra-national bodies also offer a guarantee against domination by neighbouring countries or great powers. In this way a vision of the future and the pragmatic politics of the present are brought together in a construction of international relations which is subject to continual reconstruction. However, it also presents the 'threat' of the global ascendance of the USA in world politics. The threats faced by Central Europeans that we examine may be broadly divided into external and internal threats, and into traditional and new threats. Traditional threats refer to threats that people have experienced in living memory and/or the threats which have been traditionally and widely conceptualised and propagated by experts and opinion makers. New threats are those which are rare in living memory and/or also rare and new for opinion makers. Therefore, external threats which essentially refer to threats by foreign powers are also traditional threats, primarily because the dominant form of thinking about security both by opinion makers and people at large has traditionally focused on such threats. Internal threats which are essentially threats to cultural identity are new threats as they are fairly new concepts both in the popular mind and in elite thinking (Waever *et al.*, 1993).

We could say that a range of new sources of threat have been proposed by various authors and these are, first, the threat by immigrants and refugees arriving from outside the countries, and second, the threat by minority and ethnic groups from inside the country. This is a different kind of threat because they are less a threat to the sovereignty or territory of the country than a threat to the way of life and ethnic identity of the host nation. The rather fragile new identities of nations in Central and Eastern Europe were based upon a notion of ethnic and cultural nationhood emerging from past independence movements and encouraged by the communist authorities, as long as they were not directed against the Soviet Union. Waever *et al.* (1993, pp. 72–75) argue that the long Soviet presence in Central Europe has had the effect of making many Central Europeans want and expect to build traditional nation-states where the dominant ethnic group in a given state would have its culture protected by 'its' state. However, states in the New World Order are expected to focus on economic rather than cultural issues. Pressure for the withdrawal of the state from the

cultural arena is backed by minority and human rights notions, as well as the EU, where the process of economic and political integration is largely based on the weakening of local nationalisms. Thus, according to Buzan (1991), many Central Europeans feel their identities additionally threatened because their own states fail to provide the cultural protection they expected, while the West is often seen as pressuring Central Europeans to introduce reform to reflect the Western models, particularly if they wish to join the EU and NATO (Waever *et al.*, 1993). Overall, migrants and minorities can be seen as a threat by forcing host populations to come to a different view of themselves as multi-cultural societies. In extremis, migrants and minorities can also be seen as a potential 'fifth column'—as terrorists or spies for other nations and states. When minorities and migrants are perceived in the category of 'foreign agents' these threats take on the characteristics of traditional ways of perceiving threat. On the other hand, threat posed by minorities has been kept alive since World War II in the common memory, although the analysis of this threat had been quite successfully kept out of the public space during the communist period. Thus, although the minorities issue appears as a 'new type of threat', it is often based upon security fears that have a longer historical tradition in the region. The absence of analysis and discussion of minority issues in Central Europe, at both the elite and popular levels, was important in the sense that it made it easy for many Central Europeans to use traditional forms of conceptualising threats posed by minorities in accordance with pre-World War II notions after 1989. In our research we will consider the extent to which these new sources of threat may have superseded the more traditional ones of domination by great powers.

The old sources of threat—by great powers such as Germany, Russia and the USA—may also take on a new relevance in this realignment of national allegiances. The continuing decline but also instability in Russia mean that she may not be seen so much as a military threat any more, but the chaos and criminality which have increased there also pose a threat for other countries. The unification of Germany and her increasing economic power in Central and Eastern Europe means that threat by Germany may once again be seen as an issue, whilst the USA poses both a military threat (through its intervention in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and many military bases in Europe) and has also shown cultural ascendancy in its export of films, hamburgers and the ideal of a consumerist way of life.

Another source of threat in newly emerging democracies is the threat to national boundaries posed by neighbouring countries. Whilst the Cold War period held these kinds of threat in check, the disappearance of hegemonic blocks has opened or reopened the possibility for a whole range of territorial claims, often justified in terms of historical antecedents. The threat by neighbouring countries is therefore both a new and an old threat, similar to the threat posed to minorities—it is new only in the post-Cold War period, but may reflect more deeply rooted fears and hostilities (Waever *et al.*, 1993, p. 6).

In broadening the idea of 'security' to include so many newer and broader issues, the concept is also weakened. The concepts of security and threat are increasingly analysed in terms of the subjectivity of the individual rather than as something objective or state-centred—something which is constructed in different ways by different peoples and in different circumstances. In this sense it can be rather hard to

measure (Ullman, 1995). Since the notion of threat is subjective, it is difficult to separate these threats neatly, as they can be interpreted differently by different people. For some, the threat posed by minorities and immigrants may be linked to the spread of influence of the United States and/or the European Union and its major actor, Germany. Western liberal values and politics often pressure Central Europeans to accept their minorities and immigrants and create structures for their protection. Thus the demands of minorities and to a lesser extent migrants may be perceived as strengthening the West, while weakening the 'indigenous' position. The same often applies to Russia, which pays a lot of attention to the treatment of its minorities abroad. On the other hand, the threat to culture may be blamed on minorities (especially those which are not backed by a specific foreign power: for example, Roma) and particularly migrants. In this case no 'legitimate or European' power is blamed but the threat is perceived to come from 'other and incompatible civilisations'. This approach is in line with some European and American right-wing conceptions, where the Western states are perceived more as co-victims in the struggle to maintain a particular European culture rather than as conspirators (see Hockenos, 1993).

This ambiguous sense of 'threat' or 'security' can be exploited by nationalistic leaders willing to use military intervention or to play on insecurities derived from the past as well as the present. Hence, Slobodan Milosovic is able to present himself as the victim of Western aggression. The relative security and stability which the Cold War era represented can also be a source of new ideologies for political leaders. Thus, President Lukashenko of Belarus situates himself as the leader of the traditional Soviet-era vision of Eastern and Central Europe in his calls for pan-Slavic solidarity and his strong support for Soviet-style society, politics and economics. In his many recent announcements Lukashenko offers a nostalgic vision of Soviet-era stability and glory.

Since the idea of security is so ambiguous, we have concentrated upon only very specific aspects of security. We consider six dimensions of potential threat in this analysis: threat by Russia, Germany, the USA, threat by minorities, threat by migrants and refugees and threat by neighbouring countries. We consider the differences between countries and the differences over time using three measuring points: 1992, 1996 and 1998. In this way we are able to explore the extent to which the new forms of insecurity are taking over from the old ones, as many authors are claiming. At present it is primarily a description of results that is presented here as it is beyond the scope of this article to present detailed analyses of each country separately. Rather, we are aiming at this stage to present a general overview.

The introduction of democratically elected governments meant that more attention had to be paid to the attitudes and values of the population and not just to the elites. What was their opinion? What do they regard as threatening? The answers to these questions can be gained by looking at survey data making comparisons between countries and across time. Here we analyse New Democracies Barometer (NDB) data in the following countries: Poland, the Czech and Slovak Republics, Hungary, Belarus, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovenia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Croatia. Whilst this does not include all of the Central and Eastern European countries, it does include most countries which lie between the European Union on

the one side and Russia on the other. The reason for excluding some countries is not that they are less important, but only that our survey resources did not stretch that far. There are also some missing data for some years and some countries. For example, we have only data for 1998 for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. However, these 11 nations represent enough countries to be able to provide explanations in terms of different geo-political situations for given sets of attitudes. The survey of a representative sample of approximately 1000 respondents from each country has been carried out regularly since 1991. Out of these 11 countries, 10 were members of the former Warsaw Pact; only Romania was not part of that transnational military organisation of European communism after World War II. Some of the new democracies were part of other states before 1989, but they all share the Warsaw Pact historical experience. The end of the Warsaw Pact left a military vacuum between Slovenia and Ukraine, which is now a much-debated topic in international politics, so it is important to consider this region as a whole.

We point to two key trends: first, that in spite of the serious difficulties faced by the Central Europeans, they are feeling in general less threatened, and second, that they generally look towards the West to ensure their security. Overall, Central Europeans seem to support the transformations they had undertaken in the years 1989–91, and support Western-orientated politics and Western value systems.<sup>1</sup> This point is in line with the other findings from the NDB presented by Rose & Haerpfer (1998), who analyse the level of support for the political and economic reforms undertaken by post-communist governments in the region. Rose & Haerpfer argue that Central Europeans generally support democratic forms of government and market economy. Furthermore, they prefer the new forms of politics and economics over the communist system and are optimistic that the new forms will continue to deliver stability and prosperity (see also Rose, Mishler & Haerpfer, 1998).

### *Sources of insecurity*

In this section we present the rationale behind our selection of the six dimensions of potential threat in more detail.

#### *Neighbouring countries*

What are the sources of threat for Central European post-communist peoples? Historically this region has been a buffer zone between different empires: French, German, Austrian, Russian/Soviet and Turkish empires all came and went, fighting different battles and imposing different kinds of rule. Borders and boundaries were changed many times, countries were created, countries were destroyed or countries were simply moved to a different place. The population comprises a complex patchwork of different ethnic groups, speaking many different languages, many of which have been very persistent over time despite the comings and goings of various rulers. With the nationalistic movements arising during the 19th century, many of the peoples of Central Europe were able to codify and further establish their literary and cultural heritage and claim their own nationhood with geographical borders (Gellner, 1983). But given the history of the region, these borders were always disputed. The

recognition of the existing borders (however arbitrarily drawn) was therefore one of the first key security issues of the post-1989 settlement. This has been an issue in every post-communist Central European country where neighbours can make historically justified claims upon territory—in other words, all of them. Neighbouring countries therefore pose a potential threat to the security of post-communist states which are no longer protected by grand strategic alliances—in other words, an older threat which has newly re-emerged.

### *Great powers*

The two most bruising experiences of invasion by different empires in recent memory were those of Germany from the West and Russia or the Soviet Union from the East. Central Europeans have very vivid memories of the brutal invasion by Germany during the 1930s and 1940s and the massive destruction of people and homes which took place as a result. Fear of threat from Germany is therefore still a very lively issue, especially since Germany has become the economic giant of Europe and a key player in the process of uniting Western Europe under the auspices of the European Union. Since most Central Europeans wish their countries to join the EU they are often apprehensive about the amount of influence wielded by this European power. Central Europeans have equally bitter memories of their subsequent 'liberation' by the Soviet troops from the East who did not leave again for another 45 years. Very tangible evidence of the Soviet presence was provided by the large numbers of troops and military manoeuvres to protect the western frontier of the Soviet Empire. These troops were also used to suppress internal uprisings such as that in 1968 in Czechoslovakia, in 1956 in Hungary and in 1953 in Eastern Germany. The disintegration of the Soviet Union has curbed the threat originating from the East and helped to ensure the independence of the Central European countries, but the political uncertainty and instability in Russia mean that she is still potentially a threat for these small, recreated nations. Although Russians themselves may be unwilling to re-create the military ambitions of the former Soviet Union (see Rose, 1997a), demagogic politicians such as Zhirinovskiy have the power to stir up popular feelings.

Although Germany and Russia are the two most immediate great powers to threaten Central European countries, the other great power which has been part of the global division between communism and capitalism is the United States. While many Central Europeans saw in the United States an ally against the 'occupying' Soviet regime, others were concerned by the United States having its troops stationed across the border in Western Europe, its military manoeuvres and missiles trained on Central and Eastern European cities. The collapse of the Soviet empire is usually seen as a victory for the Americans, who have become the only superpower and cornerstone in the current security regime in Europe. The United States exerts a considerable influence in Central Europe through business investment, the cultural dominance of consumer culture and Hollywood movies and through sending in various experts to help transform the political and economic systems of Central Europe. They were also dominant in military actions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. For many Central Europeans the amount of political, military, economic and cultural influence that the United States wields is threatening.

*National minorities and ethnic groups*

Despite the various forms of deportation or destruction of ethnic populations that have taken place over the past 70 years, each country contains ethnic populations and minorities from other countries as well as its own (Gellner, 1994). For each country, the national minorities belonging to neighbouring countries can be used to de-stabilise rather fragile regimes, as was done when Germany invaded Czechoslovakia in 1938 to 'save' the ethnic Germans who were living there and was done by both Serbia and Croatia in one recent war in Yugoslavia. These national minorities are often seen as a kind of 'fifth column' inside the country. There is also a particular problem with what Gellner (1996) termed 'dominant minorities'; that is, the minority populations which had previously been dominant ethnic groups but which the receding tide of empire had left behind. These dominant minorities often regard themselves as superior to the other people in the countries in which they live and are not very inclined to accept a lesser minority status. Examples of these are Russians in the Baltic States or Ukraine and Hungarians in Romania or Serbs and Croats in Bosnia. Brubaker (1996) analyses a developing dynamic between nationalising states and minorities outside those states which also exert an influence on domestic politics, such as the Hungarian minority in Romania.

The post-Cold War period has seen the eruption of various ethnic conflicts in the region and, for the first time, the persecution of minorities such as the Roma and Muslims (which was always widespread) has become more publicised (*Transition*, 1997). Furthermore, ethnic minorities are seeking to find their own voice within the newly constructed states and this is often resisted by political leaders. In some cases these ethnic minorities are well established and form highly articulate lobbies for use of their own language, their own education, their own representation in the political system, as is the case of the Hungarians in Romania. However, new ethnic groups have been discovered or re-discovered as part of the liberalisation process and perhaps as a consequence of global tendencies towards multi-culturalism. Examples in the Central European region would be the German minority in Poland, believed by many not to exist only eight years ago, but which now has hundreds of associations and is represented in the Polish parliament (Kamusella, 1997). Other examples are the Ruthenians in trans-Carpathia, whose cause has been espoused by a small number of local intellectuals and a non-local Canadian academic (Hann, 1995). For these reasons, minorities can be a threat to the internal security of the country. However, this is the case only with certain minorities. Russian minorities see themselves often as part of a 'homeland', as do Hungarians, but in Poland and the Czech Republic these issues are not so evident. This is perhaps recognised in restrictive nationality laws, which in the case of Poland and the Czech Republic reject even the Czech and Polish minorities in Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Siberia as being potential members of the national state.

Bauman (1989) has put forward the argument that the idea of 'race' and the ethnically homogeneous nation-state was a product of 'modernity', whilst a more hybrid identity involving a range of ethnic or national affiliations is more typical of 'post-modern' societies and ones where multi-culturalism has become an accepted norm. In many Western European countries the discourse of multi-culturalism with its

emphasis on the possibility of holding a number of national or ethnic identities simultaneously has become dominant in recent years. However, until now the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have tended still to have a 'modern' approach of adopting only one identity and attempting to drive out or assimilate those who do not conform. This kind of ethnic nationalism may be changing in a context where membership of the European Union or other supra-national bodies such as the Council of Europe brings an awareness of other nations and cultures. These rather rigid identities are also threatened by an influx of migrants (even though their numbers are still small) and by increasingly militant ethnic minorities. We would expect the extent to which minorities form a threat therefore to be variable.

### *Escalating migration*

In the past, movement around the countries of Central Europe was very restricted, even for their own citizens—and even more restricted for outsiders. The Iron Curtain sealed off these countries from East-West movements. However, the dismantling of the Iron Curtain has resulted in new population flows and new forms of mobility. The traditional flow has been from East to West and this continues with Central Europeans working or studying in European Union countries either legally or illegally (Fassmann & Münz, 1994). Citizens from the countries bordering the European Union can cross the 'green line' without much restriction in any case. Tourists and shoppers travel in large numbers across the borders from West to East. However, the opening of borders also liberalised movement around the Central European region as large numbers of Russians and Ukrainians or people from even further afield arrive to work, to shop or to trade in the more prosperous countries of post-communist Central Europe. Increasing discrepancies in the economic fortunes of the different post-communist countries encourage this flow of people (Wallace *et al.*, 1996; Wallace, 1999). The main recipients of these new flows of people from the East have been the Central European countries of Poland, Hungary and the Czech and Slovak Republics. In addition to people coming to work or trade, these countries started to become transit countries for migrants from outside the region trying to get into Western Europe—from China, from Pakistan and from Africa, for example. Tens of thousands were turned back from the border to be sent back to the last country which they entered—mostly the post-communist countries of Central Europe. These became transit countries not just for illegal migrants but also for criminal networks in arms, drugs, prostitution and stolen art dealing. The European Union, keen to keep its borders safe and stable, has been active in helping to deal with these problems, involving increasing co-operation and intervention in the counties of Central Europe. In economic terms and in terms of migration these countries form a new kind of 'buffer zone' between East and West.

For people in Central European countries the increase in migration has coincided with an increase in crime and these two things are linked in the minds of many people. Furthermore, a wave of asylum seekers and refugees (not always officially declaring themselves as such) hit the Visegrad countries after the war broke out in

Yugoslavia and after European Union countries started closing their doors to these refugees in 1992.

The Central European post-communist countries have therefore experienced an influx of migrants and temporary mobility unknown for some 50 years. This can also be seen as a source of threat and insecurity even though the numbers are relatively and absolutely small compared to many Western European countries. The more affluent countries of the 'Buffer Zone'—Poland, Hungary and the Czech and Slovak Republics—have been the main targets of this migration both because of their borders with the European Union and because of their relative affluence and political stability compared with other countries to the East and South.

### *Perceptions of threat in Eastern and Central Europe*

The changes described above have left the countries of post-communist Central Europe with the need to re-think their alliances. Their relatively weak position in political, economic and military terms means that they are vulnerable to many influences. They are mostly relatively small countries with unstable borders, which enhances this vulnerability. The strengthening and deepening of ties within the European Union creates a strong block on the Western side although the military union has not been pursued, despite some discussions. The European Union represents a strong *economic* pole of attraction into whose orbit the countries of Central Europe are drawn whether they like it or not (Wallace *et al.*, 1996). For this reason it is important to look at how the people of Central Europe regard this new re-ordering of Europe. This forms the next part of the article.

### *General perceptions of threat*

In Figure 1 we compare the different sources of threat for the citizens of Eastern and Central Europe overall. We can see that by 1998 the main sources of threat are the new sources of threat: minorities and ethnic groups/immigrants and refugees. Altogether, 29% of the population saw the former as a threat and 26% the latter. This fell substantially between 1992 and 1996 but had risen again by a small amount in 1998. On the other hand, only 24% saw Russia as a threat in 1998, 21% saw Germany as a threat and 21% the USA. Although slightly fewer people see these old forms of threat to security as being significant, we should note that the numbers who see the Western powers as a threat—Germany and the USA—have grown systematically since 1992. The old sources of threat (by great powers and by neighbouring countries) are therefore still significant and even growing. Whilst in general more people see Russia as a threat, their numbers are declining (despite an increase between 1992 and 1996). The numbers feeling threatened by neighbouring countries have declined quite steeply as borders have been recognised in most countries. In order to understand why these patterns are occurring, it is necessary to look in more detail at particular countries and particular sources of threat.

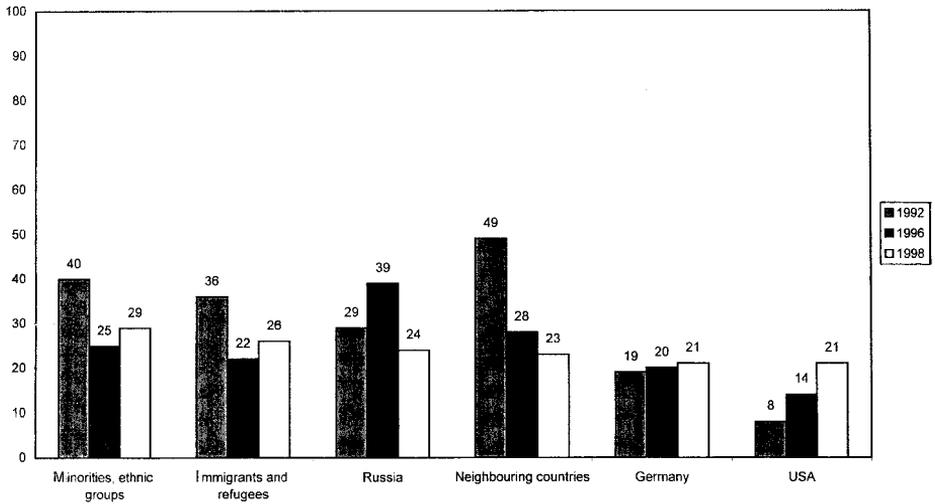


FIGURE 1. PERCEPTIONS OF THREAT 1992–1998: ‘DO YOU THINK ANY OF THESE FACTORS POSE A THREAT OR NO THREAT TO PEACE AND SECURITY IN THIS SOCIETY?’

Sources: New Democracies Barometer (NDB) II, 1992, n = 10518; NDB IV, 1996, n = 10441; NDB V, 1998, n = 11296.

### *Who is afraid of Russia?*

Poles are now far less afraid of Germany than they are of Russia; 62% of Poles are still afraid of Russia, although this number has declined since 1996. However, in the Czech Republic and Slovakia fear of Russia has actually increased since 1992. In Romania and Croatia there was a strong fear of Russia, perhaps reflecting the fact that Russia was traditionally an enemy country, but this has also declined substantially since 1992. Belarus and Ukraine, the countries closest to Russia geographically, do not feel that it poses much of a threat to them and even in Slovenia the numbers have declined significantly since 1996. Belarus, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria are all traditionally sympathetic to Russia on account of their earlier history and this seems to be reflected in the attitudes of the population today. The attitudes towards Russia therefore still reflect some of the ideologies of World War II or even before. In general, fear of Russia is declining nearly everywhere, but remains high in particular countries with historical reasons for fearing the power of Russia (Figure 2).

### *Who is afraid of Germany?*

By far the highest feeling of threat from Germany was held by those in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, where 75% of the population were afraid of Germany. This can be accounted for by the fact that Germany was traditionally an ally of Croatia, the opponent of the FRY in the recent war there. In Poland the feeling of threat by Germany has declined significantly since 1992 and we could hypothesise that not only are old forms of threat becoming less relevant but joining NATO may have helped to allay Polish fears about Germany. Also, a range of Polish-German forms of

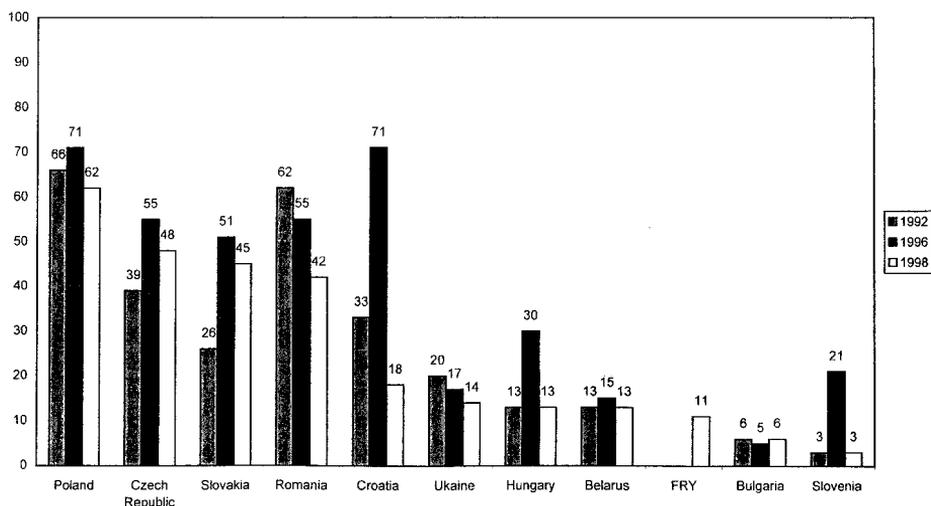


FIGURE 2. THREAT BY RUSSIA 1992–1998: ‘DO YOU THINK RUSSIA POSES A THREAT (= BIG THREAT + SOME THREAT) TO PEACE AND SECURITY IN THIS SOCIETY?’

Sources: New Democracies Barometer (NDB) II, 1992, n = 10518; NDB IV, 1996, n = 10441; NDB V, 1998, n = 11296.

co-operation and agreement, including the recognition of the Oder-Neisse line, may have helped. However, although this old source of insecurity is decreasing, there are still 42% of Poles who are afraid of Germany—the highest of any country outside Yugoslavia. In the Czech and Slovak Republics the perception of threat from Germany rose between 1992 and 1996 before sinking again in 1998. However, there are still many people in these countries who feel threatened by Germany. In Hungary the numbers are far fewer and are declining.

As in the case of Russia, the perception of threat by Germany seems to reflect traditional prejudices based on World War II or even earlier historical epochs. Hence the fear of Germany in Poland, the Czech Republic and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia perhaps reflects some of these historical memories, whilst in Hungary and Croatia there is little fear that Germany will disturb the peace and security of the country.

The people of Belarus and Ukraine are not very concerned by threat from Germany. Croatia’s fear of Germany has fallen significantly since the end of the war there and in Slovenia and Bulgaria almost nobody is afraid of Germany.

In general, the perception of Germany as a threat (Figure 3) is declining in most countries. The general perception of Germany as a threat which appeared to be high in Figure 1 is a product of the inclusion of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which is by far the most anxious of all the post-communist countries and pushes up the general average.

*Who is afraid of America?*

Figure 4 indicates the feelings of threat from the USA, a traditional source of

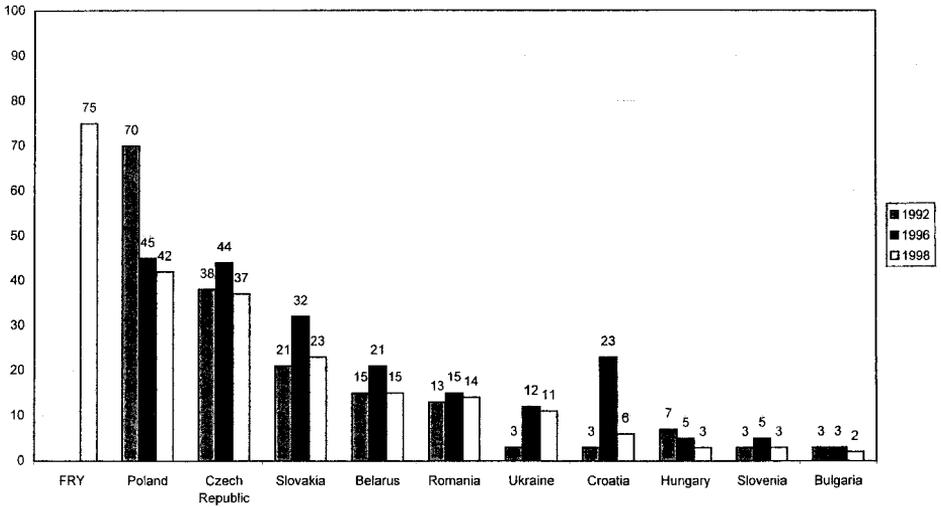


FIGURE 3. THREAT BY GERMANY 1992–1998: ‘DO YOU THINK GERMANY POSES A THREAT OR NO THREAT TO PEACE AND SECURITY IN THIS SOCIETY?’

Sources: New Democracies Barometer (NDB) II, 1992, n = 10518; NDB IV, 1996, n = 10441; NDB V, 1998, n = 11296.

insecurity. We can see that people from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have the strongest perception of an American threat by a very long way, but this is because they were the target of bombing by NATO air strikes under the leadership of the USA in the summer of 1995.

The feeling of threat from the USA has grown in nearly all countries since 1992 with the exception of Slovenia. Although the numbers who see America as a threat are in most cases very low, this ‘old’ source of threat turns out to be also a new source of threat. Again, in the general perception of threat portrayed in Figure 1 the role of the USA is exaggerated by the inclusion of the FRY which pushes up the average.

#### *Who is afraid of neighbouring countries?*

The feeling of threat by the neighbouring countries was very high in 1992 in all countries. However, by 1998 it had declined significantly everywhere compared with 1992. The slight rise in Poland and Belarus may not even be statistically significant. This old threat which re-emerged in the post-1989 era is no longer seen as the most important source of instability in most countries, even those countries such as Croatia, Slovenia and the Czech and Slovak Republics where the borders did in fact change over the last ten years. The people of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia are the ones who are most concerned about threats from neighbouring countries.

Where the sense of threat from neighbouring countries is highest is, not surprisingly, amongst those countries which were recently at war: the FRY and Croatia. Even in Croatia the sense of threat by neighbours has declined quite steeply since the

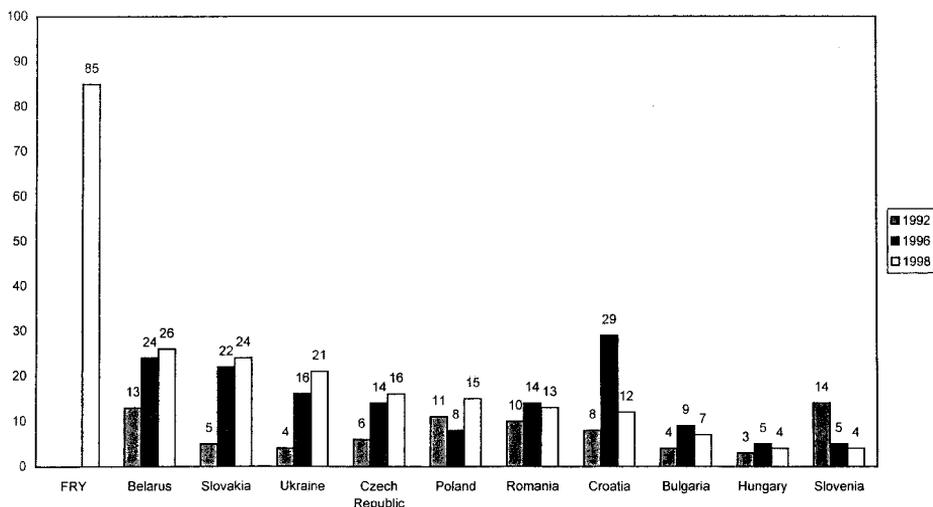


FIGURE 4. THREAT BY USA 1992–1998: ‘DO YOU THINK THE USA POSES A THREAT (= BIG THREAT + SOME THREAT) TO PEACE AND SECURITY IN THIS SOCIETY?’

Sources: New Democracies Barometer (NDB) II, 1992, n = 10518; NDB IV, 1996, n = 10441; NDB V, 1998, n = 11296.

end of the war. However, in Slovenia there is almost no sense of threat by the neighbouring countries. Slovakia, Romania and Hungary all have some feeling of threat by the neighbouring countries, whilst for the Czech Republic and Ukraine it is below 10% (Figure 5).

We could say therefore that this traditional source of threat is declining in most countries, except for those who were recently at war. Nevertheless, more than one-quarter of people in Slovakia and Romania feel threatened by neighbouring countries, perhaps reflecting the rhetoric of some nationalist politicians there rather than any real danger of invasion.

*Internal threats: who is afraid of ethnic groups and minorities?*

The fear of ethnic groups and minorities could be said to be a new source of threat according to contemporary international relations theories, but it is also an old source of threat which successive ethnic cleansing in the last century has failed to entirely eradicate. However, if we analyse the perceived threat exerted by ethnic groups and minorities to internal stability and security across Eastern Europe, the first outcome is that ethnic tensions in that region seem to have calmed down somewhat, at least in most of the countries. The average for all NDB countries went down from 40% feeling threatened in 1992 to 25% under subjective threat in 1996, but this has risen again to 29% by 1998.

The country with the highest level of ethnic tensions appears to be the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, followed by Slovakia. In the case of the FRY it is easier to explain why this should be the case because when the survey was carried out

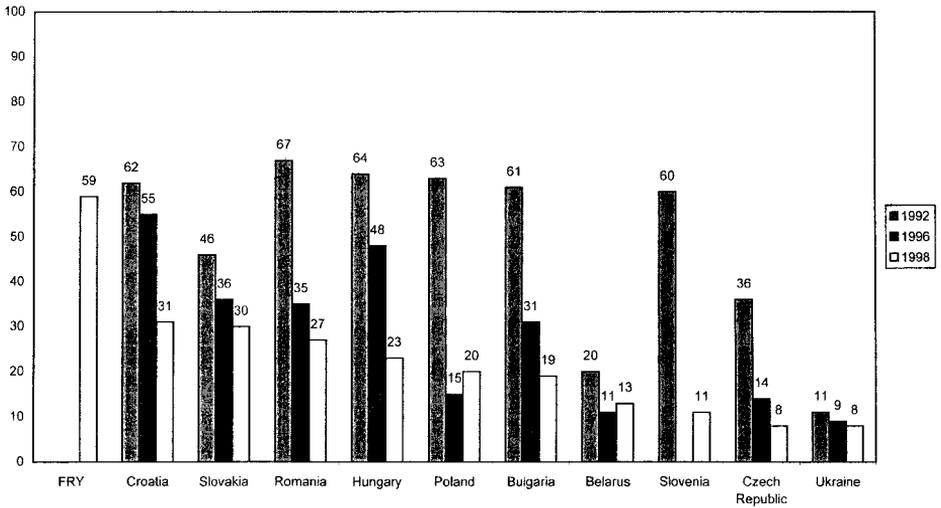


FIGURE 5. THREAT BY NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES 1992–1998: ‘DO YOU THINK THE NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES POSE A THREAT (= BIG THREAT + SOME THREAT) TO PEACE AND SECURITY IN THIS SOCIETY?’

Sources: New Democracies Barometer (NDB) II, 1992,  $n = 10518$ ; NDB IV, 1996,  $n = 10441$ ; NDB V, 1998,  $n = 11296$ .

(February 1998) the hostilities in Kosovo were just breaking out. In Slovakia it is more difficult to explain. In the case of the Slovaks, they are perhaps concerned about the consequences of the on-going problems with the Hungarian minority of about 500 000 on the southern border who are seeking the use of their own language in the region in opposition to the policies of the Slovak government. The third highest level of subjective ethnic threat can be found in Croatia. Croatia seems to be still recently emerged from an ethnic war, but the first signs of normalisation are visible—more so than in the FRY. The subjective level of ethnic threat is also quite high in Bulgaria with the unsolved Turkish question and in Romania with strong Hungarian minorities in Western Romania. These are all countries with what might be termed ‘dominant minorities’. Those countries whose populations contain ‘dominant minorities’ are therefore the ones with the strongest perception of internal insecurity from this source (Figure 6).

Slovenia is the only country where the level of subjective ethnic distrust went up between 1992 and 1996, from 14% to 20%, but it fell again in 1998 to 10%. In the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland the feeling of threat by minorities and ethnic groups declined after 1992 but then rose again between 1996 and 1998, perhaps reflecting the discovery and new militancy of ethnic groups such as the German minority and the Roma. In the Czech Republic the decline between 1992 and 1996 could be accounted for by the separation from Slovakia, where most of the ethnic minorities in the former Czechoslovakia were living. In Hungary the downward tendency is not as steep as in the Czech Republic: 26% of Hungarians felt threatened by ethnic groups in 1992, compared with only 15% of the Hungarian population in 1996, and this had risen again to 19% in 1998.

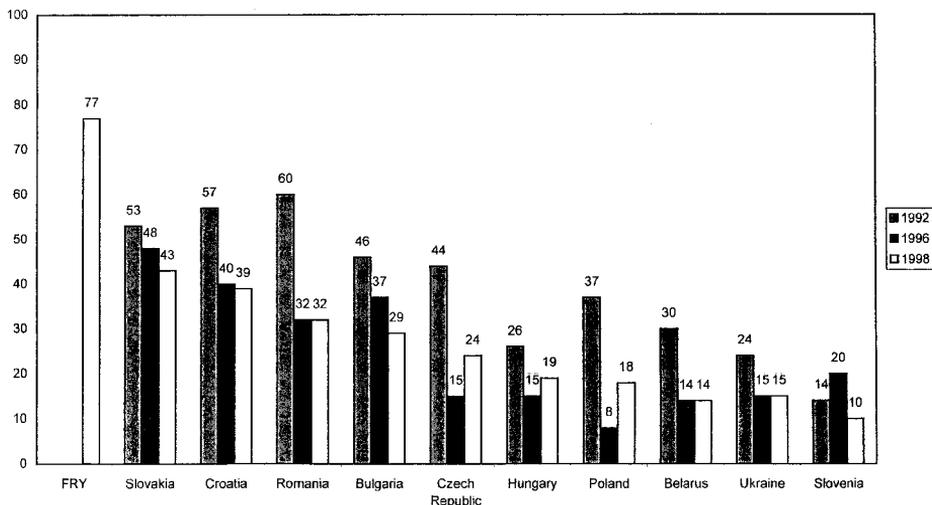


FIGURE 6. THREAT BY ETHNIC GROUPS AND MINORITIES 1992-1998: 'DO YOU THINK THAT ETHNIC GROUPS AND MINORITIES WITHIN OUR COUNTRY POSE A THREAT (= BIG THREAT + SOME THREAT) TO PEACE AND SECURITY IN THIS SOCIETY?'

Sources: New Democracies Barometer (NDB) II, 1992, n = 10518; NDB IV, 1996, n = 10441; NDB V, 1998, n = 11296.

In Belarus and Ukraine the attitudinal pattern of anxieties about ethnic groups producing internal insecurity is again similar. In both countries between 14% and 15% felt threatened by ethnic minorities in 1996. In both post-Soviet countries the level of subjective ethnic tensions within the public fell considerably after 1992. We could say that in Ukraine and Belarus the general identity as a 'Soviet citizen' overrode the particularities of ethnic identities associated with nationhood. Despite the resurgence of Ukrainian nationalism during and after *perestroika*, it seems that Ukrainians are generally at peace with their fellow citizens, many of whom are of Russian nationality. Ethnic issues are not seen as important by most people in these former Soviet Republics.

*Who is afraid of immigrants and refugees?*

An interesting question in the panorama of potential or real threats to Eastern European societies is the perception of migrants moving between different countries, especially between what we have described as the Central European buffer zone (Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia) and Western Europe on the one hand and between the buffer zone and Eastern Europe on the other. The perception of threat by migrants was expressed by 36% of all Eastern Europeans in 1992, but this went down to 22% in 1996 and up again to 26% in 1998. This is therefore one of the new threats which has been increasingly discussed in international security circles and is also something which really troubles the post-communist populations.

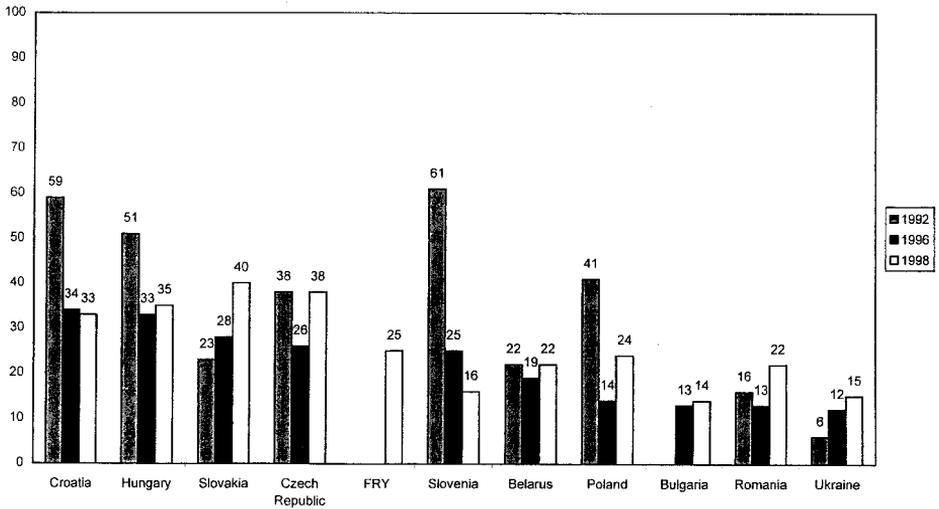


FIGURE 7. THREAT BY IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES 1992–1998: 'DO YOU THINK IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES FROM OTHER SOCIETIES POSE A THREAT (= BIG THREAT + SOME THREAT) OR NO THREAT TO PEACE AND SECURITY IN THIS COUNTRY?'

Sources: New Democracies Barometer (NDB) II, 1992, n = 10518; NDB IV, 1996, n = 10441; NDB V, 1998, n = 11296.

The concern about immigrants and refugees in the former Yugoslav Republics has decreased, although the war displaced many people there. Slovenia and Croatia both show a decline in the numbers afraid of refugees and immigrants and in Slovenia this is very steep. However, in the Central European countries which have also received many refugees, not only from Europe but also from Africa and Asia, the fear of immigrants and refugees has risen considerably. Other economic migrants, such as guest workers coming from Ukraine, have also appeared there and in these countries, unused to peace time immigrants, this is seen as something of a threat. Thus, in Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic this feeling of threat to peace and security by immigrants is increasing. Immigrants and refugees could be seen as a new kind of security threat in the Central and Eastern European countries during the 1990s (Figure 7).

What is perhaps surprising is that Slovakia has such a fear of immigrants, since Slovakia receives relatively few migrants compared with her neighbours (Wallace, Chmouliar & Sidorenko, 1997), but this may reflect the xenophobic rhetoric of the former Meciar government. Originally, the aversion against migrants was much higher in the Czech Republic than in Slovakia, but anti-migrant feeling there went down from 38% in 1992 to 26% in 1996, falling below the Slovakian level. Slovenia in 1992 was in a completely different position owing to the war and the massive flows of migrants and war refugees following the collapse of Yugoslavia. The substantial migration between Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and other former Republics of Yugoslavia produced the result that in 1992 61% of Slovenian society felt threatened by migrants and refugees. This was a real and not an imagined danger within Slovenia, but also in Croatia.

One-fifth of Belarusian society felt threatened by immigrants in 1992 and this is declining. In Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine we find similarly low levels of perceived threat by migrants, but even there it is rising. Immigration does therefore pose a new threat to many of the people of Central and Eastern Europe.

*New and old threats: a summary*

In general we could say that the traditional sources of threat by neighbouring countries are declining in all countries except those recently at war. The stabilisation of borders has had its effects upon the views of the populations of Eastern and Central Europe in the post-1989 period. The feeling of small and weak countries that they are under threat from being invaded by their neighbours seems to have declined. The fear of Russia has also declined, whether on account of this general stabilisation or on account of its economic collapse. The traditional threat by Germany also seems to be declining (if we exclude the FRY). Nevertheless, one-fifth of East and Central Europeans feel threatened by these powers, something which reflects alliances and prejudices which pre-date the Cold War and have their roots in World War II and the preceding period. However, there is an increase in the feeling of threat by the USA (although it remains generally low). Thus, at least some traditional threats by great powers have declined as these great powers have taken on new regional roles but Central Europe is still haunted by some ghosts from the past.

New sources of threat are definitely increasing in East and Central Europe. More people are afraid of minorities and ethnic groups and of migrants and refugees in 1998 than in 1996. However, the general trend has been downwards since 1992.

Thus, we could say that the new sources of threat were indeed important, but that the old sources of threat also remained significant in the region. It would be too soon to say that new sources of threat were replacing the old. Some of the old sources have even increased in importance—including fear of the USA. We could also conclude that internal sources of threat are increasing whilst external ones have declined.

The general sense of threat from all sources seems to be declining in Central and Eastern Europe ten years after the early anxieties of transition. The exception is the countries that were recently at war, where anxiety levels about everything are high.

*Attitudes toward joining NATO*

The feeling of insecurity may lead some post-communist countries towards a desire to join NATO in order to secure their military position as part of a greater alliance. The fear of Russia may also make joining NATO a desirable objective.

In general a very high percentage of the population of post-communist East and Central Europe wished to join NATO. On average nearly two-thirds of all the people combined saw joining NATO as beneficial in both 1996 and in 1998. This rose to 90% in Romania and 86% in Slovenia and Poland in 1996. Croatia followed with three-quarters of her population—76%—having this opinion. The Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary were clustered together with around two-thirds in favour of joining NATO. In 1996 people in Belarus and Bulgaria were generally not interested in joining NATO.

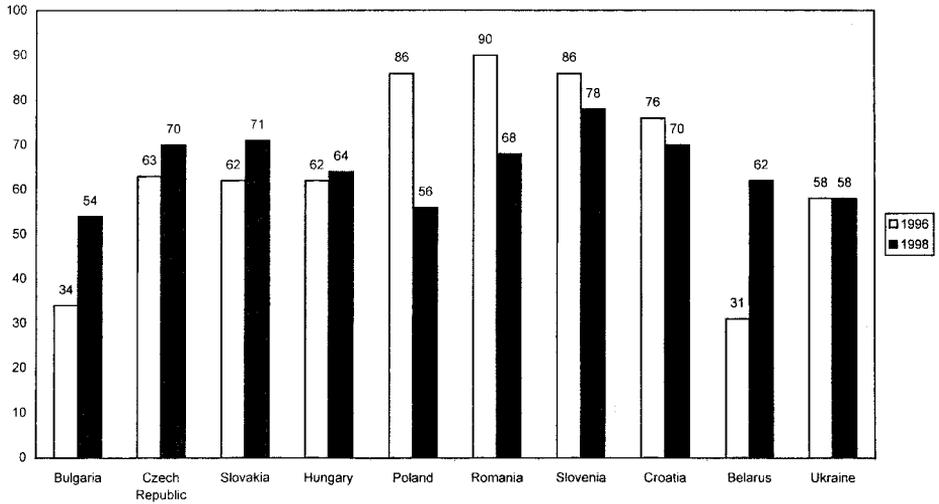


FIGURE 8. THOSE IN FAVOUR OF JOINING NATO: 1996 AND 1998.

*Note:* The questions were slightly differently phrased in 1996 and 1998. In 1996 people were asked to agree or disagree with the statement 'Joining NATO would be beneficial for my country'. In 1998 they were asked 'Do you think that NATO membership of this country is: a very good thing; somewhat good; not good'. For 1998 the first two responses have been counted together as signalling being in favour of joining NATO. Sources: NDB IV; NDB V.

By 1998 these country discrepancies were disappearing and there was a convergence towards about two-thirds of the population being in favour of joining NATO. The greatest change was in Bulgaria and Belarus, where people who formerly were not interested in joining NATO suddenly changed their minds. In Belarus this is despite the pro-Soviet and anti-Western rhetoric of Lukashenka. In the Czech Republic and Hungary, the countries which are joining NATO, the number in favour increased, whilst in Poland it declined by an astonishing 30 percentage points (Figure 8).

These results are corroborated by those of the United States Information Agency (USIA), which carries out regular surveys on security issues in these countries (USIA, 1997). Of people who said that they strongly favoured or favoured becoming a full member of NATO, they found Romanians (79%) were among the highest scorers, followed by Poland with 72% and Slovenia with 71%. Next came Hungary (57%), Bulgaria (52%), the Czech Republic (51%) and Slovakia (46%). This survey was also carried out in 1996 but did not include the former Soviet Republics of Ukraine and Belarus. They conclude that support for joining NATO is shallow and has declined since 1995. However, we would disagree with this conclusion. It seems to us that support is not shallow—it is very high and continues to be high despite some decline since 1995. More than half in most of the countries questioned wanted to become full members of NATO. However, USIA found that even if Central and Eastern European countries were keen to join NATO, they were not keen to assume the responsibilities of NATO membership, including routine exercises in their country, having NATO troops stationed in their country, having regular over-flights from NATO aircraft or

sending troops to support another NATO ally. Furthermore, the large majority in each country favoured social over military spending.

### *Conclusions*

The data show that since 1992 the number of Central and Eastern Europeans who feel threatened is steadily decreasing. As a whole, Central Europeans are generally feeling more secure in their new political, economic and societal situations. Furthermore, Central Europeans feel least threatened by the Western powers. The decrease in insecurity is found mainly in the slight but steady overall decrease of threats posed by other states, whether great powers or neighbours. Even if we add the data on threat posed by minorities to these traditional threats, the decreasing pattern is maintained.

These trends—as well as the high level of support for NATO membership—and the support for the democratic and market reforms (Rose & Haerpfer, 1998) all point to support for Western-orientated reforms, politics and strategic alliances. They also point to a trend towards accepting and feeling increasingly comfortable in the new military security system in Europe in which Western powers, and especially the USA, play key roles. The traditional state-centred threats seem to be increasingly believed to be controllable by the New World Order.

However, claims that the 'end of history' has arrived are premature. History still plays a very important part in shaping the attitudes of some Central and Eastern Europeans. The prejudices and alliances created during World War II and even the period preceding it still affect the attitudes of Central and Eastern Europeans today and are likely to continue to do so.

While Central Europeans feel increasingly less threatened by the types of threats usually associated with the traditional military and political sphere, they are not sure what to make of the new types of threats which have an impact on their sense of cultural identity. There is no decreasing pattern in their perception of threats posed by minorities and immigrants. Fear of migrants is particularly significant since their numbers are relatively low and the fear is best explained by xenophobia and threat to culture, as they pose very little threat economically, politically and especially militarily. The fact that this new type of threat plays an important role can also be supported by the increase—although slight—of the perception of threat posed by the Western powers. Throughout the world, the West, and especially the USA, are associated with a new culture. It is a culture which is often perceived as intrusive, one breaking down traditional values and cultural identities. Central Europeans, like many throughout the world, are ambiguous about whether the New World Order is bringing the type of cultural change they want. The increase in threat posed by the US and to a lesser extent Germany (as a key EU power) is increasingly associated with the way they represent new cultural values rather than simply military and political power.

Overall, Central and Eastern Europeans appear to be increasingly sharing similar types of concerns as Western Europeans. They are moving away from being concerned about traditional conceptions of threat associated with military security and paying substantial attention to 'new' societal threats. In a sense the 'Westernising' reforms undertaken since the late 1980s throughout Central and Eastern Europe appear to be effective as Central Europeans are increasingly sharing similar values

as people in the West. Unfortunately, this is as much the case with positive values, such as the support for democratic reforms, as it is with such concerns as the 'threat' of migration and multi-culturalism, something which is likewise shaping the course of Western European politics.

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<sup>1</sup> This is in spite of the steady increase in the perceived threat from the United States. For example, support for NATO membership continues to average well above 50% in spite of the costs that this entails. However, threat from the USA, especially if we remove the results from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, does not rise much above 20%.

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