Unpacking Hungary's and Czechia's strategic profiles amid the Russian aggression against Ukraine

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Introduction

In light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the European security architecture has been put under attack. Vital, stable, democratic, and prosperous Ukraine remains the backbone of peace in Europe. As long as Eastern Europe remains a "grey security zone", Russia will not abandon its ambitions to restore the Soviet Union in a new capacity. On the contrary, welcoming Ukraine, as a part of the European common space of democracy, the rule of law, respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms will end the Kremlin's expectations to reverse history. Ukraine's accelerated accession to the EU is the best track to reach that scope. However, the recent debates brought one more question to the table – are all EU Members lean into this course of action? If not, how is it even possible that so-called Russian "trojan horse" turn out to be the country that suffered the Soviet occupation in the past? This paper will aim to unpack the drivers behind the behaviour of Hungary in its deliberate choice to backslide on core European values and, in doing so, foster the Russian agenda. Furthermore, this paper will touch upon the case of the Czech Republic, which had also experienced the Soviet occupation but managed to learn the lessons from the past. The comparison between these two international actors - Hungary and Czechia - will allow the author to explore the similarities and differences that drove both countries into pursuing the certain set of strategic goals. The rationale of this research entails attending to the comparative analysis of strategic cultures built up by both countries based on their geographical, historical, political, and social backgrounds in order to trace the key elements, that asserted the tremendous effect on their foreign policy pursuits.

Therefore, this dissertation aims to answer the following research question: *what drives countries, which had suffered the Soviet occupation in the past, towards supporting in the Hungarian case and opposing in the Czech case Russia in pursuing its imperialist ambitions for the time being?*

In order to provide an in-depth answer to the research question this paper will attend to the concept of strategic culture and its potential effect on the decision-making process in Hungary and Czechia. The author will argue that the choices made by the international actors cannot be boiled down only to the current world order and its limitations but first and foremost precipitate unpacking the strategic profiles of the parties concerned. The premise of this research will be built on a solid literature choice covering Hungarian and Czech history, the phenomena of liberal and illiberal democracies, the interplay between different types of nationalism, national identity, and as the product of this interplay – shaping strategic culture and its effect on the strategic choices made by regional actors in Central and Eastern Europe.

Chapter 1 attends to the theoretical premise of this paper in order to establish the common research metrics for unpacking the topic. The chapter walks the reader through the literature review pointing out the gaps to be filled in this paper. The core concept being used by the author to answer the research question touches upon the strategic culture, the main approaches to its understanding and its main facets. Furthermore, this chapter tells the reader about the phenomenon of liberal and illiberal democracies as one of the main features of the Hungarian political landscape, which comes equally useful while comparing Czechia's strategic outlook to Hungary's strategic pursuits. Besides, this chapter also brings the new facet to exploring strategic framework pointing out the underrated importance of intelligence services in framing the threats to national security. The chapter also explains the phenomenon of commemorative practices of selective character and its place in forming the strategic profiles of Czechia and Hungary. Overall, the theoretical framework explained in the chapter is primed to establish the ontological basis for answering the research question.

Chapter 2 deals with the methodological framework of this research. The main premise of the methodological framework of this research deals with

implementing the best practices of the qualitative research techniques. The latter deals with the secondary analysis of available data along with touching upon the narration premise at public fora, particularly exploring the media landscape. This paper is built upon the qualitative approach in order to keep the balance between the positivism-driven (data, corpora) and post-positivism (co-creating meanings, human interpretation of collected data) thinking. The former will help to ensure that the data collection being analysed truly exists and does not appear to be a sum of ungrounded assumptions while the latter advises on one of the ways to process and interpret the collected data. Finally, an author arrives at micro conclusions concerning the common tropes of Hungarian and Czech positionality on Ukraine. Overall, the methodological framework outlined in the chapter is primed to establish the epistemological basis for answering the research question.

Chapter 3 walks us through the interplay between strategic culture and strategic behaviour in the field of international relations and foreign policy. This chapter is supposed to test the first hypothesis, which touches upon the interrelation between strategic culture and decision-making process. The latter is being directly linked to the strategic profile of Hungary and Czechia and their strategic choices. Besides, the chapter also draws the context, in which the strategic decisions are made. According to main arguments relayed in this chapter, the context remains heavily affected by a set of factors including but not limited to the historical, political, societal landscapes. According to the scholarship referenced in this chapter, these multiple historical, political, and societal facets bear an enormous effect on the strategic choices made by the international actors. Furthermore, this chapter unpacks different models of strategic behaviour being reinforced by the effect of the experiences. Finally, this Chapter confirms the first hypothesis related to the interrelation between strategic culture and foreign and security policy decision-making process.

Chapter 4 focuses on unpacking Hungary's strategic profile by combining a set of tools, which include but are not limited to exploring the Hungarian historical background and its eternal struggle for freedom and sovereignty, the pretext, and the ramifications of the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, and the main facets of its current political and societal landscapes. This chapter walks through the set of selective facts of Hungarian history, which help to trace the process of shaping Hungary's strategic outlook. The chapter critically reflects on the disjuncture in Hungarian perception of colonialism given the fact that Hungary took both roles throughout its history – the colonized and the coloniser. The chapter delves into the subtleties of the Soviet occupation of Hungary in 1956 from the security services' perspective. Such an angle allows the author to explore the facet that was omitted in the strategic culture literature before.

Chapter 5 unpacks Czechia's strategic profile by attending to Czechia's strategic culture and its impact on the strategic choices. Flagging the historical developments such as the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968 allows the author to draw the comparative metrics for the case-study countries in order to outline the similarities and differences, which affect the strategic choices. The chapter attends to the role of Czechoslovakian intelligence services and their significant role in orchestrating the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. This aspect has been framed as the gravity centre of this Chapter as it reveals the main difference between Hungary's and Czechia's reactions towards the Soviet invasion.

Finally, in Chapter 6 the author arrives at the conclusions regarding the main premise of this research, which is unpacking the strategic profiles of two main actors in the region – Hungary and the Czech Republic amid the Russian aggression against Ukraine. The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine is taken as the example of the highly charged unprecedented situation in the 21st century, the reaction towards which can reflect the main facets of Hungary's and

Czechia's strategic behaviours. The conclusions are based on the intense discussion reflected throughout this paper, which illuminates the interplay between the strategic culture and the models of strategic behaviour, which are being formed through absorbing norms, values and attitudes by the countries in their strategic pursuits. Therefore, the phenomenon of (il)liberal democracy as well as the phenomenon of constructing the "Self-Other" dichotomy within and beyond the state-security nexus are being touched upon in this paper.

Expected Outcomes

This paper aims to answer the research question presented above by applying the most appropriate methodology in doing so. The research will be based on the synergic mixture of several qualitative methods, which present the opportunity to closely engage with the existing literature and data related to Hungarian and Czech strategic behaviour and identify the gaps to be filled in by this paper. This paper seeks to present another angle of explaining the difference in Hungary's and Czechia's stances towards the Russian imperialist ambitions in Eastern Europe. The author attends to the concept of strategic culture and explores its link to shaping the strategic outlook. The main facet for drawing the comparative metrics is the Soviet occupation, which happened to Hungary in 1956 and then touched upon Czechoslovakia in 1968. The main purpose of this research to showcase why this variable – the shared experience of the Soviet occupation - is not the only one that should be taken into consideration when unpacking the Hungarian and Czech stance on the Russia-Ukraine war.

Limitations and Caveats

Taking into consideration that this research is based mainly on the secondary analysis, it will not bring an added value in terms of data gathering and collection techniques. Besides, the author speaks neither Czech nor Hungarian, which deprives them of the opportunity to explore more original sources available in native languages of the case-study countries. The latter remains one of the main limitations of this paper as it situates the research on

the “out there” end within the methodological spectrum. This means that the assumptions and musings, which will come up throughout the research process will tend to be framed as “externally manufactured/perceived”. This research will not seek to equip the practitioners with the specific tools and selective strategies for developing the foreign policy recommendations in order to tackle the current threats as the premise of this paper is mainly focused on bridging the theoretical gap in understanding the main facets of Czech and Hungarian strategic profiles. Furthermore, according to the limitations brought by the word count requirements, this paper does not provide the full-fledged walkthrough across the abundant history of both countries. Therefore, this paper will not fully illuminate Hungary’s and Czechia’s strategic cultures, rather their main features and elements that might be helpful to relay the author’s arguments. Starting historical points for this paper come as the Soviet occupation of Hungary and Czechoslovakia in 1956 and 1968, respectively. The retrospective analysis of the changing continuity does not answer all potential questions that might arise concerning Hungarian and Czech current political landscapes, yet it still allows us to understand better why some developments took place and how they influenced the societal canvas inside the corresponding countries. The historical analysis of the Soviet invasions should not be considered as the key point for unlocking Hungary’s and Czechia’s strategic profiles and their contemporary orientations, rather as the starting metrics for unpacking multiple facets of their strategic behaviours.

Chapter 1. Theoretical Framework

1.1 Strategic profiling

In order to answer the main research question, this paper seeks to establish the most relevant theoretical metrics for doing so. Given the premise of the research question, the author aims to narrow down the theoretical toolkit, so that the main focus is not scattered among the myriads of different approaches. On the contrary, the main focus should be placed on unpacking the strategic profiles of Hungary and Czechia and revealing the key reasons behind their strategic choices. These objectives precipitate attending to the social theory as the latter covers the developments occurring within the socially constructed order amid the constantly changing continuity. Unlocking Hungary's and Czechia's strategic profiles cannot be possible without walking through their historical backgrounds, particularly the time, when both countries were set at the crossroads of the ideological and political choices. These choices were made in different historical circumstances, they were influenced by a myriad of different factors, yet the one thing brings Hungary and Czechia together – the threat coming from the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The author does not try to reduce the abundant political, social, and cultural backgrounds of Hungary and Czechia to one moment, which was facing the common fate against the Soviet occupation in 1956 and 1968 respectively, rather the opposite. The author seeks to explain why the Soviet occupation of Hungary and Czechoslovakia cannot be the only variable to explore in a scientific pursuit of explaining the ontologically controversial positions of Hungary and Czechia towards the Russian imperialist ambitions in Ukraine for the time being.

While this paper avails itself of the opportunity to integrate some of the musings endorsed by the liberal school of international relations, the paper is primed to go beyond the oversimplified assumptions in a true spirit of political realism as the latter disregards the social canvas and the internal landscape concentrating mostly on the system of international interactions per se being

formed by the power balance. The selective techniques of the liberalism are considered the most applicable methodological choice for this research as whilst liberalism includes the internal landscape and recognizes the entanglement of the domestic and foreign policies, it does not leave a lot of space to the societal metrics and its juxtaposition to the foreign policy choices. Therefore, this paper attends to the Kantian theory of peace among the democratic state while exploring the phenomenon of liberal and illiberal democracies, yet it does not form the research metrics purely around the liberalism postulates.

Social theory allows the author to ponder the ways to address the following questions in the multidisciplinary manner not limiting themselves to the postulates endorsed by Walt and Mearsheimer: *if history is brutally back, why the countries, which had experienced the apogee of the imperialism-induced atrocities, hold off learning lessons from history? What drives them backwards? Is there any universal recipe for unpacking such a type of behaviour?* To provide the most exhaustive answer to these questions, this research will attend to the concept of strategic culture to outline the framework within which Hungary and Czechia made themselves. Furthermore, the research will show how strategic culture affects the decision-making process in a field of international affairs and foreign policy. This interplay will constitute the first hypothesis to be tested throughout this scientific pursuit. In order to do so empirically, the author states hereby the concept of strategic culture and its main facets.

Overall, the scholars, who contributed to researching strategic culture, can be divided into three camps. The impetus for the discourse on the evolution of strategic culture was mainly driven by Colin Gray (1999) and Alastair Johnston (1999). Johnston pointed out that strategic culture should be considered as an *independent variable* that has an impact on the outcome of a specific political course, whilst Gray attended to the dualistic influence of strategic culture: *decision* and *outcome*. Gray argued with Johnston about

adding strategic culture only to one side of the equation relating to outcomes. Simultaneously, Gray was convinced that strategic culture affects both political culture and its ramifications. Therefore, such a discourse did not produce a universally condoned definition of strategic culture as a phenomenon. For the time being, there is a couple of approaches to outlining the concept of strategic culture. Gray advocated for researching culture as a set of socially constructed ideas, attitudes, traditions, ways of thinking, and operational methods that might differ from each other within different communities in accordance with geography-related matters. Johnston added to the concept of "culture" a set of socially divided decision-making patterns, universal recipes, and standardized operational procedures, which were designed to form appropriate connections among individuals across different generations. However, Klein (1994) considered culture through symbols, a particular system of inherited conceptual foundations in the form of symbols, with the help of which communication channels were created for the exchange of knowledge, experiences, opinions, and attitudes towards certain phenomena. Nevertheless, Lantis (2005) emphasized the fact that considering strategic culture as an independent variable is a tautology. Berger (1998) pointed out that cultural beliefs have an impact on the nature of a national character, and, thus, limit the perception of individual actions and events. For Martinsen, "culture is not an element that can be given a precise definition, but it can be considered as a prerequisite for certain patterns of behaviour." (Cited in Yurchenko et al., 2021). However, Meyer argued about defining strategic culture as an "independent variable", justifying it by the fact that subjects do not make decisions in a value-based, empirical and intellectual vacuum (cited in Yurchenko et al., 2021). They are guided by specific values, norms, and experiences gained as a result of similar situations and their beliefs (Yurchenko et al., 2021). Subjects make appropriate decisions based on them. Based on such lively discourse, it can be concluded that although there is no unity in the issue of defining the essence of strategic culture, its influence on decision-making and behaviour of states becomes obvious and cannot be

ignored. What is important is that it is a strategic culture that can narrow choice or, on the contrary, extend it, especially if it concerns the use of force and reaction to the use of force (Yurchenko et al., 2021). Another aspect that cannot be ignored when analysing the impact of strategic culture on the process of political decision-making is the historical retrospective analysis. Meyer, Johnston, and Gray agree that history plays an important role in the context of strategic culture. Lantis (2006), in turn, goes further in highlighting the role of history as a cornerstone of strategic culture, justifying this by the fact that the upper echelons of power usually cannot depart from the historical narratives that are present during the specific period of time, as it could potentially entail their political death. Lord (1985) also included the militaristic culture of the state, its civilian channels, and armaments in the list of elements of strategic culture. According to Lord another element that causes debate in scientific circles is the position of the state in the orbit of specific geopolitical codes. The place of a state on the geopolitical coordinate system often determines the involvement of this state in historical events of various kinds, which involves the construction of threats, their perception from the position of strength/weakness, and the development of a foreign policy course based on existing conditions.

Among the tools of constructing the external and internal threats the national myth is considered one of the most effective (Dobre & Ghiţă, 2017). The national myth can be constructed in many ways, yet the most effective one remains drawing the commemorative practices of selective character (Yurchenko et al., 2021). These practices are primed to emphasize and commemorate specific events or individuals while ignoring or downplaying others (Yurchenko et al., 2021). This technique proves to be quite useful when building the national identity (Dobre & Ghiţă, 2017). The startling examples of selective commemorative practices include the glorification of national heroes while ignoring their human rights abuses, emphasizing victories in war while ignoring the suffering and losses of the other side, or focusing on one's own

victimhood while ignoring the victimhood of others (Dobre & Ghiţă, 2017). Hungary's commemorative practices of selective character primarily indicate the main features of Hungary's strategic profile. These practices involve the glorification of nationalist figures and liberation developments drawn from its historical background while diminishing and shadow banning its involvement in the Holocaust and other atrocities.

Thus, it brings us to formulating the first hypothesis to be tested throughout this paper: *the strategic culture shapes the decision-making process marking the limited set of both opportunities and caveats for the strategic choices.*

In this regard, it is worth mentioning that while strategic culture usually focuses on geography, history, ideology, public policy, the organizational interests, the practitioners – those, who call the shots and implement the decisions should not be completely taken out of the equation. The latter is not being specified to the extent that we could consider the fullest in the existing literature. The scholarship pays less heed to the nature of the organizational interests, which might come among others from the security services, for example. The role of intelligence services has been always relegated to the supportive one (Vitkauskas, 1999). The security apparatus is supposed to help the policymakers navigate among the myriads of challenges permanently posed by the volatile international environment (Vitkauskas, 1999). The intelligence circle has been always primed to contribute to better understanding of the international community, its national, transnational, and global interests as well as predict and handle the potential menaces stemming from the regions with the unstable or even hostile dynamics (Betts, 1988). However, as it is demonstrated throughout this paper, the security services might also step beyond their duties and take the initiatives, which run contrary to the policymakers' vision (Graham, 2020). This disjuncture in the security-state nexus is clearly illuminated by the course of action undertaken by the Hungarian and

Czechoslovakian security services on the eve of the Soviet invasions (Graham, 2020). Therefore, the role of intelligence services in shaping the strategic culture and its effect on the decision-making process cannot be ignored. Understanding the "technical" part of formulating and constructing threats to national security remains one of the multiple facets of cracking the fabric of strategic outlook canvas. Except of executing the assigned operational tasks, which include gathering, processing, and analysing sensitive information on interests, intentions and capabilities of foreign governments, transnational actors and other sources of potential threats or opportunities, the intelligence services can also contribute to weaving the canvas of public opinion and in doing so shape the patterns of threat perception. For instance, the intelligence services have the capacity to assert the influence on the public debates on sensitive issues such as international terrorism, cyber security, and espionage (Betts, 1988). In some cases, intelligence services may be used to legitimize the specific course of action, which requires the "public validation" (Hastedt, 2013). A startling example of this might be found in Colin Powell's UN speech, which unleashed the authorization of the US invasion of Iraq (Russell, 2004). If synchronized and pursued in (real or perceived) good faith, such actions could assure the synergetic nature of the security-state cooperation.[1] However, as it was evidenced in the Hungarian and Czechoslovakian cases on the eve of the Soviet invasions, the national intelligence services played if not decisive then the significant role in bringing the Soviet troops to Budapest and Prague, which run contrary to their governments' pursuits let alone Hungarian and Czechoslovakian national interests. Throughout their scientific pursuits Michael McCabe (2019) mentions the asymmetric relationship between the security services and the newly established government in the 50s Hungary. Even after Rákosi's tenure came to an end, Hungarian intelligence service (AVH) was still

[1]In this regard, it is important to clarify that by stating so the author of this paper does not attend to the gist of the decision undertaken (the invasion of Iraq), the author attends only to the "technical" side of this decision, which is the synchronization between by the intelligence services and the government.

controlled by Rákosi. It gave the Soviets carte blanche in terms of putting their "liberation" sentiments in practice by invading Hungary in 1956.

Simon Graham (2020) fairly points out that amid the triangle of intelligence collaboration between the Czechoslovakian, Soviet and East German security services a new disjuncture in the state-security nexus grew. This disjuncture led to the situation, when since 1953 a portion of the Czechoslovakian intelligence service (StB) identified more closely with the Soviet KGB than it did with the Dubcek Government, which initiated the national shift in Czechoslovakia. Such a detachment between the policymakers and security services gave Moscow a tool to insert its influence and strategic control over Eastern Europe (Graham, 2020). Pavel Zacek (2016, p. 1) described this Soviet practice as "a hierarchic system of direct control of Eastern bloc satellite secret services by way of a complicated system of KGB advisors".

Notwithstanding, the Soviet control inserted over the intelligence services in Hungary and Czechoslovakia did not avert the national shifts in these countries and their aspirations to advance beyond the backward Soviet playbook (McCabe, 2019). A startling example of such dedication was evidenced by the attempts to pursue democratization and liberalization in both Hungary and Czechoslovakia on the eve of the Soviet occupation (Graham, 2020). Noticeable advances in civil and political freedoms, a measured economic liberalization, the gradual devolution of power to regional units and the independence in foreign policy contributed enormously to the societal canvas in Budapest and Prague (Rainer et al., 2002). The process of opting for the value-based coordinate system that was ontologically opposite to the Soviet Union's set a solid precedence that could have not been forgotten by the Hungarian and Czechoslovakian society even after the Soviet occupation (Kramer, 2003). Nevertheless, for the clarity's sake, the difference between democratization and liberalization should be addressed. Attending to the disjuncture in the democracy-liberalism nexus illuminates the phenomenon of liberal and illiberal

democracy, which is established as one of the selective variables of this comparative research. The decision to highlight this variable is made in accordance with the status-quo, which presents Czechia as a liberal democracy while Hungary as rolling back to its illiberal agenda.

1.2 (Il)liberal agenda

Since the end of the Second World War, when the alleged hegemon at that time - the United States - considered the process of democratization as one of the effective tools for establishing the reliable global security framework, the international political landscape turned into the new coordinate system, which allegedly continues to exist nowadays – the so-called "rules-based" order (Brzezinski, 2012). The emergence of new international actors willing to adhere to the rules-based order sets new impulses not only at the global, but also at the regional and local scale. Thus, the issue of the political regime becomes extremely acute, as it transpires not only the internal landscape, but also affects the interactions among the states (Brzezinski, 2016).

In his treatise "To Eternal Peace", the outstanding German philosopher Immanuel Kant noted that "democracies usually do not enter the wars with each other". This notion is explained by the high level of trust among the homogenous actors.[2] Therefore, the homogeneous systems of international relations appear to be less prone to armed confrontations. This finding became the gravity centre of the "messianic" strategy pursued by the US after the Second World War (Brzezinski, 2012). In a nutshell, the idea may be summarised as follows: in order to prevent wars in the world, it is necessary to democratize other actors (Brzezinski, 2012).

It appears to be not less important to complement this idea with other theory-driven factors that can testify the relevance of such a claim and explain

[2]In the given context by homogenous actors the author means the states with the same political regimes.

why democracy became possible in the first place and even necessary in general (Ambrose, 2010). If we look at the process of forging a popularity of a democratic regime from the retrospective standpoint, we can flag that a significant jump in the rooting of democracy took place in the second half of the 20th century (Krastev & Holmes, 2019). This transpired due to several factors, including the increase in literacy, the major improvements in the access to the education system, and the increase in economic advancement, which facilitated establishing the liberal rules-based order (Krastev & Holmes, 2019). Not the least, the US played a significant role in this by investing into Europe's restoration, particularly by implementing the Marshall Plan, and extending the US security umbrella to Europe by landing a couple of military bases and placing the nuclear and conventional weapons therein (Kissinger, 2015). On the account of such developments, the internal landscapes of the war-affected countries required a quick adaptation of the state bureaucracy to new internationally driven agenda (Krastev & Holmes, 2019). This adaptation demanded a swift and efficient alignment between the multi-strata population and scattered elites (Krastev & Holmes, 2019). Democracy became a reaction to these dynamic changes, given that societal canvas evolves much quicker than its state counterpart. The American slogan "no taxation without representation", which was coined during the American revolt against the British colonisers may be extrapolated to the current coordinate system (Ambrose, 2010). So far, democracy is the only political regime known to mankind, which allows to maximize the presence of the population in public affairs (Applebaum, 2020).

Moreover, the emergence of the Internet brought more challenges for the well-oiled bureaucracy machine (Krastev & Holmes, 2019). People, who have never been a part of the public debate entered this realm swiftly forming and sharing their opinions on a daily basis (Pinker, 2011). The concepts such as "Twitter diplomacy", "a state in a smartphone", "online elections" fostered transparency and accountability as online users became the main source of the

public control (Pinker, 2011). Numerous corruption scandals and related investigative materials regarding the highest echelons of power became available to the public at a one-button-click distance (Pinker, 2011). Therefore, democracy fostered the process of engaging more citizens into political life and encouraging them to participate in public debates over the political issues (Zakaria, 2007). Therefore, any "roll-back" or ill-judged attempts to halt this process of individual involvement spawned a crisis of trust in the state-citizen nexus (Zakaria, 2007). This disjuncture finds its explanation in the phenomenon of illiberal democracies, Poland and Hungary being startling examples (Zakaria, 2007).

According to the data delivered by "Our World in Data", the democratisation process got accelerated at the beginning of the 21rst century. The theory of democratic transition became extremely popular at that time as it fitted into the narration about the inevitability of democratising all international actors, as it was later called "the end of history" by Fukuyama (2006). However, the Arab Spring showed that if establishing democracy might be possible in its essence, it is not that easy to maintain it in a proper condition. In his essay on illiberal democracies Farid Zakaria argues that the terms "democracy" and "liberalism" have been mistakenly used interchangeably. However, the terms "democracy" and "liberalism" are situated on the opposite sides of the coordinate system. Democracy precipitates bringing more individuals into the public realm while liberalism demarcates the limits of state presence in people's lives by establishing the set of rules to be followed within the socially constructed reality (Zakaria, 1997).

Samuel P. Huntington's (2012) theory of "authoritarian roll back" suggests that countries that have experienced a democratic transition may face challenges to their democratic institutions and processes as they grapple with issues such as economic instability, social unrest, and external pressures. It appears to be quite relevant to interpret Hungary's recent political developments,

including the erosion of democratic institutions, restrictions on media freedom and civil society, and the concentration of power in the hands of the ruling Fidesz party, as evidence of an authoritarian roll back. According to János Rainer (2006), the gist of the Hungarian politics today is boiled down to numerous attempts to take the revolution of 1956 out of context and connect it with urgent issues of the contemporary political agenda. The question of the scale of post-socialist development in Hungary polarized society into social liberals and national conservatives, who also evaluate the events of 1956 differently (Rainer, 2006). Bringing this fact, however, does not answer the question: what were the reasons for the Hungarian Revolution of 1956? Why was Hungary almost the first of the socialist states to burst into flames? What were the consequences of the events of 1956 for the whole world and Hungary in particular?

Therefore, this research suggests that states' behaviour should be explored through unpacking their past experiences coupled with tracing how these experiences can be extrapolated to the contemporary security landscape. When it comes to Hungary, the situation was slightly different. In his essay, "The Tragedy of Central Europe", Milan Kundera argues that Hungarians were ready "to die for Hungary and Europe", however, Europe remained blind and silent. This lack of support from Europe backfired as on the societal level it was quite easy to blame the Western countries for atrocities experienced because of the Soviet occupation. It brings us to the second hypothesis to be tested throughout this research: *the combination of commemorative practices (memory of the Soviet occupation and reticent Western reaction) in Hungary fostered the public support for Ukraine but the political culture absorbed the anti-Western sentiments due to its limited reaction while the Soviet tanks crossed the Hungarian border*.

In case of Czechia, it is quite important to flag that the Czech leaders were seeking for any opportunity to manifest their liberal attitudes, so that when

the political life in the Soviet Union became relatively loose, the Czechs immediately launched the liberal processes (Kramer, 2006). It brings us to outlining the third hypothesis to be tested throughout this research: *the commemorative practice (memory of the Soviet occupation) in the Czech Republic became the significant factor for backing Ukraine in the war against Russian imperialist ambitions.*

Therefore, this comparative study should be conducted bearing in mind one more facet – Hungary's and Czechia's attitudes towards the collective West, which opted for supporting Ukraine in its fight against Russia's imperialist ambitions (Kopeček & Wciślik, 2015). Regarding Hungary this contributes to the matter of doubt while attending to Hungary's readiness to abide by the EU-driven rules. The numerous attempts to demonise the EU and blame it for all challenges the Hungarian authorities have been encountering over past decades should be explored further. The main facets of Hungary's strategic culture such as the eternal fight for "freedom" and "sovereignty" should be brough to the light as the most relevant explanation of Hungary's behaviour (Kopeček & Wciślik, 2015). Regarding Czechia and its main strategic culture features, one can conclude that Prague took more severe measures to adhere to the EU-driven liberal agenda putting a lot of effort and hope in the awarding nature of the chosen course. For the clarity's sake, while Hungary is trying to divert the attention from the internal issues such as corruption, nepotism, favouritism and authoritarian roll-back to the EU and its egalitarian approach, Czechia is trying its hardest to fix any domestic issues in accordance with the EU values and priorities. These musings finally bring us to exploring the final theoretical concept to come in handy throughout this paper – the nationalism-supranationalism disjuncture.[3]

[3]By bringing this disjuncture to the research the author aims to address the difference in perceiving the EU by Hungary and Czechia. Hungary and Czechia developed different perception towards giving a part of their sovereignty to the EU. A startling example of this may be found in public statements delivered by the Hungarian authorities that keep blaming the EU for all their problems. Simultaneously, it fits into the Hungarian strategic culture

By comparing the Hungarian and Czech strategic cultures, the author aims to unpack the most contentious elements of the aforementioned metrics in order to clear any misjudgements up. The first such element should be a concept of nationalism, which appears to remain an incredibly complex and multifaceted premise that has been evolving and taking various forms over the decades. In its essence, it resonates with the strong self-identification and solid loyalty individuals might develop towards their nation, sometimes accompanied by a sense of superiority and pride in one's own country, yet not obliged to do so. To understand the scale of different nationalism concepts across European countries, particularly in Hungary and Czechia, this chapter walks us through the key developments that shaped nationalism per se over time.

1.3 National mythology

According to Wimmer and Feinstein (2010), the concept of nationalism emerged in the 19th century and was closely tied to the rise of nation-states. This era witnessed the breakdown of old feudal structures and the rise of modern nation-states based on shared linguistic, cultural, historical, and territorial gains (Wimmer & Feinstein, 2010). Notable nationalist movements during this period included but were not limited to Italian unification led by Giuseppe Garibaldi and the unification of Germany under Otto von Bismarck (Kissinger, 1994). In the early 20th century nationalism played a significant role in shaping world developments (Jaskulowski, 2010). Among others, it fuelled colonial expansion, with European powers seeking to project their influence and control over foreign territories (Jaskulowski, 2010). This period also witnessed the rise of ethnonationalism, where nationalism became entangled with ethnicity or race, leading to exclusionary and supremacist ideologies. The most notorious example of this is Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler, which propagated an extreme form of nationalism based on Aryan superiority. However, the famous

concept, which is mainly built on the “eternal fight for freedom” and “preserving sovereignty”.

historian Timothy Snyder (2012) fairly pointed out that the German trauma of bringing Nazis to power back in time has not been properly processed. According to Snyder (2012), this trauma should be addressed not from the nationalism-driven standpoint but from the colonial perspective. Nazi Germany was not much different from any other aspiring colonial power (Snyder, 2022). The same argument may be applied to the Napoleon wars meaning that the difference should be made between nationalism and colonialism (Olsen & McCormick, 2017). Thus, even though the devastation of World War II and the subsequent formation of the United Nations led to a temporary decline in nationalism-driven approaches, as the international community was eager to capitalise on global cooperation and secure the prevention of another world war, nationalism did find itself persisting and even bearing fruit in terms of unleashing decolonization movements (Olsen & McCormick, 2017). The latter shows us another side of nationalism, which might be considered not only as an invitation to conquer others but also free them from the colonial yoke (Rotberg, 1962). Former colonies sought independence and self-determination, often fuelled by a sense of national identity and pride (Rotberg, 1962). Yet, not pride in its entanglement with supremacy and superiority but coupled with its strong sense of freedom, independence and restoring national agency (Rotberg, 1962). Subsequently, nationalism experienced a resurgence in the late 20th century, partly as a reaction to transnational transition and globalization, which coined the perceived erosion of national identity (Olsen & McCormick, 2017). Some countries, particularly in Eastern and Central Europe, witnessed the breakup of multinational states such as the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, as different ethnic groups sought independent nation-states based on their distinct national identities (Applebaum, 2020).

Notwithstanding, nationalism has remained a significant force in the socially constructed reality of the 21st century, preserving its both positive and negative effects. On the positive end, nationalism can foster a sense of unity and cohesion among citizens, promoting social stability and development (Olsen &

McCormick, 2017). Yet, it can also lead to exclusionary practices, xenophobia, and conflicts, particularly when it turns into ethnonationalism or extreme forms of superiority (Olsen & McCormick, 2017). Lately, populist nationalism has gained prominence in various parts of the world (Becker, 2010). Populist leaders often tap into nationalist sentiments, emphasizing protectionism, anti-immigration policies, and a rejection of international institutions. This form of nationalism has been witnessed in countries like Hungary, and several European nations, often challenging the rules-based order and normative nature of the existing social order (Becker, 2010). The contemporary global landscape, charged in intense feelings about migration, terrorism, climate change, and economic interdependence, has prompted debates on the role of nationalism (Becker, 2010). Some argue that nationalism can hinder global cooperation and halt effective responses to these challenges. Others contend that national interests and sovereignty should take precedence in addressing these issues.

Finally, the evolution of nationalism over the decades reflects its dual nature within the historical, cultural, and political contexts. While it contributes to a sense of identity and solidarity, it might also pose challenges when misused for indoctrinating hostilities against other nations. Understanding the complexities of nationalism is crucial in navigating its impact on societies and global affairs as well as attending to its different facets in different countries.

Chapter 2. Methodological Framework

2.1 Social theory discourse

According to Bryman (1998), the scientific pursuit entails following a certain pattern of arriving at the academically recognized findings. A brief description of such a challenging journey may be found in the process of unfolding several facts, discerning the key takeaways coupled with eradicating the redundant facets. This process is primed to facilitate the emergence of the so-called "new knowledge". To make this process as transparent as possible the researcher should bear in mind at least two components. The first component deals with analysing the status-quo findings and their potential ramifications on the field-related studies. The second component touches upon the process of identifying potential gaps that should be filled to secure a meaningful contribution to the academic world (Bryman, 1998). According to Bryman (2012), filling the gaps may be possible only if the relevant methodological methods applied. The most relevant methodological framework remains the core facet of making the research pursuit academically recognized and scientifically valid. Recalling the words of Cameron (1963), "…not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted", one can recognize that conducting research that related to the Social Sciences is a multilayered and complex endeavour. Addressing the social relations may bring some complexities ranging from defining the terms to delineating the actors concerned. For instance, one may find it challenging to assign the exhaustive meanings to the terms such as "security", "justice", "freedom", "happiness" etc. The multilayered nature of such terms poses a few challenges for researchers of Social Sciences. Hence, the researchers should take into consideration the ontological and epistemological cognitive paradigms. The ontological paradigm related to the gist of the research focus, dealing with "what" we learn, while the epistemological paradigm addresses the part of "how" we learn (Kara, 2017).

For securing the most relevant research metrics on the epistemological level, the researcher abides by the certain hierarchy of socially and academically recognized attitudes, beliefs and views. According to Bryman (1998), should the researcher pursue the approach, which prioritizes the empirical knowledge, quantitative calculations and hard facts over the interpretation of all mentioned above, then the epistemological level of such research correlates with the (post-)positivism metrics. However, as Schultz et al. (1962) fairly pointed out, if the researcher attributes the socially constructed superposition to reality, the (post-)constructivism paradigm is the strong fit for such scientific pursuit. Notwithstanding, a lot of scholars tend to combine both metrics applying the mixed methods in order to retrieve more insights onto the multilayered research questions (Bryman, 2006). However, as Halperin and Heath (2020) argue reducing the epistemological metrics to the positivism-constructivism disjuncture cannot be considered the best research technique given the fact that the social reality is much more complicated to embrace.

Therefore, the premise of this research is based on the social theory, particularly strategic culture. Supposing the constructivist lenses applied, then this research is conducted in accordance with the main principles of **an interpretive approach**, which involves the use of qualitative methods, sticking to **deduction** as one of the main categories of the research metrics (Bryman, 2012). It precipitates taking the subjectivity of the world for granted with reference to social experience, social context and the articulation of hypotheses and their testing based on the available empirical experience. An interpretative approach mainly focuses on the reactions towards the specific events instead of the events themselves. This allows the author to trace the drivers behind the developments and go beyond the descriptive nature of this research. This scientific pursuit will include **a comparative case study** aimed to present Hungary and Czechoslovakia as two state entities that were subject to the Soviet occupation because of their prevailing liberal sentiments. Simultaneously, the research will involve **secondary analysis** primed to provide critical reflection

on the available academic literature. **A deductive approach** will make some inroads through the premise of this paper to draw the findings based on testing key hypotheses in order to address the main research question.

2.2 Deductive approach

The premise of deduction entails tracing the linkage between the theoretical framework and the crux of social research. Based on the already existing findings in the research domain the scholar identifies the relevant set of hypotheses and proceeds with testing them in order to prove or disprove the theory. Deducing hypotheses remains one of the most efficient ways to carry out the empirical scrutiny. The hypotheses contain the specific variables, which allow the author to navigate among the potential gaps that might appear in the research field (Bryman, 2012). The scholars are expected to identify these gaps, deduce the hypotheses, which can help to fill out these gaps and then translate the research findings into the understandable language for the target audience, mainly academia. The researcher is supposed to outline the hypotheses in a logical and consistent way, so that testing them can bring a new value to the social science (Bryman, 2012).

In this paper the author draws three hypotheses, which are supposed to help answer the main research question. The first hypothesis touches upon the correlation between the concept of strategic culture and its potential impact on the strategic choices of the case-study countries –Hungary and Czechia. After confirming the first hypothesis in Chapter 3, the author proceeds with testing the second hypothesis related to Hungary's strategic culture and an impact of its variables on the current strategic decisions. After confirming the second hypothesis in Chapter 4, the author moves to testing the third hypothesis in Chapter 4. The third hypothesis deals with unpacking Czechia's strategic culture and its effect on the current strategic behaviour. After confirming the third hypothesis the author concludes that strategic culture and its impact on the

strategic outlooks of the case-study countries can be considered as a valid angle, from which Hungary's and Czechia's current behaviour can be explained. It also contributes to the knowledge on how to approach Hungary's controversial stance on the Russian aggression against Ukraine bearing in mind that Hungary fell itself the victim to the Soviet imperialist ambitions in the past.

2.3 Secondary analysis

The core method used in this dissertation is the secondary analysis. Overall, this method can be used for analysing both quantitative and qualitative data, yet in this research the author mainly uses the qualitative data given the topic subtleties (Bryman, 2012). The secondary analysis entails dealing with the data collected and summarized by others. This research method remains one of the most accessible and efficient for those, who experience the lack of resources to arrange the data collection process in a unique and independent manner. Besides, the secondary analysis helps to process more data and information as the author does not tailor out the time to arrange the data collection (Babbie, 2010). The choice of this research method has been also driven by the high-quality data it suggests. Given the fact that any academic article goes through the strict scrutiny and peer-review perusal, the data and information obtained via secondary analysis should appear to be credible (Bryman, 2012). Secondary analysis also allows the author to carry out the longitudinal research, which is extremely important for this paper as it touches upon the political and societal developments that took place last century (Soviet occupation) and long beyond (the features of strategic culture that appear before the Soviet occupation but asserted a tremendous impact on the current strategic outlooks of Hungary and Czechia).

In this paper the author uses secondary analysis to outline and establish the premise of the research. Processing the data and findings collected and made by other scholars allows the author to identify the gap in the existing literature, which is closely tied to the current security situation in Eastern Europe,

particularly the Russian aggression against Ukraine. The author uses secondary analysis to relay the core concept of this paper, which is the strategic culture and its impact on the strategic behaviour of Hungary and Czechia in Chapter 3. This research method is also reflected in processing the theoretical and empirical materials related to Soviet occupation of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, respectively.

2.4 Content analysis

As Berelson (1952) pointed out, content analysis is usually approached as a research method for addressing the objective, quantitative and systemic nature of the matter. According to Holsti (1969), the content analysis is mainly used for manufacturing the inferences by systemic pursuit for objectivity. Thus, the ontological level of this research technique precipitates approaching reality "out-there", meaning that the social actors can preserve their independence towards the research framework and its implementation. This research method considers the objectivity as a gravity centre of the research metrics bringing the positivism-driven paradigm ono the epistemological level (Drucker, 2020). However, according to Altheide (1996) the content analysis should not be boiled down only to the positivism-driven bottom line, it can be ethnographic in its essence. Altheide mainly argued that the content analysis entails creating the co-meanings by the researcher while exploring the specific issue. The researcher remains the actor coming up with the research question, choosing the methodology for addressing this question and the selective sources for backing or debunking the hypotheses. One part of this technique deals with raw data, hard facts, and solid evidence; however, it is always the researcher, who puts them together (Bryman, 2012).

In this paper the author uses content analysis to provide the evidence for claims regarding the current position of Hungary and Czechia towards the Russian aggression against Ukraine. The author uses qualitative analysis of public statements delivered by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán in

Chapter 4. This method is also used for analysing the Czech position towards Ukraine, in particular the public statements delivered by Czech-elect President Petr Pavel in Chapter 5.

2.5 Comparative case study

Even though social science scholars need to navigate among a myriad of societal developments, they tend to narrow down their research to a single event in order to carry out the in-depth analysis and attempt to understand the nature of the particular phenomenon. Singling out a certain example is called a case study. The latter deals with indicating the specific social instance such as a country, a village, a city, or a family. According to Ragin and Becker (1992), cited in Bryman (2012), the definition of "case" is quite broad and there is no consensus on what can be considered as a full-fledged case. Some cases can entail narrowing down to the specific amount of time in history or a certain group setting. The main objective of applying this method lies in its descriptive nature, which allows to demonstrate the idea or test the hypothesis in an explicit way. Case studies can lead to confirming or rejecting the theories (Bryman, 2012).

In this paper the author attends to the comparative case study - Hungary and Czechia - two separate cases, which share some similarities and differences. Analysing the similarities and differences through applying the concept of strategic culture to both cases allows the author to present another angle of addressing the question related to their strategic choices and reactions towards the ongoing security-related matters.

Overall, on the epistemological level, this research precipitates using a set of qualitative methods outlined above, which include secondary analysis, content analysis and a comparative study. The methodological premise of this paper is built upon the constructivist facets, which entail exploring the interpretation, perception and reactions induced by the specific social developments. In order to make this research as accessible as possible even to

those, who might not be well-aware of the theoretical and methodological framework being used, the main key terms come as follows: strategic culture (patterns of foreign policy behaviour of states, a strategic profile of the state in the context of construction/perception/overcoming threats to national security); security at the expense of others (indirect or direct triggering the change in behaviour of the international actor A by accumulating the resource for ensuring the security of the international actor B**;** values (a material or abstract phenomenon that determines the behaviour of an individual actor), norms (a defined rule of perception about the acceptability of things that outlines the limits of its application); commemorative practices (historical memory of the particular social unit, mainly based on the negative experience that might have established the metrics of applicable and not applicable course of action); political culture (a set of values, beliefs, attitudes or sentiments that give a meaning to political process pursued by the state), ideas/meanings (articulation/reflection of the essence of a particular phenomenon, its content); myths (socially approved stereotypes/superstitions/semi-conspiracy theories regarding the political agenda to be implemented); foreign policy-oriented behaviour (a series of intellectual, material or metaphysical efforts, institutions and mechanisms aimed at developing a reaction to a particular international political situation).

Chapter 3. Strategic Culture & Decision-Making Entanglement

3.1 The making of strategic culture

This chapter is primed to test *the first hypothesis* formulated herein, which touches upon the interrelation between the strategic culture and the decision-making process. As it was mentioned before, the impetus for the discourse on the evolution of strategic culture was driven mainly by Colin Gray and Alastair Johnston. Johnston noted that strategic culture should be considered as an independent variable that has an impact on the outcome of a certain political course of action, while Gray pointed to the dualistic influence of strategic culture being deeply embedded in the linear dichotomy of "decision" and "result" (Gray, 1999). Gray disagreed with Johnston over the incorporation of strategic culture only on the side of the equation that was responsible for consequences. Gray was convinced that strategic culture affects both decision-making process and its outcomes. Accordingly, the product of such a discourse was not a separate definition of strategic culture as a phenomenon, and at this stage of scientific research there are several approaches to addressing "strategic culture". Gray believed that culture should be understood as a set of socially produced ideas, attitudes, traditions, way of thinking and operational methods, which differ to one degree or another within different communities according to their geographical place (Gray, 1981). Johnston added to the concept of 'culture' a set of socially divided decision-making patterns, universal recipes, standardized operational procedures, which were designed to form appropriate connections between individuals of different generation groups (Johnston, 1999). Clifford Geertz approached "culture" through exploring symbols, delving into a certain system of inherited conceptual units in the form of these symbols, bearing explicit meanings, which help establish communication channels primed to secure the exchange of knowledge, experience, thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and feelings towards certain phenomena (Yurchenko et al., 2021). Lantis (2005) emphasized the fact that considering

strategic culture as an independent variable can be classified as “tautology”. Berger pointed out that cultural beliefs have an impact on the crux of the national character, and, thus, limit the perception of individual actions, patterns of behaviour and developments (Yurchenko et al., 2021). Meyer argued about defining strategic culture as an “independent variable”, justifying it by the fact that actors do not make decisions in a value-free, empirical or intellectual vacuum (Yurchenko et al., 2021). They are being heavily affected by certain values, norms, experience gained as a result of similar situations and their beliefs. Based on such dynamic discourse, it can be inferred that although there is no upcoming coherence, unity, and common position towards the issue of defining the essence of strategic culture, its influence on decision-making becomes obvious and cannot be disregarded. What becomes even more significant in this regard, is the impact of strategic culture on the decision-making process. Strategic culture can narrow these choices or, on the contrary, extend them, especially if it concerns the use of coercion, or any other type of force. Another aspect that cannot be ignored when analysing the impact of strategic culture on the process of political decision-making is the historical retrospective facet. Meyer, Johnston, and Gray agree that history plays an important role in the context of strategic culture. Lantis (2005), in turn, goes further in highlighting the role of history as a cornerstone of strategic culture, justifying this by the fact that the upper echelons of power usually cannot depart from the historical narratives that remain deeply sown in the fabric of social canvas, given that this would mean a political suicide for them (Lantis, 2005). Lord (1985) also attended to the military culture of the state, its civilian channels and armaments in the list of elements of strategic culture. Another element that fuels discussions in scientific circles is the position of the state in the orbit of certain geopolitical codes (Yurchenko et al., 2021). The place of a state on the geopolitical coordinate system often determines the involvement of this state in historical events of various stripes, which can drag the construction of threats, their perception from the position of strength/weakness, and the development of

a foreign policy course based on defining, constructing, or framing the current threats and dangers. Strategic culture usually focuses on history, ideology, state policy, organizational interests (of individual groups), and geography (Yurchenko et al., 2021).

Snyder emphasized that strategic culture can be considered as "a sum of ideas that resulted from the reactions and patterns of behaviour inherent in the actors that participated in the development of the national strategy" (cited in Yurchenko et al., 2021). It concerns the nuclear strategy. From the theoretical point of view, the findings by Bradley Klein, who, attended to the example of the United States, contributes a lot to defining specific manifestations of strategic culture and its elements. Snyder pointed out the need to extrapolate power beyond the borders of the American continent by creating coalitions and alliances to ensure one's own security from the middle of the 20th century, after the Second World War (Klein, 1988).

Among the key ideas that lied the conceptual foundations of strategic culture, a prominent contribution was made by considerations that, in their essence, contradict the rational facet of foreign policy behaviour of states, although this does not mean that strategic culture does not correlate with rationality. A. Johnson is convinced that "strategic culture should not be separated from the postulates of *limited rationality* (particularly, its relativistic nature that entails the simplification of reality[4]), *operational rationality* (particularly, its essence that entails designating the most desirable scenarios of the developments or at least narrowing their number to the certain extent) and *adaptive rationality* (particularly, its selective nature of bringing the

[4]The application of this facet is tested throughout the public narration constructed by numerous communication channels.

commemorative practices[5])" (cited in Yurchenko et al., 2021). In general, the approaches to the study of strategic culture can be split up into two main camps.

The first scholarship camp advocates for the study of strategic culture in a narrow and broad sense. The narrow approach is pursued by such scholars as Snyder, Glenn, Johnston, Jones, Lantis, Margaras, who keep defining strategic culture mainly through the prism of military aspects, paying attention to its influence on designation of military strategies and the use of force. Within this context, strategic culture is defined as a predisposition to a particular military strategy or behaviour, which is carried out by the military or civilian elitist circles. It bears deeply embedded cultural, historical, political, geographical roots. Glenn reduces strategic culture to "special military options inherent in achieving clearly defined objectives" (Yurchenko et al., 2021). A. Johnston defines strategic culture as "an integrated system of symbols designed to create comprehensive and long-term strategic priorities" (Johnston, 1999). Notwithstanding, not all theoreticians of strategic culture support its narrowing to military aspects, arguing that its influence is widely present in the foreign policy of any state entity (Howlett, Eitelhaber, Duffield) (Yurchenko et al., 2021).

The second scholarship camp advocates for the study of strategic culture in a chronological dimension. Alistair Johnston's essay "Thinking About Strategic Culture" presents a metrics for measuring and assessing the strategic culture within its theoretical framework. The aforementioned author singled out three generations of theoreticians of the conceptual foundations of strategic culture (Yurchenko et al., 2021). The first camp of theorists considered strategic culture through the prism of historical analysis, which made it possible to predict behaviour or at least get the foresight studies trapped into the illusion of being able to do so. The second camp of theorists brings up the political

[5]Selective commemorative practices deal with the set of selective facts that helps to justify the construction of the specific course of action. Commemorative practices are frequently used to build the national myth and ensure its viability.

component of the foreign policy agenda. The third generation almost aims to combine these diametrically opposed discourses, which resulted in forming the standing position with regards to cultural representations as limitations that create a new myriad of multiple strategic decisions (Yurchenko et al., 2021).

Johnston refers to a group of scientists who appeared in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Jack Snyder, David Jones and Colin Gray) as to the first generation (Johnston, 1999). These scientists tried to find an explanation for why the US and the USSR had different visions of the nuclear factor. Jack Snyder's work "The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations", printed out by the RAND Corporation in 1977, became a classic piece for this concept (Yurchenko et al., 2021). Using the term "culture", Snyder tried to explain that these unique characteristics are more permanent and stable than politics and have a far-reaching influence on the formation of strategy ("as a result of the socialization process, a set of general beliefs, attitudes and behaviour patterns regarding nuclear strategy reaches a state of semi-permanence") (Yurchenko et al., 2021). Thus, Snyder defined strategic culture as "a set of ideas, sentiment-driven facets and patterns of behaviour caused by them, which members of the community who are carriers of national strategic culture acquire in the process of experience or its analogues and exchange them in connection with the definition of the appropriate (nuclear) strategies" (Yurchenko et al., 2021). As for the prognostic function of strategic culture, Snyder explained that it does not predetermine the entire strategic decision-making process, but reduces the objectivity of the perception of reality, since existing threats and problems are viewed through the prism of strategic culture. For instance, the focus of perception is determined by compelling elements based on historical experience, nationalism-driven mythology, and selective commemorative developments (Yurchenko et al., 2021).

The logical sequel of D. Snyder's work was the work of Colin Gray and David Jones. K. Gray in his work "National Style and Strategy: The American

Example" defined strategic culture as "a unique set of cultural experiences that determined special ways of thinking and acting regarding the role that the use of force should play in the international system" (Gray, 1997). K. Gray developed the concept of strategic culture based on the historical experience of the United States and arrived at the conclusion that the unique experience of the United States created special conditions for the formation of a military establishment that heavily relies in its decisions on military doctrine and strategy on a set of dominant national beliefs that come from a special perception of historical experience (Gray, 1997). Unlike D. Snyder and K. Gray, D. Jones devoted a detailed study of the sources of strategic culture splitting them up into three leading groups: a full-scale group (geography and ethnocultural factors); the social aspects group (normative dimension and social constructs); the micro-scale group (readiness of society to counteract certain threats) (Yurchenko et al., 2021). Consequently, the first generation of theorists of strategic culture relied on historical experience and defined the past as a determining factor for the hierarchy of the state's strategic priorities. Therefore, while bringing the strategic culture to the table in order to understand the strategic behaviour, one should bear in mind the lessons, traumas and syndromes inherited from the past experiences.

Regarding the second generation of theorists of strategic culture, which was formed during the 1980s and early 1990s, an orientation towards the scientific research of their predecessors coupled with simultaneous correction of their methodological and semantic shortcomings has been inherent and pushed forward. First, this concerns the departure from the nuclear field of research and analysis of the historical past, and the work of Bradley Klein "Strategic Culture: American Power Projection and Alliance Defence Politics" is relevant in this context, which presents another definition of strategic culture as "a set of cultural attitudes, formed on the basis of political ideologies" (Klein, 1988). B. Klein attempts to keep a balance within the importance of historical experience and the status quo regarding the strategic culture main facets (Klein,

1988). According to A. Johnston, the main feature of a second-generation research was the presentation of strategic culture as a tool to execute political hegemony put in the centre of the strategic decision-making. Klein fully supports his thesis with an analysis of US military doctrine, stressing that its defensive nature, described by the first generation of strategic culture theorists, was mostly declarative in its essence, as it was supposed to provide a justification for the US strategic position that would be acceptable from a cultural and historical point of view, and aimed at raising the stakes for potential adversaries. The operational element of the strategy was pragmatic by nature and contained provisions regarding the use of force to secure American highly contested hegemony and national interests globally (Klein, 1988).

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War gave new impulses to alternative explanations of the new international political reality, and it occurred within this context that the apogee of constructivism coincided with a new wave of strategic culture research. A. Johnston is convinced that the third generation of theorists of strategic culture sought to reach a compromise between the positions of the first and second, particularly trying to reconcile its brightest representatives Elizabeth Keir with her work "Culture and Military Doctrine: France between the Wars" and Jeffery Legro with "Culture and Preferences in the International Cooperation Two-Step" (Yurchenko et al., 2021). For aficionados of this generation, strategic culture is "a set of limitations and parameters that narrow the range of strategic alternatives for the individuals who call the shots, as well as a specific prism that transforms the external nature and effectiveness of various options for military decisions." Elizabeth Keir puts forward the thesis that domestic political culture forms different ways of controlling the military facets based on domestic political considerations (Yurchenko et al., 2021).

Therefore, strategic culture has been evolving over three generations from a historical-cultural approach with a rigid determinism and prognostic

function to a combination of historical and contemporary factors, especially in the context of the interests and positions of military and ruling elites, which creates a range of possible options for behaviour at the international fora.

Johnston himself decided to drift away from three generations, advocating in his works “Thinking About Strategic Culture” and “Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History” for his own definition of strategic culture and the factors of its formation, but most researchers consider his works to be a unified embodiment views of the third generation of theorists of strategic culture (Yurchenko et al., 2021). A. Johnston considers strategic culture as “an integrated system of symbols (structures of argumentation, language, analogy, metaphor) designed to create comprehensive and long-term strategic preferences that shape the vision of the role and effectiveness of military force in interstate relations.” Johnston points out that “different states have different dominant strategic priorities, which are embedded in the early or turning experiences of the state and are subject to the considerate influence by the philosophical, political, cultural, and cognitive characteristics of the state and its elites” (Yurchenko et al., 2021).

“Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in China’s Historical Retrospect” (1995) was the apogee of the research delivered by the third generation of scholars working on strategic culture Johnston, 1995). The study itself clearly delineated the nature of strategic culture and its correlation with the cause-and-effect relationships of the use of force in response to external threats. Johnston outlined the concept of strategic culture within the “ideational environment that narrows the choice of behavioural model”, converting into a source of specific predictions regarding strategic choices (Johnston, 1995). Johnston's methodological approach in the form of a clear distinction between the “independent variable” (cultural orientations) and the “dependent variable” (military strategy) became the core of the behavioural approach to the study of strategic culture Johnston, 1995). This allowed Johnston to arrive at the

conclusions that the strategic culture of China, for instance, should be considered in the close interaction of two separate components: 1) strategic culture as symbolic or idealized within a separate set of assumptions and preferences; 2) operational aggregate that had a non-trivial impact on strategic choices during the Ming dynasty (this aspect is contingent on the historical experience). Ironically, these two components, considered as two separate approaches to defining strategic culture, are close to demonstrating the classical elements of "Realpolitik" (Johnston, 1995).

Furthermore, it is still possible to trace the application of the behavioural approach in the studies of German and Japanese strategic cultures. In his work "Cultures of anti-militarism: national security of Germany and Japan", Berger focused on the anti-militaristic political and military aspects of strategic culture, which allowed him to explain the regularities in the foreign policy behaviour of these two actors of international relations (Berger, 1998). Berger emphasized that despite economic and technological power, and perhaps even military power at the end of the Cold War, the postwar culture of anti-militarism became a determining factor in the crystallization of the security policy of Japan and Germany in the 1990s (Berger, 1998). In addition, Berger admits that cultural beliefs and values make up a separate pool of national support, which shapes the perception of events and gives the impetus for a possible reaction of society (Berger, 1998). This, in turn, becomes a determining factor in the formation of the state's behaviour model in relation to other subjects of the international political space. In this context, according to Berger, "the strategic cultures of Japan and Germany enjoy a certain degree of autonomy and depart from a purely subjective reflection of objective reality." In fact, Banchoff moved in the same direction as part of the development of a constructivist model of foreign policy behaviour "dependency on the chosen path" (Banchoff, 1999). Banchoff is firmly convinced that the decisions made at critical historical moments lay the foundations for the evolution of foreign policy activity, determine the limits of its diversification and reaction (Banchoff, 1999). Duffield supplements this

canvas with judgments about Germany's behaviour in the international arena after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Duffield, 1999). He singles out *restraint* and *caution* as the most significant German patterns of behaviour, which were determined by the desire to manipulate society and the political elites into a certain pattern of thinking and understanding the world. In his recent works, Malichi resorts to the congruence technique, designed to prove that German elites are prone to a "culture of silence" (reticence) when it comes to security matters (Malici, 2006).

The behavioural approach assumes a short distance with the current status quo. Therefore, it seems almost impossible to ignore modern research in the context of behavioural models of strategic culture. Kier (1995) emphasizes the exceptional importance of organizational culture in terms of the evolutionary development of French security doctrines. Rosen offers a convincing account of how India's military-organizational culture influenced the formation of foreign policy behaviour. In his opinion, military culture absorbed beliefs and assumptions that become decisive when choosing an international political pattern of behaviour (Rosen, 1995).

3.2 Shaping strategic choices.

Considering the peculiarities of this study, which is designed to reveal the influence of certain elements of strategic culture on the process of foreign policy decision-making, a broad approach is the most acceptable. It can become an effective tool for outlining the main factors that became decisive when choosing a specific option in the context of the implementation of foreign policy activities of Hungary and Czechia within a specific period of their statecraft and in formulating their stances towards the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

The process of making foreign policy decisions until the end of the 60s of the last century was based exclusively on a model of rational choice, which cannot be considered separately without an organizational model. In the first case, it was about the adoption of a foreign policy decision as a result of a well-

thought and rational choice, which was implemented by a unitary entity pursuing strategic goals based on a clear understanding of national interests (in a true spirit of classical realism being backed by H. Morgenthau, E. Carr, G. Kissinger, as well as specialists in the field of game theory such as T. Schelling, O. Morgenstern). In the second case, the decision is considered as a product of the functioning of several government organizations acting according to routine procedures based on agreed programs. However, it is quite logical that the model of rational choice requires sufficient grounds for making this or that decision, and these grounds can be obtained only through a comprehensive analysis of the problem, its clear formulation and the development of mechanisms that are directly designed to solve it (Tsygankov, 2002).

At the end of the 1960s and 1970s, several studies came to the light, in which the authors examine the process of making foreign policy decisions through the prism of subject analysis and the cognitive model. Ole Holsti (1989) tried to combine these two approaches when analysing foreign policy decision-making in crisis situations. At the same time, works were published in which the model of bureaucratic politics was applied. This included but was not limited to exploring the decisions in the field of foreign policy as a product of bargaining, a complex game between members of the bureaucratic hierarchy, the state apparatus. The scientific works of Graham Allison (1969) were written in a similar paradigm. The main merit of Allison should be considered the description, comparison and analysis of all the main models of foreign policy decision-making, gradually considering rational, organizational and bureaucratic models, comparing them with each other (Allison, 1969).

The rational model consists of the main components related to the inclination of the state leadership to choose exactly those means that allow achieving clearly defined goals with minimal costs. Setting goals depends on established national interests, which become products of the values and needs of a particular social canvas (Allison, 1969).

In this regard, the organizational model relies on giving the organizational structures of the state apparatus a decisive influence on the conjuncture of foreign policy decision-making. Organizations, ipso facto, are perceived as departments that work on monitoring, research and analysis of events corresponding with the specific political culture. Their competence also includes gathering, processing, and analysing necessary information in order to develop the most efficient decisions based on in-depth research (Allison, 1969).

The bureaucratic model precipitates the presence of a close connection between domestic political life and foreign political realities. According to the bureaucratic model, foreign policy is considered through the prism of solving domestic political problems, in which the state apparatus is interested.[6] The peculiarity of this model is that its application involves a wide range of officials, including representatives of both the legislative and executive branches of government. In fact, in the case of Trump, who appealed to Congress to allocate the necessary amount of funds for the construction of a wall on the border with Mexico (the securitization process) does not fall under this model, because it shows a clear line of antagonism between Congress (the legislative branch of power) and president (executive branch of government). In this case, the interests of the higher echelons of power do not coincide within the Congress-President relationship, which simply makes it impossible to advance a specific decision without the consent of one of the parties (Allison, 1969).

Allison concludes that the choice and implementation of US national security policy is determined by organizational procedures and bureaucratic politics, rather than rational calculations and even political goals of the highest echelons of power. In his opinion, the system of US national security bodies should be considered such a bureaucratic organization, in which the position of the president is not so significant. Important decisions related to national

[6]The range of such interests may include but are not limited to raising political ratings, pursuing securitization of certain international political processes, aspiring to be reelected, securing the interests of their position in power.

security issues are implemented not based on a choice approved by the president but based on less obvious actions of workers in the bureaucratic apparatus. At the same time, it should be considered that the latter de facto always have their own national, organizational, political, and personal inclinations (Tsygankov, 2002). This logic might be extrapolated to the political landscape in Hungary and the Czech Republic to understand better their political cultures and main stakeholders in defining the foreign policy priorities.

However, J. Vendor and T. Hammond point out that G. Allison unjustifiably rejects rationalism, plainly reducing it to achieving a single goal. However, the presence of one or many goals cannot be considered a determining factor when choosing a decision to be made. Another shortcoming of H. Allison's conceptual approaches is the focus only on a specific period. The fact is that Allison does not consider the results of choosing a political decision, even in the period of the most acute crisis, bear consequences in the future, and, therefore, entails responsibility. Finally, Allison neglects uncertainty in the implementation of rationality when it comes to defining main drivers for making strategic choices (Holsti, 1989).

B. Childress and J. Ahart concluded that Allison's research as part of the analysis of the process of foreign policy decision-making on national security issues indicates an obvious judgment: *the organizational-bureaucratic model of foreign policy decision-making does not exhaust the theoretical considerations regarding who and what determines security policy of different states* (Tsygankov, 2002). Therefore, the process of making foreign policy decisions cannot be considered within the framework of a single theoretical model. By bringing the cognitive model of foreign policy to the set of main factors affecting decision-making, scholars in no way level Allison's scientific achievements, but only note that the role of top management should be given more attention, particularly if they channel the attitudes, beliefs and view being amplified by the strategic culture considerations.

To sum up, the most comprehensive and in-depth analysis can be carried out only by using an interdisciplinary approach and singling out the features that affect the strategic behaviour (Tsygankov, 2002). Moreover, the share of influence of one or another feature should be determined by the goals and tasks that must be implemented or fulfilled within the framework of making a specific decision. This brings us to *proving the first hypothesis*, which touches upon the idea of the significant role of strategic culture in shaping the opportunities and limits of decision-making process. As it was mentioned above, strategic culture attends to the specific set of beliefs, attitudes and values being perpetuated by several facets such as geography, history, political landscape, national identity, military and civilian interplay, and security concerns. The concept per se helps to hash out contentious details regarding different patterns of behaviour inherited by various entities (Yurchenko et al., 2021). This includes but is not limited to perceiving, constructing, and handling internal and external threats. Thus, it might not appear to be surprising if the country with a solid history of conventional interventions and colonialism-driven ambitions may possess a more aggressive command that those, who experienced colonialism themselves or developed a long-standing tradition of neutrality or non-intervention (Yurchenko et al., 2021). Attending to the concept of strategic culture remains one of the crucial tools to line up the various strategic scenarios that might follow in the light of highly charged developments. Bearing the main facets of strategic culture in mind, the practitioners (policymakers) tend to identify the fields for potential cooperation or confrontation with the party concerned. Finally, unpacking Hungary's and Czechia's strategic cultures aims to showcase the country's strategic outlook and its way of handling the security-related matters. Therefore, unlocking strategic profiles of Hungary and Czechia should be conducted in accordance with outlining the main features of their strategic cultures and its core components first and then linking them to their current foreign policy pursuits.

Chapter 4. Hungary's Strategic Profile Unlocked

4.1 Overview of Hungary's strategic culture

Given the theoretical framework nurtured by the strategic culture concept, Hungary appears to be a startling example of highly contested and complicated case study. After the First World War, the Hungarians fought for freedom and restoration of the unfair, in their perception, territorial division of the country, which was classified as a "Trianon syndrome" (Kovács, 2016). The latter allegedly led to a fatal alliance with Adolf Hitler (Kovács, 2016). After the Second World War the Hungarians were fighting for freedom from the Soviet yoke (Kovács, 2016). The apogee of this struggle may be found in the 1956 revolution, which the new Hungarian authorities, after it was suppressed by Soviet tanks, started calling the counter-revolution (Cox, 2013).This chapter is supposed to test *the second hypothesis* outlined in the premise of this research, which touches upon the combination of Hungarian commemorative practices, in particular the memory of the Soviet occupation followed by the *reticent Western reaction*, and its effect on the current Hungarian position towards the Russian aggression against Ukraine. To test this hypothesis, the author outlines the main features of the Hungarian strategic culture related to its geography, political landscape and history to provide the context before jumping to the Soviet occupation of Hungary and its ramifications on Hungary's strategic profile.

In terms of geographical framework, Hungary has been located in the region bearing a burden of a so-called civilisation clash (Kovács, 2016). One might attend to Central Europe as to the region at the crossroads of different empires willing to preserve their colonial heritage (Kovács, 2016). This aspect made Hungary per se a contested territory to some extent, which affected Hungarian strategic outlook enormously (Kovács, 2016). The latter brought a strong sense of vulnerability coupled with a need to find a geopolitical balance

in order to tackle the external threats and preserve own independence and agency. The significant shift in Hungary's perception of its role within the international politics took place after the Second World War, when the communists came to power in Hungary and the country became part of the Eastern Bloc (Zinner, 1956). The newly coined official ideology successfully incorporated past experiences of liberation campaigns into the theory of class struggle. It was a golden opportunity to turn the narration around and present those liberation campaigns as a national struggle against foreign oppressors (Gati, 2006). The leaders of the anti-Habsburg movements became the national heroes, who made the predecessors of the revolutionaries of 1848 and the communists of the 20th century (Kovács, 2016).

From the historical standpoint, Hungary's strategic profile has been mainly shaped by the experiences of invasions executed by itself and by adjacent countries. The conquests brought by neighbours created a strong sense of *strategic insecurity* (Kovács, 2016). To navigate among these various sets of insecurities and vulnerabilities Hungary shifted a focus towards defensive agenda cultivating permanent reservations against external actors that from the Hungarian perspective might seek to deprive Hungary of its agency. It contributed to developing Hungarian national identity as a set of linguistic, cultural and historical factors advocating for strong leadership and maintaining political sovereignty (Tihany, 1980). Apart from the fact that the latter has been weaponised by the right-wing units recently, this also revealed the duality that haunted the Hungarians during almost the entire millennium of their European history: *freedom for themselves turned into a lack of freedom for others*.

One more startling example of dual nature related to the commemorative practices deals with the "celebration" of the Treaty of Trianon (Kovács, 2016). The Treaty of Trianon was signed in 1920 and led to the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Kovács, 2016). While it is seen as a national tragedy by many Hungarians, some nationalist groups celebrate it as a symbol of Hungary's

independence and struggle against foreign oppression (Kovács, 2016). Another facet of freedom pursuits at the expense of others can be found in Hungary's downplaying Hungary's role in the Holocaust (Gerner, 2007). While Hungary officially acknowledges its role in the Holocaust, some nationalist groups and politicians have sought to downplay or deny the extent of Hungary's complicity in the genocide. This includes minimizing the number of Hungarian Jews who were deported to death camps and blaming Jewish organizations for collaborating with the Nazis (garner, 2007). The dual nature of Hungarian strategic pursuits is also reflected in the glorification of Miklos Horthy, who was the regent of Hungary during World War II and whose government was responsible for the deportation of nearly 600,000 Hungarian Jews to Nazi death camps (Gerner, 2007). Despite this, Horthy is often praised in Hungary for his role in expanding the country's borders and restoring its national pride. Likewise, the rehabilitation of the Arrow Cross party is highly contested. The Arrow Cross party was Hungary's pro-Nazi party during World War II and was responsible for the murder of thousands of Jews, Roma, and political dissidents (Gerner, 2007). Despite this, some Hungarian nationalists have sought to rehabilitate the party and its ideology in recent years "justifying" it with their freedom pursuits.

One way or another, the nationality of many Budapest subjects of the emperor turned out to be 'submerged' in the idea of Hungarian statehood. Hungary was liberated by the forces of the Red Army, the perception of which by ordinary Hungarians was far from bursting out with gratitude. John Lukacs (1990) wrote about "a grey-green sea of Russians moving from the East" while Sándor Marai (1996) was truly convinced that "the Red Army - a completely different human race, whose reflexes and reactions do not have a clear meaning." There was no lack of scepticism among the political elites, who did not completely share the goals advocated by Stalin (Marai, 1996). It was a given that belonging to the British or American zones of occupation would make the

lesser of two evils. In Hungary, pro-British politicians believed that their country would be liberated by British troops (Lukacs, 1990). Being trapped into the ideas of several hundred years ago - Hungary as a stronghold of the Western struggle against the Ottoman Empire and any threat from the East – the Hungarian elites believed that in the 20th century they would be able to fulfil the same role. However, these beliefs did not age well.

Since the onset of Hungary's national identity craft, death and the following burial ceremony have been frequently arranged very solemnly, and the funeral of significant personalities for the country could change the course of history (Brubaker & Feischmidt, 2002). For example, the funeral of the poet Mihaly Vörösmarty in 1855 became the first silent mass protest against the repressive system that had developed after the defeat of the 1848 revolution; the funeral in Budapest of the leader of this revolution, Lajos Kossuth, who died in exile in 1896, unexpectedly merged with the general national affirmative spirit of the celebration of the millennium of "finding a homeland"; the prologue to the revolution of 1956 was the reburial of Laszlo Raik, the victim of the main staging process of the times of Hungarian totalitarianism, and the fall of socialism in 1989 began with the reburial of Imre Nagy, the revolutionary prime minister, who was executed after the defeat of the 1956 revolution. Thus, "out of defeat and death, some new hope was born." (Réti, 2017)

Last but not least, the myth of common Hungarian national identity is being cultivated through the myriads of national holidays including the anniversary of the 1848 Revolution and War of Independence, National Day on August 20th, and the anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence (Réti, 2017). Establishing and maintaining the monuments and memorials that commemorate historical events and figures should be considered one more justification of Hungary's enormous investment into holding the national identity myth (Réti, 2017). Amongst others, these profound identifiers of national identity include Millennium Monument in Heroes' Square in

Budapest, commemorating the 1000-year history of Hungary, and the Shoes on the Danube Bank memorial, which honours the victims of the Holocaust (Gerner, 2007). Besides, Hungary has a number of museums and exhibitions that showcase the country's history and culture, including the Hungarian National Museum and the House of Terror Museum in Budapest (Réti, 2017). The echoes of national heroes are reflected in street names and public spaces (Réti, 2017). For instance, several streets have been named after the leaders of the 1956 Revolution and War of Independence. Hence, not only Budapest architecture reflects the eclectic and a contrast-heavy nature of Hungary, but the facts re-laid above tell how controversial and multi-layered Hungary's strategic perception is (Réti, 2017).

Therefore, on the eve of the Soviet occupation, Hungary already developed a strong sense of freedom pursuits. Preserving independence coupled with the permanent struggle for freedom became the gravity centre of Hungary's strategic culture. No wonder that the "Trianon trauma" and the aforementioned insecurities coined throughout the historical developments and reactions towards them became one of the most important causes of the revolution. The permanent presence of Soviet troops in Hungary after the Second World War fostered the societal insecurities regarding the deprivation of Hungary's agency. The military units deployed on behest of the Soviet Union on Hungarian soil created the atmosphere of foreign presence and observance. This deprivation of agency was maintained through the political and ideological landscapes formed in a true spirit of the Soviet totalitarian playbook. Amongst others, the political framework included the one-party system, the cult of M. Rákosi, a quasi-democratic image of the totalitarian dictatorship, the ban on political parties, restrictions on freedom of thought, speech and choice, the deployment of intelligence services, and political repressions against a few civil activists. All these measures created the unbearable pressure on the Hungarian society, which could not help trying to restore its sovereignty.

4.2 Soviet occupation and its ramifications on Hungary's strategic outlook

After the Second World War Hungary was governed by the communists. A dedicated Stalinist, Matthias Rákosi, came to power in the 1940s (Kramer, 2006). With the Red Army on Hungarian soil, Rákosi established a harsh repression system, which was toppled down after the Berlin Uprising in 1953 (Kramer, 2006). After the social unrest in Berlin, Rákosi was summoned to Moscow to be told that he was to be replaced with Imre Nagy, whose career loops and twists deserve special attention as he was commemorated by the Hungarians as one of the national heroes even though his background might be found by some scholars as highly controversial (Meray, 1959). Imre Nagy had been a member of the Communist Party since the Russian Civil War (Granville, 1995). In 1933, he was voluntarily recruited by the Soviet intelligence services, in particular the NKVD (Granville, 1995). A solid justification of this can be found in the report of Volodymyr Kryuchkov, head of the USSR KGB from 1988 till 1991, who in 1989 presented a report according to which Imre Nagy cooperated with the Soviet special services under the alias "Volodya" (Granville, 1995). Kryuchkov noted that Nagy kept collecting information about Hungarian and other political immigrants, as well as Soviet citizens. According to Ukrainian historian Vladlen Maraiev, Nagy made an offer to the NKVD about "keeping an eye out for thirty-eight Hungarian political immigrants." In another list, Nagy point out one hundred fifty Hungarians, Bulgarians, Russians, Germans, and Italians he knows, with whom, if necessary, he "could potentially work" (Maraiev, 2022). Given the intelligence Imre Nagy provided, several groups of political emigrants, members of the Hungarian, German, and other communist parties were shot, some of them sentenced to various terms of exile (Maraiev, 2022). The Kremlin helped Nagy take the chair of the General Secretary, even though he was around 60 years old (Maraiev, 2022). Imre Nagy hardly wanted radical changes in Hungary, he rather tried to implement a new

economic policy, but no more. Popularity of Imre Nagy grew and at the same time annoyed the Stalinists, so in April 1955 Rákosi removed him (Maraiev, 2022).

After Rákosi's return, the repression system was back (Kramer, 2006). The repressions unfolded against the intellectuals and artists (Cox, 2013). Imre Nagy was excluded from the Communist Party (Lasky, 1957). These measures were not shared by Stalin's successors (Lasky, 1057). Therefore, they preserved the connection with Imre Nagy and allowed him to survive (Meray, 1959). He even managed to publish a treatise, which questioned the right of the Soviet Union to interfere in the internal affairs of fraternal communist states (Meray, 1957). Simultaneously, Rákosi, who came to power for the second time, turned out to be no more receptive to the aspirations of his fellow Hungarians (Meray, 1959).

In mid-February 1956, at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party, Khrushchev delivered a speech debunking the cult of Stalin's personality and leader (Kramer, 2006). The report was supposed to be classified, but it was successfully leaked beyond Moscow causing a huge impact on the political and social life of Eastern Bloc countries, in particular on Hungary (Rainer et al., 1956). Khrushchev's report led to Rákosi dismissal in favour of a close Soviet ally Erne Gehre (Lasky, 1957). An active movement for socialism began in the country, the main drivers of which were the creative and intellectual circles, the youth (Lasky, 1957).

However, even though Gehre declared himself a nationalist, he was so closely associated with Rákosi that he failed to be on the crest of a wave of patriotism that swept the country (Zinner, 1956). On October 23, the day after Gomułka's official return to power in Poland, public indignation was seething in Budapest (Cox, 2013). Students circulated a list of demands that went far beyond the reforms implemented in Poland; these included, in particular:

freedom of speech, the holding of a trial of Rákosi and his entourage, the withdrawal of Soviet troops, and the return of Nagy to power (Lasky, 1957). When Nagy appeared before the huge crowd in the Parliament Square, he was still a communist reformer, and his program was to supplement the communist system with several democratic procedures (Gati, 2006). He urged the disappointed crowd to remain confident that the Communist Party would carry out all the necessary reforms. Moreover, in the meantime, Imre Nagy kept writing letters to Moscow with his own vision of Hungary based on the Leninist principles of democratic socialism and moderate liberalization (Granville, 1995).

Falling under the illusion that the collective West would consider him weak, Khrushchev ordered a brutal crackdown on the Hungarians (Maraiev, 2022). On October 24, street demonstrations turned into a full-blown revolution (Kramer, 2006). Soviet tanks, hastily engaged in a fight, were set on fire, and government buildings were under siege (Kramer, 2006). On the same day, Nagy was appointed prime minister, and two members of the Soviet Politburo, Mikoyan and Suslov, arrived in Hungary to assess the situation on the ground (Kramer, 2006). By October 28, the Soviet visitors appeared to have managed to reach an agreement similar to that reached by Khrushchev in Warsaw, i.e., in essence, agreed to the transformation of Hungary within the framework of the "Yugoslav model" (Meray, 1959). Soviet tanks began to leave Budapest. But even this step failed to ensure appeasement. The demonstrators now demanded nothing less than the establishment of a multi-party system, the removal of Soviet troops from all parts of Hungary, and withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact (Meray, 1959).

A. Mikoyan, M. Suslov, I. Serov (head of the USSR KGB), M. Malinin (deputy chief of the USSR General Staff) immediately flew to Budapest, where Yuriy Andropov, then the USSR ambassador to Hungary, acted as their main adviser (CIA Archives, 2006). Considering the counter-revolutionary and

fascist character of the described events (via the Soviet perception), the use of the Soviet armed forces became a "justified" option (Gati, 2006). However, as soon as the involvement of the Soviet special services in the shootings on L. Kossuth Square was undoubtedly proven, the party and state leadership switched to the side of the demonstrators, henceforth considering the people's movement as an uprising and a national liberation struggle (Kramer, 2006).

According to CIA archives, the Soviet authorities were also caught off guard even though they deployed the troops, several KGB advisors, and personal informants. Instead of attending to the roots of the uprising, the Soviets just kept displacing their anger over the situation onto the "hostile" West, particularly the CIA (CIA Archives, 2006). A startling example of this may be found in the remarks delivered by Klement Voroshilov at the Presidium that took place in October (Meray, 1959). He blamed the US intelligence services for being much more active in Hungary than his comrades Suslov and Mikoyan that were sent to Hungary for negotiating a modus vivendi with the newly established Nagy government (CIA Archives, 2006). According to the CIA documents, Voroshilov was woefully wrong as at that time the Soviets had more people on the ground than CIA.

Just right after the onset of the Hungarian revolution, the only CIA agent sent a request to the CIA officials regarding the official position on supplying ammunition (CIA Archives, 2006). The CIA HQ replied in a very explicit manner, which was considered as the most "optimal" amid the ongoing Suez crisis (CIA Archives, 2006). The US intelligence services responded that there was no need to go beyond information collection let alone engineering any circumstances for the American intervention. This message was followed up later with the official instrument from Washington saying that "it was not allowed to send the US arms" (CIA Archives, 2006).

The United States approached the Security Council on October 27 in the light of "the situation created by the activities of foreign military forces in Hungary" (US Department of State Bulletin, 1956). But this was done so chaotically that the resolution of the Security Council that followed this appeal was adopted only on November 4, that is, when the Soviet intervention had already taken place.

"In November 1956, the director of the Hungarian News Agency, shortly before his office was flattened by artillery fire, sent a telex to the entire world with a desperate message announcing that the Russian attack against Budapest had begun. The dispatch ended with these words: 'We are going to die for Hungary and for Europe.'" (Kundera, 1984, p. 1)

The Hungarian revolution was happening at the time when the Western powers were too busy to fix the Suez crisis and this geopolitical constellation coupled with the strategic calculations of the collective West let the Soviet tanks topple the Hungarian liberal sentiments (Kissinger, 1994).

The transformation of Hungary into a satellite of the Soviet Union became the Soviet foreign policy asset that could have been used for international trade-offs (Kissinger, 2012). By taking a control over a rebellious Hungary, the Soviet Union marked its so-called sphere of interest completely ignoring the Hungarian liberal sentiments (Kissinger, 1994). Bearing in mind this aspect multiplied by Hungary's insecure stance embroiled in its strategic culture, depriving Hungary of international agency contributed to the rise of the alt-right sentiments, which played a significant role during the revolution (Kissinger, 1994).

Thus, *the second hypothesis*, which relates to the role of commemorative practices (memory of the Soviet occupation and "betrayal" by the West) in Hungary in fostering the absorption of the anti-Western sentiments due to its limited reaction in 1956*, should be regarded as proved.* Yet in Hungary's

perception these commemorative practices have been weaponized to foster the politically driven agenda.

Thus, from the Hungarian perspective, the focus is shifted towards the reticent reaction of the Western countries. Therefore, the main features of Hungary's strategic culture outlined therein point out Hungary's strong sense of insecurity and the prolonged fight for freedom. In fact, this facet of Budapest's strategic culture let to Hungary's numerous attempts to demonise the EU and its policy, one of the main targets for securitisation from the Hungarian perspective became the EU migration policy (Miklóssy & Pierzynska, 2019). Hungary put a lot of effort into framing migrants from the Middle East as one of the most significant threats to Hungary's national security. The influx of migrants and refugees gave an impetus to a rise in right-wing nationalism and anti-immigrant sentiments (Miklóssy & Pierzynska, 2019). Hungary has taken a hardcore stance on immigration, constructing border walls, and enacting strict laws to control the flow of migrants into the country. One more threat being permanently viewed by Hungary as such is the supranational element of the EU. Since the emergence and consequent establishment of the EU project amid the abundance of ideas ranging from (neo)functionalism to federalism, Hungary has been trying its best to mitigate the potential controversy between the traditionalist and liberal approaches (Olsen & McCormick, 2017). Hungary has sought to balance its relationships with the EU and NATO against its growing ties with Russia and China, but some observers have expressed concern that Hungary's closer ties with these countries could undermine its commitment to Western liberal democratic values and institutions.

4.3 Hungary's stance on the Russian aggression against Ukraine

The simmering tensions in the Hungary-Ukraine relations have been always intense and subject to pressing improvement. Due to its inherited insecurity and a strong sense of sovereignty coupled with distrust towards the

neighbours, Hungary put a lot of effort into weaponizing the minority rights. Back in the interwar period, the Hungarians tried to conquer Transcarpathia and Halychyna, originally Ukrainian territories (Ustymenko, 2022). The Hungarians granted autonomy to Ukraine only in May 1938 - Subcarpathian Rus for one day. To defenders of the Ukrainian land were called Sichovyky – the Ukrainian youngsters who were ready to defend their motherland barehand. The imperial ambition of the Hungarians found its embodiment not only in the desire to seize Ukrainian territories. Hungary had many territorial claims to Romania, which was an ally during the Second World War (Kissinger, 1994).

Since 2017, relations between the two countries have been at their worst in 30 years due to the conflict around the Hungarian minority in Transcarpathia, which Budapest believes has been oppressed and restricted in its rights due to Ukraine's laws on education and language (Ustymenko, 2022). For three years, the Hungarian side, in an ultimatum, has been demanding from Kyiv the cancellation of some provisions of the relevant laws, blackmailing Ukraine by blocking the meeting of the Ukraine-NATO Commission (Ustymenko, 2022).

Budapest has been mainly the initiator of the confrontation. A startling example of this can be found in appointing the "Transcarpathian commissioner" in the Hungarian government coupled with issuing Hungarian passports at the consulate in Berehovo (Iwański & Sadecki, 2018). An apogee of such confrontation was marked by the interference of Hungarian officials in the parliamentary and local elections in Ukraine (Iwański & Sadecki, 2018). For the impartiality's sake, it is worth mentioning that controversial steps on the Ukrainian end also took place during this period such as the SBU[7] investigation against the Egan Ede Foundation (Arunyan, 2018).

Therefore, the Russian aggression against Ukraine found Hungary not at ease towards its neighbour. According to the public statements regarding the

[7]SBU is the internal security service of Ukraine operating exclusively on Ukrainian soil.

Russia-Ukraine war, voiced up by the Hungarian government, Hungary tends to call for immediate ceasefire and by doing so Hungary tends to question Ukraine's right to self-defence according to Article 51 of the UN Charter:

"It's been a year since Russia attacked Ukraine. We are not naive. We know that the prospects of a mutually acceptable peace deal in the #RussiaUkraineWar are dim. But the first step is surely a ceasefire. This is the only way to save lives. Loss of life is already being expressed in the hundreds of thousands. The pain, the widowhood, growing numbers of orphans and oceanic waves of suffering can only be called by a ceasefire. The only thing that can save lives is a ceasefire" (Orbán, 2023).

A startling example of defeating Ukraine's right to self-defence has been reflected in numerous claims to stop supplying Kyiv with weaponry during the NATO Summit held in Vilnius:

"We are in Vilnius, at the two-day NATO summit. The most important topic is the Russian-Ukrainian war. The Hungarian position remains unchanged, and we will represent it: instead of bringing weapons to Ukraine, we should bring peace. Ceasefire is necessary and instead of war, peace negotiations should start as soon as possible. The Hungarian position is clear since the war is in our neighbourhood and tens of thousands of Hungarian people are in immediate danger because there are Hungarians living in Transcarpathia. Hungary insists that NATO should not change its previous position. NATO is a military defence alliance, it was created to protect its members, not to carry out military actions on the territory of other countries. At the start of the negotiations the Hungarian position completely coincides with NATO's position, since NATO does not send troops, doesn't not send weapons, does not train combat military units, but rather tries to strengthen the defence capabilities of its own member states. This's necessary and right, and Hungary will support it." (Orbán, 2023).

Besides, Prime Minister Viktor Orban is fostering the narration of the Hungarians living in Ukraine while issuing them the Hungarian passports, which would automatically deprive them of the Ukrainian citizenship as the dual

citizenship is forbidden in Ukraine. Therefore, by the so-called passportisation Hungary is technically interfering with the Ukrainian domestic affairs and at the same time using it to justify its call for peace, not Ukraine's victory. This narrative is quite important given the fact that talks about peace are supposed to blur the difference between the aggressor and the victim.

"[Russia] attacked [Ukraine] a year ago. Hundreds of thousands died since then. The majority of Europe is on the road of escalation. The Hungarian people think otherwise. They want peace, and they want to stay out of this war. This is our mandate." (Orbán, 2023).

"It is one year since Russia attacked Ukraine. This war is not taking place at an inconceivable distance from us. This war is taking place neighbouring us and it is taking its toll on everyone. It is bad for Ukrainians, it is bad for Russians, it is bad for Hungarians, it is bad for Europe, and it is becoming clear that it is bad for the whole world. Hundreds of thousands of people are dying, and an imaginable amount of assets is being destroyed. The Hungarian government looks on with grace concern as step by step the whole of Europe is drifting into war. European countries are already sending tanks, fighter jets are already on the agenda. And if this continues, there will be those, who want to send troops to Ukraine. Last April Hungarians decided that Hungary should stay out of the war, and they confirmed this in the national consultation at the end of last year. This is why we are not supplying weapons, and why the Hungarian government remains on the side of peace. We want the war to end as soon as possible, because we believe that in this war no one can win." (Orbán, 2023).

According to these public statements, the Hungarian government keeps shifting the focus from the aggressor – Russia – towards European countries that seek to support Ukraine. By doing so, Hungary establishes the pattern of hindering numerous attempts of the EU to ensure the joint stance on the Russia-Ukraine war. Hungary keeps demonising Europe by calling the politicians, who

advocate for Ukraine's victory, "warmongers" deliberately leaving Russia outside the equation.

"The leaders of the Western world are in a wartime fever. When I hear them, they are giving motivational speeches about winning the war, calling for further sacrifice, during otherwise calm negotiations, and the consequence of this, which you also mentioned in your question, is that more and more dangerous weapons are being shipped to Ukraine. Let us not forget that the Germans started with helmets, they moved on to tanks, and what was previously a taboo is now a completely established topic. The next task is to send fighter jets. And I think we are very close to putting on the table as a serious proposal that the soldiers from the allied countries. allied with Ukraine, should also cross the border and go to the land of Ukraine, So, I have to say, in summary, in response to your question, that we have never been so close, or the world has never been so close to turning the local war - since we are talking about Luhansk and Donetsk - a local war - into the world war. The probability of this is increasing day by day." (Orbán, 2023).

"Hungary doesn't need warmongers. What we need is a powerful #army that can guarantee peace. If we don't have strength, we won't have justice either." (Orbán, 2023).

"…Unfortunately, Europe is suffering from war-induced psychosis and the continent from which I come is day by day drifting into war. Therefore, it's important for the voice of peace to compete with the voice of war, and it's important to make it clear that the global, majority wants peace" (Orbán, 2023).

"*Europe's success was rooted in constant self-reflection. But today if you ask difficult questions about the #RussiaUkraineWar, you become a heretic. Self-reflection has vanished. We can see the results."* (Orbán, 2023).

Amid the EU's numerous attempts to reach a common agreement regarding the Russia-Ukraine war, Hungary continues to undermine the

consensus by constructing the "Self-Other" dichotomy dividing the EU into the so-called two camps: "peacemakers" and "warmongers". This position is reflected in Hungary's actions undertaken to block the sanctions against Russia:

"*#Sanctions are a step towards war. If #Brussels continues down the same path, we will be drawn deeper and deeper into the #RussiaUkraineWar, and the threat we face will become more and more powerful"* (Orbán, 2023).

"Today, Europe is divided between advocates of war, and advocates of #peace. I am firmly on the side of an immediate ceasefire, and immediate peace talks. I am often asked whose side we are on; we are on the side of Hungarians. And I consider it a very big problem that we couldn't isolate this conflict. You obviously know that I have had some brutal arguments with Angela Merkel on certain issues. Especially on migration. But what Angela Merkel did during the Crimean crisis was a masterpiece. So, danke Angela. That war could have broken out during the Crimean crisis - since there was also an obvious violation of international law - but is did not become a war. Why did it not become a war? Because the Germans immediately initiated negotiations with the chancellor at the helm. They went to Kyiv; they went to Moscow; they invited them to Brussels and isolated the conflict. So, the Crimean conflict remained a Ukrainian-Russian conflict, and they did not allow it to explode and involve us all." (Orbán, 2023).

The statements made by Viktor Orbán are particularly representative in terms of the failed attempt to process the trauma of the Soviet occupation in 1956. Back then, the Hungarian liberal sentiments were toppled down by the Soviet tank as the Western countries were too busy to deal with the Suez crisis. For the time being, the motivations of Hungary sit on the same end as the Western ones sat towards Hungary in 1956. Moreover, according to Orbán's public statements on the US position regarding the Russia-Ukraine, Prime Minister of Hungary is quite supportive towards Donald Trump, who became the first President of the US to be prosecuted for the violation of the rule of law.

"I don't think it's good news from the point of view of the war and I even find it worrying that legal proceedings have been initiated in America against the former president of the United States President Donald Trump because if there's a person in the western world today, who can stop this war and create peace that is the former president of the unites states Donald Trump. And it would be in Hungary's interest to have a pro-peace person at the helm of the United States and a pro-peace politician to lead this part of the world. The pro-war camp, especially the American leg of the Soros-empire are attacking Donald Trump with full force and doing everything to prevent his election as President" (Orbán, 2023).

The aforementioned quotation illuminates Hungary's position bringing the alt-right discourse to the table. It is being demonstrated by references to the Soros-empire and its alleged attacks aimed at Donald Trump, who shattered democracy in the US.

Overall, Hungary's position towards the Russian aggression against Ukraine reflects the tendencies towards supporting Russia and leaving Ukraine without strong support from the collective West. The weaponization of selective commemorative practice such as the Soviet occupation of Hungary back in 1956 is reflected in Hungary's strong sense of independence and manifesting agency, which in the Hungarian perception can be achieved via peace talks and immediate ceasefire.

Taking into consideration the aforementioned musings, the author can conclude that Hungary's stance on the Russian aggression against Ukraine is mainly shaped by its strategic culture (Talas, 2013). However, in Hungary's case, the strategic culture could not help weaponizing the memory of the Soviet occupation of Hungary in 1956. The main focus from the Hungarian perspective should be placed on the reticent reaction from the West during the Soviet occupation. Hungary continues to view itself as a "bridge" between East and

West and keeps seeking to balance its relations with Russia and the West (Talas, 2013). This pushed Hungary to become more critical of the EU and NATO and pursue a more nationalist and illiberal agenda under the leadership of Viktor Orbán. Hungary's strategic culture is characterized by a sense of insecurity and a desire for autonomy, as well as a suspicion of external influence and intervention.

Chapter 5. The Czech Republic's Strategic Profile Unlocked

5.1 Overview of Czechia's strategic culture

This chapter is primed to test *the third hypothesis,* which relates to the interrelation between the commemorative practice (memory of the Soviet occupation) in the Czech Republic and its current discourse aimed at backing Ukraine in the war against Russian imperialist ambitions. To test this hypothesis, the author outlines the main features of the Czech strategic culture facets related to its geography, political landscape and history to provide the context before jumping to the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakian and its ramifications on Czechia's strategic profile. According to the researcher Jan Beneš (2021), the core parameters of Czechia's strategic culture should be defined based on its abundant historical, political, and societal landscapes.

In terms of the geographical framework, Czechia is located at the heart of Europe and shares borders with Germany, Poland, Slovakia, and Austria. As a result, Prague has been always particularly sensitive to the political and societal landscapes in these neighbouring countries. The main focus has been placed on the issues concerning migration, defence and energy security. Czechia's accession to NATO and the EU has affected enormously its strategic outlook locking Prague in the chain of constant collaboration and mutual trust within the alliance (Kramer, 2013). These developments have also sealed off Czechia's shifting away from the traditional nationalism-driven approach towards a more liberal agenda (Beneš & Karásek, 2021)One of the most significant facets of Czechia's strategic culture may be found in its political culture, which seeks to promote democracy, human rights, the rule of law and stable diplomatic relations with external partners (Beneš & Karásek, 2021). In general, Czechia's strategic culture is driven by a mixture of traditional and modern components. This includes preserving the sense of national identity along with maintaining good relationships with external partners and clearly

articulating the importance of not only sharing but also living up to the common values, beliefs and attitudes (Beneš & Karásek, 2021). Therefore, Czechia's strategic culture absorbed the strong sense of state preservation and its existential survival (Beneš & Karásek, 2021). It has been coupled with the strongly evident democratic character even at the cost of its sovereignty. With the existential survival necessity, it became historically justified yet not obvious and should not be considered a given. Thus, Jan Beneš points out that defence remains a key parameter of Czechia's strategic thinking.

Regarding the political culture, the Czech Republic has a relatively open political system, with a competitive multi-party system and a relatively active civil society. This means that threats to national security are often constructed through a political lens, with different parties and interest groups seeking to define and shape the national security agenda (Beneš & Karásek, 2021). The main feature of Czechia's diplomatic approach is abiding by the established rules and the full-fledged compliance with the containment assurances towards its allies in case of the external threat directed at the allies. It also nurtures a high level of trust amongst the parties, which becomes the cornerstone of peaceful co-existence. However, it does not mean that Czechia does not have any insecurities regarding trust and cooperation in the interactions with the allies.

In terms of the historical background, the Czech Republic has had a complicated relationship with its neighbours, particularly Germany, and has experienced various forms of aggression and occupation throughout its history. This historical experience has contributed to Czechia's perception of external threats, particularly from larger and more powerful neighbours. The feelings of strategic insecurity were amplified by the appeasement strategy pursued by the United Kingdom on the eve of the Second World War. The Munich Betrayal taught Czechoslovakia a lesson regarding the importance of securing the reliable alliances (Houzvicka & Retter, 1998). Taking into consideration Czechia's limited capabilities in standing for its independence, security and democracy,

Jan Beneš argues that Czechia absorbed a strong sense of seeking reliable allies and the security guarantees from them. In this regard, Czechia was particularly looking for strong allies so that band wagoning could be completely justified. The debate over foreign and security policy in Czechia has been mainly driven by a strong sense of international cooperation and engaging with the international organisations (Beneš & Karásek, 2021). Therefore, it is not surprising that Czechia's security strategy is equally balanced between the collective defence and band wagoning. It also means that within the Czech strategic perception diplomacy prevails over the use of force (Beneš & Karásek, 2021).

With regards to constructing the national myth in Czechia, the commemorative practices played a significant role as well. Amongst the most famous national holidays in Czechia, the Czech National Day stands. It is celebrated on October 28th, marking the anniversary of the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918 (Paces, 2001). Prague Spring Commemoration takes place on August 21st (Wyss, 2021). Czechs commemorate the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, which brought an end to the period of political liberalization known as the Prague Spring (Wyss, 2021). Wenceslas Square in Prague became the site of several memorials to significant events in Czech history, including the Velvet Revolution, the 1968 invasion, and the self-immolation of Jan Palach in protest against the Soviet occupation in 1969 (Wyss, 2021). The commemoration includes speeches, wreath-laying ceremonies, and other events. On November 17th, Czechs celebrate the anniversary of the Velvet Revolution, which saw the overthrow of the communist government in 1989 (Wyss, 2021). On July 6th, Czechs commemorate the martyrdom of Jan Hus, a 15th-century religious reformer who was burned at the stake for his beliefs. The day is marked by religious services and other related events (Paces, 2001).

One of the most controversial examples of Czechia's commemorative practices of selective character is the statue of Soviet Marshal Ivan Konev, who led the liberation of Czechoslovakia from Nazi occupation in 1945 (King, 2001). While many Czechs view Konev as a hero for his role in defeating the Nazis, others criticize his subsequent actions as a Soviet leader, including the suppression of the Prague Spring in 1968 (Wyss, 2021). In 2019, the statue was removed from its pedestal in Prague and placed in a museum, a decision that sparked protests from those who saw it as an affront to the memory of those who fought against the Nazis (Wyss, 2021). This controversy highlights the tensions between different interpretations of Czech history and the challenge of reconciling competing narratives in the context of commemorative practices.

The fear of potential betrayal and past traumas, particularly the Munich betrayal led to tremendous endeavour from the Czech side in relation to increasing its strategic value for the potential allies. Such reservations also contributed to increasing the level of credibility of the up-to-date security guarantees and any commitments in place (Houzvicka & Retter, 1998). The aforementioned strategic value of Czechia has been always amplified by permanent international engagement and constant participation in foreign missions and related projects, in particular with NATO members, both within the NATO-Czechia and bilateral nexus (Beneš & Karásek, 2021). Moreover, Czechia constantly expresses an interest in tackling the potential external threats through the close engagement with the neighbouring allies, hereby diminishing the risk of betrayal. Czechia also fairly take credit for maintaining the liberal and democratic values by clearly showing the absence of any territorial hostile ambitions or offensive aspirations. Even though the Czech foreign and security policy is split among numerous strategic views, it remains consistent and loyalty-based in dark times as it was evidenced by its harsh stance on the coherent support measures delivered to Ukraine in its fight against the Russian imperialist ambitions.

Thus, on the eve of the Soviet occupation, Czechoslovakia already developed a need to secure the existential survival. Preserving the opportunity to exist coupled with the permanent struggle for inflating its strategic relevance in the eye of the potential allies became the gravity centre of Czechoslovakia's strategic culture. No wonder that the "Munich trauma" and the aforementioned insecurities coined throughout the historical developments and reactions towards them became one of the most important facets of Czechia's strategic perception.

5.2 Soviet occupation and its implications on Czechia's strategic outlook

A year of 1968 in Czechoslovakia was marked by the onset of "socialism with a human face" initiated by Alexander Dubček (Heinmann, 2009). The liberal reforms were well-received by the society and later assumed the name – Prague Spring (Günter et al., 2009). Notwithstanding, the countries with personal investment into the Czechoslovak matters such as the Soviet Union, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria and East Germany did not share Dubcek's perspective on liberalising the Czechoslovak Communist Party (Günter et al., 2009). Compared to Hungary, Czechoslovakia became a victim of the enormous power of its own intelligence services that were primed to work for the Czechoslovakian government but ended up helping the Soviets to overthrow it (Graham, 2020). As it was mentioned in the CIA archives, the Soviets were caught off guard by what was happening in Budapest and undertook measures on the fly. Contrary to this, the Eastern bloc countries started seeking to weaponise the intelligence cooperation with Czechoslovakia to topple down the Prague Spring (Graham, 2020). The Soviet intelligence services tried to orchestrate the authoritarian roll-back in Czechoslovakia being perpetuated by Antonín Novotný, the former First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (Graham, 2020).

Graham explores the interactions between the Czechoslovak, Soviet and East Germany intelligence services from 1954 till 1970 amid the high level of mutual distrust. Graham addresses the relations that were built between the main institutional security actors such as the Czechoslovak Security Service (StB), the Soviet Committee for State Security (KGB), and the East German Ministry for State Security (Stasi). His contribution relates to unpacking the role of KGB and Stasi in engineering violence out of peaceful demonstrations in order to bring the Soviet troops to Prague.

As Graham mentions, the extensive cooperation between KGB and StB was established in 1949. It was embraced via a bulk of political processes, which were sharpened after the 1952 Slánský Affair. In the aftermath, KGB acquired enough leverage to convert the StB officers to the Soviet side and betray Dubcek. According to Pavel Záček, Moscow pursued the strategy of assigning the KGB advisors, whose main task was inserting the Soviet influence over the so-called satellite countries. A startling example may be found in the 1950s, when the StB intelligence operations consumed more resources than internal counterintelligence initiatives. Yet, the latter would benefit Czechoslovakia much more (Žáček, 2016).

Besides, the inter-intelligence agreements concluded between the Czechoslovak and Soviet security services established the hierarchy under the KGB auspices, which already created the unhealthy dynamics in the KGB-StB nexus (Graham, 2020). In July 1960 the KGB Chairman Alexander Shelepin facilitated the official negotiations regarding the inter-intelligence collaboration with the Czechoslovak Head of StB, Rudolf Barák (Graham, 2020). The tone of negotiations was run by the Soviet side and focused mainly on designating the collection priorities and transfer procedures. Hence, StB managed to align its priorities with Soviet interests minimising its involvement in the operations beyond Europe and shifting the focus towards the domestic counterintelligence and European matters (Graham, 2020). This arrangement appeared to be

incredibly annoying for East Germany given that Czechoslovak StB gained the consent to cover Western Germany, which Stasi considered their responsibility not willing to share it with others (Graham, 2020). In June 1962 the negotiations were sealed into the agreement aimed at intensifying the inter-intelligence cooperation. In accordance with the aforementioned arrangement, the Soviet Union got a chance to deploy nine KGB officers in Prague as liaisons towards StB (Graham, 2020). To balance this disproportional arrangement, the Czechoslovak government preserved a chance to define the intelligence-collection priorities on its own. Yet, the balance was still skewed towards the Soviet Union given that Moscow got an opportunity to make some significant inroads in the Czechoslovak StB by integrating the KGB officers in the StB structure (Graham, 2020). No wonder these KGB officers started overstepping later on. They primarily insisted on deepening the further cooperation. Graham arrives at the conclusion that the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia became the startling example of the USSR's unwillingness to accept autonomous Czechoslovak security and state structure. The KGB officers managed to build a very close relationship with StB members that preserved their loyalty to the Soviet Union (Graham, 2020). The Moscow advisors were inserting the Soviet influence through the interpersonal relationship with Czechoslovak security officers, which helped them to turn the part of StB against Dubcek when time came. As Graham fairy pointed out, "This disjuncture in the state-security nexus is significant because it suggests that close collaboration with Moscow from 1953 onward led to a portion of the StB identifying more closely with the KGB than it did with the Dubček Government." (Graham, 2020). Such a security-state constellation led to hijacking the Prague Spring partly by its own intelligence services that were supposed to protect the Czechoslovak state and secure it liberal sentiments but instead fostered pooling its sovereignty to the Soviet Union (McDermott et al., 2018).

Significant contributions to researching the Prague Spring were made by E.J Czerwinski, Jaroslaw Piekalkiwicz, Jaromír Navrátil, Kieren Williams, and Mark Kramer. However, while the aforementioned scholars approached the Prague Spring via different perspectives, they paid less heed to the intelligence side of it. Graham fills out this gap by providing an in-depth analysis from the intelligence perspective. Therefore, his starting point of approaching the Prague Spring lies into Jan Sejna's affair in order to showcase the operational side of KGB-StB-Stasi cooperation in hijacking the Prague Spring. Starting from December 1967, the gossip regarding potential hostile cooperation between Jan Sejna and Miroslav Mamula, General of the Eighth Department of the Party Central Committee, shattered the Czechoslovak security circles. The rumours touched upon the sting operation aimed at using the Czechoslovak intelligence services for supporting Novotny against the Dubcek Government (Graham, 2020). The huge scandal shattered the party towards supporting Alexander Dubcek, who assumed a post of First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in January 1968. He started off demoting the Soviet influence, including the KGB hard-line advisors. This policy touched upon Jan Bartuska, the Prosecutor General, and Jan Kudrna, the Minister of the Interior, who oversaw the StB. Once Josef Pavel substituted Jan Kudrna, the Soviet Union could no longer insert its influence through the asymmetrical KGB-StB cooperation. Therefore, the KGB advisors held a set of meetings with the most loyal to Moscow StB officers in 1968 trying to convert them into the proxies deeply imbedded into the Czechoslovak state structures willing to act in the Soviet interests (Graham, 2020). Hence, as Graham fairly points out, "duplicity on all sides caused Dubček and Moscow to lose confidence in the StB as an institution and the durability of formal intelligence collaboration between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union."

Once Antonín Novotný stepped down, Ludvík Svoboda assumed office being extremely vocal in his support towards Dubcek (McDermott et al., 2018).

Right after these developments, a new ad hoc political group grew – Warsaw Five – including the Soviet Union, Hungary, Est Germany, Bulgaria and Poland (Graham, 2020). The Soviet delegation did not push forward a vocal condemnation of the national shift in Czechoslovakia, yet Moscow was very explicit in its support for using force including but not limited to the military, paramilitary and intelligence units. This meeting did not only illuminate the Soviet attempts to legitimise the invasion but ensure the KGB advisors and their fellow StB defectors were authorised to keep an eye out for Dubcek (Graham, 2020).

Starting from April 1968 East Germany intelligence services took part in the joint KGB and Stasi covert operation aimed at rolling back the reforms in Czechoslovakia (Graham, 2020). On the Stasi's end, the information about the alleged involvement of Western Germany into the fundraising campaigns for the Czechoslovakian trade unions was disseminated. The HVA, the East Germany foreign intelligence unit, took part in the joint investigation with Reuters concerning the instability at the Bavarian-Czechoslovakian border (Graham, 2020). The East Germany intelligence unit debunked all the claims regarding the dreadful incidents at the border, yet the numerous reservations of the "spillover" effect started making inroads in East Berlin. Therefore, it was not a surprise that East Germany became a nurturing soil for launching the KGB's operation aimed at toppling the Prague Spring. According to Graham's findings the East Berlin unit of KGB First Chief Directorate Department V planted a weapons cache next to Czechoslovakia's border with West Germany, which StB fellows "came across" together with the KGB officers. They framed this incident as West Germany's infiltration acting on behest of the US. This false-flag operation was supposed to "legitimise" the intelligence-related campaigns in Prague aimed at identifying potential Western "collaborators", should the Soviet occupation take place (Graham, 2020). The StB officers being

significantly manipulated by KGB agreed on proceeding with the aforementioned efforts (Graham, 2020).

Even though the memory of the Soviet occupation clearly outlined the black-and-white metrics in terms of constructing the national myth in Czechia, the intense cooperation between the intelligence services could not be completely ignored by the leaders after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Czechoslovakian intelligence services that were supposed to be the reliable ally of the Czechoslovakian government fell the victims of the Soviet manipulation. The fact of their cooperation for the purpose of toppling down the Prague Spring contributed to the extent of trauma it brought to the Czechoslovakian society. Therefore, the main ramification of the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia is reflected in narrowing the options for ensuring the existential survival.

5.3 Czechia's stance on the Russian aggression against Ukraine

The Czechia-Ukraine relations have been quite stable on the eve of the Russian aggression. Unlike Hungary, Czechia has been quite vocal regarding its support of Ukraine. Czechia clearly stands with Ukraine in its fight for freedom, restoration of territorial integrity and manifesting agency at the international fora. Czechia was among the first partners to supply Ukraine with weaponry in March 2022. Prague authorised placing tanks and infantry fighting vehicles such as BMP1s and T72s on Ukrainian soil, so that the Ukrainians could trigger Article 51 of the UN Charter giving the right to the country under the attack to resort to self-defence (Cameron, 2023).

In his interview to BBC, Czech President Petr Pavel pointed out that supplying Ukraine with the fighter jets F-16 has never been a taboo, which completely run contrary to what Viktor Orbán has claimed (Cameron, 2023). Notwithstanding, Petr Pavel expressed a doubt regarding the timeline of the supplies. He assumed it might take too much time that Ukraine does not have.

Petr Pavel completely validates Ukraine's frustration about the slow speed of weaponry deliveries, in particular when it comes to Western tanks such as Leopard 2s, M1 Abrams, Challenger 2s, which are primed to prevail over the Soviet counterparts (Cameron, 2023). As a former Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, Petr Pavel points out the difference in men power and resources between Ukraine and Russia. Thus, he is convinced the current weaponry deliveries are not enough (Cameron, 2023). Besides, Petr Pavel is very explicit regarding Czechia's position on the desirable endgame:

"We have no alternative. If we leave Ukraine without assistance, they will most probably lose this war. And if they lose – we all lose." (Cited in Cameron, 2023)

"We all understand that there is a window of opportunity this year and that's why many of us argue let's give Ukraine whatever they need to extend success as far as possible to have the most advantageous position for negotiations once they start." (Cited in Haynes, 2023)

"There is certainly high hope that the Ukrainian counteroffensive will be successful, because Ukraine is motivated, well prepared, its troops are experienced and certainly do not succumb to such deficiencies as the Russian army." (Cited in Lopatka & Muller, 2023)

Moreover, Petr Pavel keeps addressing the sceptical sentiments towards supporting Ukraine in the European quarters. He refers to the necessity to stop the aggressor now and not wait for Russia to start bombing other European countries:

"Our cities are not being destroyed by Russian artillery and missiles. But our future could be destroyed if we don't support Ukraine to a successful end to this conflict." (Cited in Cameron, 2023)

In reply to numerous claims related to the peace talks and numerous accusations aimed at Pavel of being "warmonger", Petr Pavel keeps on highlighting that there are no such options on the Russian end:

"What needs to be said is this: the end of war is entirely in Russian hands. It would take only one decision from President Putin to withdraw his forces from Ukraine and the war is over." (Cited in Cameron, 2023)

Moreover, Petr Pavel fully supports Ukraine's membership in NATO recognising the advancements made by the Ukrainian military over the past months:

"The Ukrainian military will be probably the most experienced military in Europe. Ukraine deserves to be part of a community of democratic countries." (Cited in Cameron, 2023)

"I hope it will be strong and clear enough to demonstrate that we are ready to start the accession process once the war is over." (Pavel, 2023)

"Supporting Ukraine's entry into the EU and NATO should be our long-term target." (Cited in Lopatka & Muller, 2023)

"I am not saying it has to be in any given time horizon, because preparations for entry into both these institutions is very complicated, requires long preparation and meeting a whole list of criteria, but we should help Ukraine with it." (Cited in Lopatka & Muller, 2023)

Regarding to the Hungarian stance on the Russian aggression against Ukraine, Petr Pavel clearly recognised the pro-Russian sentiments:

"There [are] a number of good reasons to be afraid of pro-Russian orientation of current Hungarian leadership." (Cited in Bayer & Jochecová, 2023)

While delivering a speech at the UK Royal College of Defence Studies, Petr Pavel recalled the time after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the political discourse was predominantly fuelled by the threats of international terrorism:

"We believed that we have only rosy times ahead of us full of cooperation and understanding […] We didn't have an idea at that time that we will be facing another competition, confrontation at a level of superpower, especially the powers with nuclear weapons." (Pavel, 2023)

Czech-elect President also mentioned the document concluded between NATO and Russia back in 2004, which had been toppled down by Putin's Munich speech in 2008:

"Since then, a lot of things have changed. Now, we are in the situation, where we have an aggressive war of Russia against the sovereign country, against Ukraine." (Pavel, 2023)

"Some political scientists expect that in the near future, we may have even a military conflict with China. I heard the dates, latest in 2027 we'll see a military conflict between China and Taiwan, and then involving a number of countries in this conflict. I don't go that far, but it is fair to admit that we are entering an era of strategic competition between democracies on one side, between autocratic rulers of a different kind on the other side." (Pavel, 2023)

"I am repeating that to the citizens of the Czech Republic when we discuss the necessity to support Ukraine, it is in our interest, ***because if we don't want Russia and others to believe that whoever wants to promote their interest through aggression is actually free to do so because we will not oppose him, then we have to react****. It's a matter of principle, it is not a question if we like Ukraine or not, it is not a question if we like Ukrainians or not,* ***it is a matter of preserving the rules that are necessary to live in peace and cooperation****."* (Pavel, 2023)

Taking into consideration the aforementioned musings, the author can conclude that Czechia's stance on the Russian aggression against Ukraine remains clear and steadfast. Czechia fully supports Ukraine's victory as Prague considers Ukraine's fight not a local armed conflict but a menace to the rules-based international order. Such a fierce stance echoes an experience of the Soviet occupation in 1968, which amplified Czechia's insecurities regarding the potential aggressors in Central and Eastern Europe. The fact that Czechia addresses the Russian aggression from the position of full support of Ukraine reflects its own facet deeply embedded in the strategic culture, which is band wagoning. Czechia itself does not possess a lot of resources and fully understands how important the international partnership and cooperation are. Thus, it completely stands with Ukraine in its fight for freedom and democracy.

Conclusions

The dissertation has explored the strategic profiles of Hungary and Czechia amid the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. The premise of this paper has been drawn around the main research question related to the link between the experience of the Soviet occupation of both countries and its implications on Hungary's and Czechia's strategic outlooks. The dissertation addressed the potential drivers that lead the countries with the past Soviet occupation trauma towards the alleged support in Hungarian case and strong opposing in Czech case the current Russian imperialist ambitions.

The author had attended to the concept of strategic culture and outlined its scope of application and effect on the strategic outlook of the case-study countries. This linkage traced by the author remains a cornerstone of this research as it gave the opportunity to proceed with testing other two hypotheses with the valid theoretical and empirical frameworks. Before jumping to the findings regarding the Hungarian and Czech stance on Ukraine, the author outlined the main features of Hungary's and Czechia's strategic culture coupled with the in-depth analysis of the Soviet occupation in 1956 and 1968, respectively. The reaction towards the Soviet occupation and its peculiarities in both cases allowed the author to confirm the aforementioned features of strategic culture delineated before unpacking the Soviet invasions. In both cases these facets were amplified by the Soviet ambitions and their long-term consequences on the perception of external and even internal threats in Hungary and Czechia.

Concerning the similarities found in the strategic outlooks of both countries one can easily recognise a strong sense of post-occupation insecurity. However, Budapest and Prague are dealing with these insecurities in a different way. Given that both countries were subject to conquests by their neighbours, Hungary and Czechia developed a solid basis for cultivating national identity coupled with advocating for preserving independence and agency, yet the

toolkit for doing so is different. While Czechia does not mind pooling its sovereignty for bargaining the equal and reliable alliances, Hungary tends to turn defensive while the matters touch upon its sovereignty. The latter has been weaponised by the right-wing Hungarian government lately. Both countries are members of NATO and the EU, yet they sit differently on adhering to their values and understanding the "end game" of the aforementioned alliances. Both countries went from shifting away from their traditionalist nationalism-driven approaches to more liberal and democratic agenda and successfully landed somewhere in between.

In terms of outstanding differences between Hungarian and Czech strategic outlooks, first and foremost the author of this paper argues that even though Hungary and Czechia might share some in common provided their strategic cultures, they assign different meanings to same (at face value) terms. For instance, when we are talking about Hungarian nationalism it cannot be unpacked in the same regard as the Czech nationalism. Yet both countries went through numerous occupations, invasions and betrayals perpetuated by their close neighbours. Secondly, the geographical facets should be considered more like a difference than a similarity as Hungary and Czechia belonged to different value-based systems. Besides, Hungary and Czechia developed totally different political cultures. The Czech Republic gives more credit to democracy, human rights and the rule of law within the statecraft process while Hungary tends to adopt more authoritarian stance by weaponizing the concepts of national sovereignty and independence. Finally, the perception of external threats is being cultivated differently. Hungary tends to frame external threats as existential ones bearing a menace to Hungary as a state with the long-lasting statecraft tradition while Czechia attends to diplomacy and multilateralism as main facets to stand up against any external challenges.

Czechia's strategic culture absorbed a very strong sense of existential survival and the necessity of preserving the premise of its identity. This aspect

is being absolutely shared with Hungary with regards to looking for an effective balancing strategy to ensure survival and a strong sense of national security. However, in Czechia's case, Prague tends more to rely on the alternative regulators of security such as alliances and pooling a part of its sovereignty for the sake of security. Therefore, Czechia does not feel the need to oppose the position of its allies and rather advocate for the common strong reaction towards the Russian aggression.

This aspect is different in Hungary's case as Budapest tends to consider any pooling of sovereignty as the deprivation of agency. A startling example can be found in demonising the EU and its policies. Hungary weaponised its memory of reticent Western reaction during the Soviet occupation in 1956 and turned it against the EU. Within Hungary's perception the EU plays the role of depriving the sovereignty due to its supranational nature while Russia might be potentially suggesting Hungary the illusion of equals. This might be also manifested in the territorial gains and imperialist pursuits of Hungary that remained the elephant in the room throughout the Hungarian historical background, which absorbed the duality of colonising and being colonised.

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