

CZECH FOREIGN POLICY IN 2007–2009:  
Analysis



Michal Kořan at al.

# Czech Foreign Policy in 2007–2009

ANALYSIS

Prague 2010

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Michal Kořan et al.

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Analysis**

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# Introduction

What was the Czech foreign policy like during the years 2007–2009 and why? The team of authors from the Institute of International Relations (IIR) and other partner institutions has been looking for answers to these questions for three consecutive years. For three years the IIR also has been producing Czech written thorough analysis of the Czech foreign policy. The book *Czech Foreign Policy in 2007–2009: Analysis* intends to become the first volume of regularly presented deep analyses of the Czech foreign policy in English which builds on the findings and analysis of the previous three Czech language analytical books<sup>1</sup> and presents their synthesis. The English edition thus aims to offer a long-term and continual observation of the development of the Czech foreign policy in various areas: its ideational background, its concrete agenda and events that occurred in a given period, the influence and involvement of various actors and the overlap of the Czech foreign policy with the media and public spheres.

These referential points are built into the structure of each chapter, so that the analysis enables the reader to differentiate and trace the various ways in which the Czech foreign policy is contemplated, produced, executed, implemented and reflected. This concept, among others, promises to disclose the changes in the process of the Czech foreign policy making with respect to different issues and different actual political contexts. As the *issue area* approach to the study of foreign policy suggests, a specific agenda tends to attract different sets of actors. Thus the process of foreign policy making is not constant and does not remain the same in regard to various issues and agendas.<sup>2</sup> Our approach enabled us to enhance our ability to capture the mutual relationship between issues that have the potential to initiate political and media debates on the one hand and actual foreign policy making and execution on the other.

The book is divided to four broader parts that reflect several distinctive dimensions of the Czech foreign policy. The analysis begins with a general part that explores the nature of the political context of the processes of the Czech foreign policy making. The main argument is that even if the executive and administrative background of the Czech foreign policy is solid and full of potential, the worsening political context seriously hampers the outcomes of Czech foreign policy. The second general chapter adds an important analysis of the media coverage of the Czech foreign policy as a part of the policy's context. This chapter includes a quantitative as well as a qualitative analysis of the coverage of foreign policy by the Czech media.

The second part focuses on the European and security dimensions of the Czech foreign policy. The EU oriented chapter reflects political debates on various EU issues,

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the preparations and execution of the Czech EU presidency and it also discusses the main challenges of the Czech EU policy. The fourth chapter is focused on the security dimension of the Czech foreign policy.

The third, most extensive part is dedicated to the Czech foreign policy towards selected countries and regions. The fifth and sixth chapters analyze Czech relations with its immediate Central European neighborhood, namely Germany, Poland, Slovakia, Austria and the related regional – Visegrad – cooperation. There are ten more bilaterally oriented chapters covering the USA, West European countries, Russia, Eastern European countries, Balkan countries, the Middle East, the Mediterranean, the Far East, Sub Saharan Africa and Latin America.

The fourth part explores the multilateral dimension and other thematic areas of the Czech foreign policy. The multilateral dimension is the subject of chapter 16. Chapter 17 analyses the economic dimension of the Czech foreign policy. The human rights dimension of the Czech foreign policy is analyzed in chapter 18, followed by a chapter dedicated to the development cooperation. Chapter 20 studies the cultural dimension of the Czech foreign policy. The book is concluded with a broad and critical assessment by Petr Drulák.

All individual chapters follow the same unifying structure. Each chapter first inquires into the conceptual background of as well as into the nature of the political context of a given foreign policy dimension, and then it goes on to follow the actual agenda and main events during 2007–2009. Each chapter also contains an important part that consists of focusing on the key actors involved in the particular policy making, thus enabling us to point out possible changes in the process of the foreign policy making. The last part of each chapter is devoted to the public and media substratum of the given foreign policy field.

It is necessary to stress that the goal of the book is not to provide a complex map of the Czech external relations with all countries, regions or institutions. Such a map is annually provided by the *Report on the Foreign Policy of the Czech Republic*, published by the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Instead, this book aspires to provide a deep understanding of various and carefully selected aspects of the foreign policy, sacrificing complexity for greater analytical depth. As we maintained a strict conceptual discipline for three consecutive years we believe that our analysis will provide a rich source of ideas that will further contribute to a better understanding of the Czech foreign policy.

Our undertaking would be unthinkable without the willingness of countless foreign policy actors, politicians and officials to share their opinions and information on various foreign policy issues. Particularly, we would like to express our gratitude to the officials at the Czech MFA and embassies for their valuable insights. The informational richness of the analysis was possible only with the help of the staff of the library of the Institute of International Relations who have for the past three years provided their exceptional services to the team of authors. The finalization of the book could not have been accomplished without the thorough proofreading of Jan Hrubín and with a professional approach of the staff of the IIR's publishing department. The quality of the individual texts was greatly enhanced by the careful reading of our two

peer-reviewers Juraj Marušiak and Oldřich Krpec (all omissions, mistakes or errors remain solely the responsibility of the team of authors). Special thanks go to Kristýna Dyková and Jana Kotrbová who during their internship at the Institute of International Relations worked hard to contribute to the project.

We hope that this book will give rise to a tradition of deep and meaningful bi- or tri-annually produced English language studies of the Czech foreign policy. Their value should consist of both up-to-date evaluation of the Czech foreign policy and of building and providing a rich empirical and analytical base for later scholarship.

*Michal Kořan*

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Kořan, Michal et al. (2008): *Česká zahraniční politika v roce 2007: Analýza ÚMV*. Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů; Kořan, Michal et al. (2009): *Česká zahraniční politika v roce 2008: Analýza ÚMV*. Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů; Kořan, Michal et al. (2010): *Česká zahraniční politika v roce 2009: Analýza ÚMV*. Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů (these books are not referred to throughout the text of this English edition).
- <sup>2</sup> Kořan, Michal (2007): *Struktura a proces zahraniční politiky*. In: Kořan, Michal–Hrabálek, Martin (eds): *Česká zahraniční politika: Aktéři, struktura, proces*. Brno: Mezinárodní politologický ústav, p. 16.





**PART I:  
Czech Foreign Policy  
in 2007–2009:  
Context and Making**



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## Chapter 1

# The Political Context and the Making of the Czech Foreign Policy in 2007–2009

*Michal Kořan*

This chapter is an introduction to the political, conceptual and institutional context of the Czech foreign policy (CFP) in 2007–2009. The first part of the chapter will focus on the conceptual and political background of the CFP and it will be followed by an analysis of the involvement and the roles of the main actors.

The time frame of our analysis roughly corresponds to the establishing of the second government of Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek (January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2007–May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009) on the one hand and the middle of the term of the interim caretaker government of Jan Fischer (end of 2009) on the other. Topolánek's government was formed by an ideologically broad coalition of the rightist and liberal Civic Democrats (ODS) as the leading party and the centrist and conservative Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL) and the urban-liberal, environmentalist the Greens (SZ) as minor coalition partners. The interim government of Jan Fischer was formed mostly by non-political professionals, and the government ruled with the support of the ODS and the Social Democrats (ČSSD) and for some time also with the support of the Greens.

As we will see below, the ideological span of Topolánek's coalition, which also transcended into foreign policy, caused a great many problems. Besides that, there were dissenting currents even within the coalition parties themselves. However, what was even more disastrous for the Czech foreign policy was the thin and fragile majority of the government coalition parties in the Chamber of Deputies (the lower Chamber of the Czech parliament). Prime Minister Topolánek was able to assemble the necessary parliamentary majority for his government only with the incalculable support of two deputies elected to the Chamber of Deputies as members of the opposition Social Democrats.

The wide ideological differences within the coalition, the disunity within the coalition parties and the fragile and thin parliamentary majority of the government set out the basic political framework for the foreign policy of the Topolánek government. These factors also led to the perplexing fall of the government during the Czech EU presidency in March 2009 and to the no less perplexing 14 month reign of the 'interim' apolitical caretaker government of Jan Fischer.

## THE CONCEPTUAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY

The Czech Republic is firmly grounded in all essential international political, economic and security organizations of Europe and the world (among others, the UN, EU, NATO, the OSCE, the WTO, the WB, and the OECD). In general, the Czech Republic acts as a respectable and dependable international partner. Thus, the Czech Republic's performance on the world stage for the past 18 years of its existence can be characterized as a success. On the other hand, this situation creates historically unparalleled favourable conditions for the Czech Republic, and it seems that the CFP is unfortunately unable to fully capitalize on them. Probably the most decisive reason for this inability stems from the lack of a general political will to take foreign, security and European policies seriously and handle them responsibly.

The Czech Republic traditionally lacks any overarching conceptual and strategic document that would set up the basic framework and priorities for foreign policy. The first – and last – such document was prepared under the government of Vladimír Špidla. It was called *Conception of foreign policy of the Czech Republic for the years 2003–2006* ('conception' hereafter)<sup>1</sup> and it more or less reflected the priorities of the then government. In many respects, the conception was outdated already at the time of its birth as it was more oriented on the process of the EU accession than on the actual performance of the Czech Republic as a member of the EU. Even so, no government since the expiration of the original conception (2006) made an attempt to come up with a new or reformulated concept. Thus, since the EU accession (2004) the Czech foreign policy finds itself in a strange vacuum without any comprehensive framework of references. Several particular concepts have been worked out (e.g. in the field of cultural diplomacy or in relation to African countries) but no complex foreign and European policy strategy appeared. The Czech EU presidency represented a unique opportunity to take a breath and to elaborate a thorough strategic document, and in a way the Czech government succeeded in this undertaking. Yet, even the Czech presidency program reflected only the actual priorities and agenda instead of a strategic long term outlook based on a broad political consensus.

As a result, the only conceptual outlines of foreign policy were to be found in the government program declaration of M. Topolánek's<sup>2</sup> and J. Fischer's<sup>3</sup> governments. The foreign policy goals, as proclaimed in M. Topolánek's program declaration, mirror the long term continuity of the Czech governments' priorities (promotion of a strong EU, of strong transatlantic relations and NATO, and of good relations with neighbors; economic diplomacy, etc.). Overall, the government adopted a more pro-U.S. approach. It was less enthusiastic about Russia and pragmatic when it came to EU affairs (as the Czech EU presidency approached, the government became more and more moderate in its European views). However, the very government declaration is not too specific and above all it corresponds to the trade-off nature of the coalition. Even a look at the tip of the iceberg (i.e. the top decision makers) unveils the diverse nature of the coalition: the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Karel Schwarzenberg) was nominated by the strongly pro-European the Greens, which emphasized an envi-



ronmentally and socially conscious EU (even demanding a seat for the EU in the UN Security Council); Prime Minister M. Topolánek (Civic Democrats) has not been shy about arguing for his neo-liberal minimalist approach to the EU with strong ‘national interest’ driven rhetoric. And the Vice-Prime Minister for EU Affairs Alexander Vondra (Civic Democrats) is one of the most prominent advocates of a sharp Atlanticism. The third coalition partner, the Christian Democrat Party (it held the Ministry of Defence), has been known as a proponent of internationalism with a strong international human rights promotion drive. These differences inevitably found their way into the program declaration, which combines the adoption of a realistic and geopolitically determined approach to foreign policy on the one hand with a strong internationalist emphasis on human rights advocacy on the other. Similarly, it calls for liberalization of the EU as a minimalist intergovernmentalist organization and at the same time (even in the same sentence) it espouses a socially and environmentally conscious EU. Even these two examples only show the compromise-based combination of the neo-liberal approach of the ODS and the world views of its two minor coalition partners.

At the outset of the coalition government (during most of 2007) the ideological diversity had some positive aspects. The coalition partners were forced to engage in a deep and thorough dialogue about the most important foreign and European policy issues (which was not the case in most of the previous governments). At the beginning the coalition negotiated the most fundamental questions in the so-called ‘coalition nine’ (that is, in a close circle of the top three party leaders of each of the three coalition parties). For example, it was in this setting where the response to the U.S. offer to station the ABM radar base on Czech soil was worked out. Similarly, the Czech position to the reform (later Lisbon) treaty negotiations was decided in the narrow format of the top nine party leaders. When worked out in this format, the government had a strong mandate and the support of the leadership of all three parties. However, as time passed by – roughly from 2008 on – the consensual attitude began to erode even in the parties themselves. Most importantly, there were two breaches. The first breach appeared within the ODS over the position towards the EU, and the second one appeared among the Greens over the issue of the U.S. ABM radar base. In the ODS case there were several deputies who strongly disagreed with the supportive stance of the ODS leadership towards the Lisbon Treaty and within the SZ there was a strong current disagreeing with the U.S. radar base emplacement. Needless to say, it was precisely the most visibly dissenting deputies from the ODS and the SZ who voted against M. Topolánek’s government during the non-confidential voting in the Chamber of Deputies in March 2009. Of course, besides foreign and European policy issues, there were other burning and dividing domestic political fields (most importantly, in the area of health care reforms) that contributed to the erosion of the coalition.

With the worsening political context during 2008, it was increasingly difficult to find a consensual position on all of the most pressing foreign policy issues, namely on the U.S. radar base, the Lisbon Treaty and Kosovo’s independence. As a consequence, foreign policy was discussed less and less within the ‘coalition nine’. For example, the Christian Democrats, who did not support Kosovo’s independence, were unable to call together a ‘coalition nine’ meeting prior to the government meeting where this ques-

tion was to be decided (April 2008). The Christian Democrats' leadership did not recommend for its ministers to vote for Kosovo's independence, and the entire issue was postponed till the end of May, when only 11 of 18 members of the cabinet voted for acknowledging Kosovo's independence<sup>4</sup> (the Czech constitution does not require parliamentary approval for establishing diplomatic ties with a foreign country; is an exclusive executive authority). This example eloquently illustrates the weakening ability of the coalition to provide the government with a strong mandate and to work out a wide compromise. Both the coalition and the opposition parties are responsible for this situation. The coalition is to blame because of its inability or lack of will (or both) to face the tough yet important discussion over foreign policy, and the opposition is to blame because of its irrational (from a foreign policy point of view) tendency to extremely polarize and politicize any foreign policy issue it chooses. These tendencies even led to domestic politics taking foreign policy issues hostage.

Under these circumstances it was drastically difficult to discuss foreign and European policy questions in the larger coalition/opposition context (especially in the Chamber of Deputies). The coalition intentionally prevented the opposition from placing some of the foreign policy issues on the agenda of the Chamber of Deputies meetings out of the fear that they would be defeated. Thus, foreign policy was not agreed upon within the coalition, but it was not a subject of a meaningful discussion between the coalition and the opposition either. These conditions were hardly favourable for the situations to come when the Parliament (and most crucially the Chamber of Deputies) had its constitutional say in the foreign policy matters (see below).

Another dimension of the political context of the Czech foreign policy is the traditional gap between the foreign policy views of the government and those of the Czech President. This gap is a result of several factors, including the relatively autonomous constitutional position of the Czech President in foreign policy matters and the fact that both of the Czech Presidents since 1993 (Václav Havel /1993–2003/ and Václav Klaus) have been strong personalities with clearly articulated views on some of the most important foreign policy questions. Václav Klaus was a founding father of the ODS. Therefore it was expected that the communication and cooperation between him and the ODS-led coalition would be better than that between him (a liberal-conservative) and the Social Democrat-led government in the previous years. Indeed, in 2007 these optimistic predictions turned out to be quite accurate. A new coordinating quasi-mechanism was established, consisting of regular discussion meetings of the President, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Vice-Prime Minister for European Affairs. However, in 2008 the traditional opinion gap reappeared (see below).

Thus, in 2008 the political context of the CFP making was gradually worsening. Irrational political polarization became heightened, the stalemate situation between the coalition and the opposition became deeper and less constructive, and the disagreement between the government and the President reappeared and strengthened. To be precise, in 2007 and even in 2008 the actual foreign policy was not so badly influenced by the above depicted conditions. This is because the vast majority of foreign policy is exclusively handled by bureaucratic and executive actors without any in-

volvement of the top political players. Unfortunately, the year 2009 (the first half of which was supposed to be fully devoted to the Czech EU presidency) all too painfully confirmed the fears of those who argued that the poor political context might have disastrous consequences for the actual foreign policy conduct.

The stalemate, the polarization, the lack of political interest in foreign and European policies which led to a lack of understanding of what could be at stake, the inability to communicate and above all the desperate lack of responsibility on the part of both the coalition and the opposition led to the fall of the Czech government at the end of March 2009. That is, it fell exactly in the middle of the term of the execution of the Czech EU presidency. Even with our distance from this event, it is clear that this act hurt the Czech Republic in European and even world politics. A small or mid-size country like the Czech Republic is only as successful as it is able to capitalize on its limited potential. The fall of the government during the EU presidency, when the Czech Republic was in the spotlight of Europe's attention, meant a waste of a great deal of human, financial, symbolic and political capital. It is hardly surprising, for example, that not only some of the peaks of the Czech EU presidency (such as, for example, the Eastern Partnership summit) but also some of the routine ministerial councils were represented by some European partners as being on a palpably lower level than expected. Also, the media and political assessment of the Czech EU presidency was in most cases critical. It was all the more painful that the fall occurred precisely when the Czech government was just slowly beginning to gain some reputation after the initial disbelief in it. Nothing can change this doomy evaluation – not even the fact that on the administrative and executive levels the presidency was handled very well and that the caretaker government of Jan Fischer as well as the Prime Minister himself finished the presidency with great ease.

The harm done to the Czech foreign policy, however, does not lie only in the very act of expressing non-confidence in the government. It is true that this step could hardly be taken at a worse time and from less understandable motives. But it is of utmost importance to stress that a non-confidence vote is, after all, an exclusive act of a democracy and also an expression of its functionality. Besides, no one can hide the fact that the Topolánek government had lost its political mandate long before the non-confidence vote. What is worse, though, is the fact that the fall of the government threw the Czech politics, including foreign policy, into a sluggish political vacuum without any direct political responsibility. It was this development that revealed the real scariness of the extent of the irresponsibility and immaturity of the Czech political milieu. Concentrating only on foreign policy, we can see Czech politicians leaving top political responsibilities to non-elected and mostly non-partisan bureaucrats face to face the lasting financial and economic recession, face to face the dynamically changing circumstances of the world politics, which are particularly embodied in the advent of the new U.S. administration of B. Obama (and his chase after 'resetting' the U.S.-Russian relations); face to face the deeply changing EU in relation to the Lisbon Treaty and so on. Under all these circumstances the Czech politicians preferred short term political objectives as they decided to leave all the responsibility to a non-political government. In the fall of 2009, the Social Democrats even prolonged this

period from six to more than fourteen months by deciding not to support a constitutional change that would enable early elections. It would be difficult to find a worse case of political irresponsibility.

The general popularity of the caretaker government of J. Fischer, its will to go ahead with some unpopular but necessary reforms and the generally positive evaluation of its performance cannot obliterate several solely negative facts. Firstly, the very existence of the Fischer government was a consequence of a desperate political situation. Secondly, one of the necessary consequences of the ‘interim’, ‘non-political’ and ‘caretaker’ nature of the government was that it had to execute an ‘interim’, ‘non-political’ and ‘caretaker’ foreign policy with extremely limited possibilities of dealing with long-term objectives and issues for which a strong political mandate is needed. Especially during the first months of J. Fischer’s government, this fact was also reflected in the stances and expectations of foreign partners. Thirdly, and most importantly, the way foreign policy was politically handled during the period of the Fischer government opens up some questions about the very political and democratic framework for foreign policy as one of the policies of a democratic polity. Commentators and analysts usually agree that the CFP suffers from a hypertrophic political polarization and the non-consensual nature of foreign policy. The second half of 2009, though, lucidly demonstrated that there is a second extreme – and it is potentially even riskier. Foreign policy making was fully concentrated in the hands of the executive branch and even more in the hands of particular ministries instead of the government as a whole. The second half of 2009 found the Chamber of Deputies in the position of a mere formal and technical tool designed to confirm international treaties. There were no real discussions about any important foreign policy questions, and the executive branch did not feel any need to turn to legislature. Legislature, and above all the Chamber of Deputies, thus failed in its role of articulating political objectives as well as in its role of continuously checking the executive branch. This was even amplified by the fact that particular ministers did not have a parliamentary mandate either (in most cases) future further political perspective. Thus they were unbound from the usual political framework, and the formal as well as informal channels of communicating foreign policy priorities mostly failed.

Another negative consequence of this political silence was the resignation of the political parties in the face of the assertive steps taken by President Klaus, who kept refusing to sign the Lisbon Treaty and constantly put new conditions on his fulfilling this Presidential constitutional duty. It has to be noted that J. Fischer’s approach towards President Klaus was quite admirable as Fischer no less assertively and yet constructively (and successfully) navigated his government throughout the rest of the ratification process, which included uneasy negotiations with the EU partners about the so-called ‘Czech exception’ from the Lisbon Treaty. However, the President’s position and manoeuvring space would have been much more complicated if he had to face a full-fledged strong government or at the very least strong and fully articulated positions on the part of the parliamentary parties.

What is probably most consequential from a long term perspective is the fact that the irresponsibility and the harmful polarization are but different sides of the same

coin, which can be characterized as a grave disinterest in the foreign and European policy issues on the part of the vast majority of the Czech politicians.<sup>5</sup> Under these circumstances of disinterest and irresponsibility it is easy to provoke fierce and irrational debates, whose actors seldom have an idea of what can be caused by the short term politicizing of a selected foreign policy issue. This is what we have witnessed during the period 2008–March 2009. From the same disinterested context, though, arises an even more fatal resignation – the resignation on the efforts to provide a meaningful political background for the foreign policy.

It is necessary to note that the second half of 2009 also brought some more positive signals. Political parties displayed signs of greater moderation in their foreign policy attitudes and there were even some movements towards an opinion and program rapprochement of the most relevant foreign policy poles. While the ODS did not abandon its more favourable European heading, the ČSSD to a some extent abandoned its unpredictable rhetoric in regard to Russia and began to search for new trans-Atlantic topics and ties which were previously missing from its agenda. The general disinterest by the Czech politicians (and public) about foreign and European policy will hardly change in any foreseeable future, yet strong lessons from 2009 might contribute to a cultivation of the political dialogue and to a greater responsibility.

## THE CZECH GOVERNMENT AS A FOREIGN POLICY ACTOR

The previous part was designed to illustrate a general political framework for the Czech foreign policy. The following part is focused on the actual making of foreign policy and on the roles of particular actors. The government has the role of a key actor in this respect. According to the Czech constitution, the Czech government is the supreme executive body and is responsible to the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Parliament, among others, for making and executing foreign policy. The most important instruments of the Czech government for influencing the Czech foreign policy are threefold:

- the government as a foreign policy making structure guarantor
- the government as a coordinator and executor of foreign policy
- the diplomacy of the Prime Minister

### *The government as a foreign policy making structure guarantor*

The single most influential instrument at the government's disposal to influence the way CFP is produced is its authority to change the *Rules of Procedure of the Government* ('rules of procedure'). By changing this official provision, the government can decide on the way the government as a whole and particular ministries are coordinated and managed. These changes can directly affect the involvement and significance of individual foreign policy actors. For example, by using changes in the rules of procedure, past governments gradually strengthened the coordinating, planning and executive roles of the MFA at the 'expenses' of other ministries. This was done in the period 1998–2004 by including an obligation for particular ministers to inform the

government and the Minister of Foreign Affairs about their plans for trips abroad. Besides that, every plan for a ministerial trip to an EU or candidate country has to be approved by the Minister of Foreign Affairs.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, in relation to the EU accession process, the government created (and later on further strengthened) a governmental *Committee for the EU*, which has developed into an extremely important and influential governmental body for dealing with EU affairs on a day-to-day basis. The second government of Mirek Topolánek (January 2007–May 2009) chose to reverse the previous trend to concentrate foreign policy at the MFA and opted for a model where EU affairs (with the exception of the EU's external, defense and security affairs) are handled by a special governmental body. Thus, in accordance with the programme declaration, an *Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs* was established in January 2009 (it was assumed by ODS member Alexandr Vondra). Subsequently, the roles of the MFA and the Minister of Foreign Affairs himself in the *Committee for the EU* were weakened in favor of building up the role of the new Office for European Affairs (for a detailed account of this, see Chapter 3, *The European Dimension of the Czech Foreign Policy*). The government of Jan Fischer (since May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009) decided not to change the structure of foreign and European policy making. The only change was that the Office for European Affairs was no longer run by a deputy Prime Minister but by a regular minister instead (Štefan Füle /till November 2009/ and Juraj Chmiel). Formally this decision did not in any way affect the role of the Office for European Affairs, yet in relation to the end of the Czech EU presidency and in relation to the fact that both Ministers for European Affairs were not strong political figures like Alexandr Vondra, the informal significance of the office slightly sunk (at the end of 2009 there were many political voices that claimed that after the elections the entire issue of the existence of the office should be reconsidered). These were the most important changes in the structure of the Czech foreign and European policy making to be decided on by government. The Czech government also decides about the members and coordination of the *State Security Council*, yet there were no substantial changes in it during the observed period. Variations in the membership of the council mostly reflected personal changes in the government itself or, in some cases, the particular issues at stake. More substantial structural changes were planned during the preparations of the proposition of a new law on the foreign development cooperation (for details see Chapter 19 *Development Cooperation in the Czech Foreign Policy*). Other governmental inputs into the structure of the CFP making were of a rather subtle significance such as, for example, the attempt of J. Fischer's government to speed up the process of adopting European legislation or its decision to create a new central database for inter-resort coordination of European policies (these changes reflect the stronger pragmatic pro-European orientation of the caretaker government /see below/).<sup>7</sup>

### ***The government as coordinator and executor of foreign policy***

The single most important function for the Czech government in the field of foreign policy lies in the actual coordination and execution of the policy. The Czech government is a collective body based on a resort principle. That means that the govern-

ment manages, controls and unifies the activities of particular ministries and sets their agenda.<sup>8</sup> The same applies to foreign policy. The government decides which ministry will be responsible for which particular part of the foreign policy's execution while, overall, the fundamental role obviously falls to the MFA. In the analysed period, the most frequent foreign policy issue to be handled by the government was the negotiation of international treaties. The government decides which member(s) of government will be responsible for negotiating a particular treaty and then gives its approval before sending it to the parliament. The government approved more than 30 treaties in 2007, roughly the same amount in 2008 and almost 40 treaties in 2009. The majority of the treaties were bilateral treaties of an economic nature (e.g. they dealt with double-taxation prevention, support of investments, investment prevention or economic cooperation), and a significant number of them were of a security nature (mostly treaties securing mutual protection of classified information). The most important multilateral treaties included the protocols of the accession of Albania and Croatia to the NATO and the Association and Stabilization Agreement between the European Communities, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (both from 2008). None of these treaties provoked much controversy (or at least it was not publicly recorded) within the government and mostly they provoked hardly any discussion in the parliament (with the exception of Communist deputies opposing Albania and Croatia's NATO accession). As mentioned above, however, there were several treaties that were highly controversial and carried a heavy dividing potential. In 2007 the situation was not yet so essential and there were only three exceptions to the hassle free treaty adoption process. The most important of these was the government's approval of the *Rome Statute of the International Court*, which was (after many years of hesitating) submitted to the government by the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the beginning of December 2007. Yet, because of the opposition to the ICC voiced by the ODS, the government suspended its decision on this issue until January 2008 (when it was finally approved – see the details in Chapter 16 *The Multilateral Dimension of the Czech Foreign Policy*). The other two exceptions were the two controversial treaties related to Russia of 2007 – an agreement on mutual protection of intellectual properties during bilateral military-technical cooperation and an agreement on the modernization of the Russian-manufactured helicopters in the ownership of the Czech military (for details see Chapter 9 *Russia in the Czech Foreign Policy*).

In 2008 there were more treaties that were approved by the government. They met fierce discussions or even opposition in the parliament and also wide public attention. The most important of these treaties were the Lisbon Treaty, which was sent to the parliament at the end of January 2008 (see the details in Chapter 3, *The European Dimension of the Czech Foreign Policy*), the two treaties necessary for the placement of the U.S. ABM radar on Czech territory and the accompanying agreements. Both of the treaties related to the U.S. radar were withdrawn by the government from the parliamentary ratification process in March 2009 out of a fear of not getting the necessary approval by the Chamber of Deputies, which would bring the entire negotiation process back to the beginning. Another Czech-U.S. agreement that brought about wide discussions not only in the Czech Republic but also at the European level was

the memorandum of understanding about the visa-free regime (for details see Chapter 7 *The United States of America in the Czech Foreign Policy*).

Another essential role of the government that requires parliamentary consent is that of deciding about Czech military missions abroad. In 2007 the governmental plan of military missions abroad for 2008 was approved by both Chambers, yet there was a fierce debate between the government and the opposition in the Chamber of Deputies at the time. The Social Democrats felt left out of the decision making about foreign military missions and demanded that they be consulted from the beginning of the process of mission planning for 2009. They especially opposed the continuation of the 100 men strong contingent of the Czech special forces in Operation Enduring Freedom. The opposition, with reservations, approved the continuation of the special forces contingent in May 2008, yet they gave the warning that if they would not be consulted during the working out of the new plan, they would not vote for it. In October 2008 the government adopted a new plan (prepared by the Ministry of Defence) which counted on an increase of the Czech forces in Afghanistan under NATO to 645 soldiers, which was unacceptable for the opposition. Unofficial negotiations between the government and the opposition took place from October on and they resulted in a compromise.<sup>9</sup> In spite of the alleged deal, the Senate, controlled by the ODS, approved the original version of the plan, which the opposition Social Democrats considered to be an unfair pressure. The Social Democrats blocked the entire plan in the Chamber of Deputies in December 2009 under terrifying circumstances. For example, they demanded some concessions from the coalition in issues related to domestic politics (e.g. health policy) in exchange for their agreement with the foreign military missions plan. After this failure to get the necessary legislation through the Chamber of Deputies, there was a risk that all Czech military missions stationed abroad would have to be pulled. Thus, the government, in an extraordinary meeting, had to adopt the unusual step of prolonging the term of the missions to up to 60 days by a governmental decree which needed parliamentary approval. The quickly negotiated new plan for Czech military missions abroad for 2009 was then approved by the parliament in early 2009. The last plan for the Czech military missions (for 2010) was adopted by the government of J. Fischer already in June 2009.

The Czech government has the exclusive authority (i.e. without requiring parliamentary approval) to establish diplomatic relations with another country as well. In each of the observed years, a decision to establish diplomatic relations was made. The least controversial one was in November 2007, when the government decided to establish diplomatic relations with the Cook Islands. In 2008 it made the decision to establish diplomatic relations with the newly independent Kosovo, which faced a great many objections. It even led to divisions within the government itself (for details, see above and Chapter 11 *The Balkan Dimension of the Czech Foreign Policy*). This situation also clearly showed that in some crucial spheres of foreign policy making, the government has an extremely autonomous position. The Chamber of Deputies – across political parties – adopted a declaration that in very strong language urged the government to thoroughly consider this issue before making any decision. The government, though, chose to disregard this declaration and move rather quickly in rec-



ognizing Kosovo's independence. In 2009 the government of M. Topolánek was to (re)establish diplomatic relations with Lichtenstein, the absence of which was considered as an abnormal situation in contemporary Europe. With all its historical baggage (the claims of some Lichtenstein families for vast properties in southern Moravia that were expropriated after World War II) this issue turned out to be potentially politically hazardous (especially prior to the May 2009 EP elections). Perhaps this was one of the reasons for why the decision to establish diplomatic ties with the Lichtenstein principality was postponed until July 2009. Therefore, it was already the interim government of J. Fischer that took this step.

The government is a key actor in the Czech European policies. The day-to-day business of European policies has been handled by the Office for European Affairs, by the Committee for the EU, by the permanent mission in Brussels, and partly by the MFA, to name the most important actors. These actors also serve as an expertise support for the government and the Prime Minister himself. However, the government determines and approves the Czech representatives at the top EU councils. This was extremely important in March and June 2007, when the Lisbon Treaty was negotiated; in June 2009, when the fate of the so-called 'Irish exception' from the Lisbon Treaty was to be negotiated at the EU summit (under the Czech presidency); and in November 2009, when the Czech President's demand for an exception from the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU was approved by another summit. For example, in 2008 the government set the Czech position towards the climate package from March 2008. In all cases the mandate was firmly set and agreed by the government as a whole. According to the then Prime Minister M. Topolánek, the government thoroughly discussed each mandate for each particular minister.<sup>10</sup> The government is also continuously informed by individual ministers about the outcomes of particular councils. Information about the former GAERC was being presented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. This, however, changed after the Lisbon Treaty entered in to force – since then it is the Minister for European Affairs who is responsible for the GAC, while the Minister of Foreign Affairs is responsible for the CAF.

The government as a whole only seldom discusses and decides about bilateral issues (with the exception of international treaties) in its official meetings as these are mostly dealt with by particular ministries or by diplomatic activities (see below). Every time a bilateral issue appears on an agenda of a governmental meeting, it is a signal of its vital importance. Yet, in each of the observed years the government decided to put several bilateral foreign policy issues on its agenda. To start with, in March 2007 the government negotiated over the response to the U.S. note seeking for a deal to place the ABM radar on Czech territory. The radar issue was again raised in September 2007 (in order to overview the process of negotiations). The government also chose to overview two other treaty negotiations – the negotiation over the visa free regime with the U.S. (2008) and the negotiation over the purchase of some Pandur armoured carriers from Austria (2008). In April 2007 the government also decided about the fate of a sensitive issue – it proclaimed the so-called 'Melk process' to be successfully completed, a step that was opposed by Austria for a long time (for details see Chapter 5 *The Visegrad Cooperation, Poland, Slovakia and Austria in the Czech Foreign Policy*). The

fact that this Czech-Austrian bilateral issue became a formal point of the governmental meeting agenda illustrates the importance and sensitivity of this relationship. Similarly, there were two cases in which the lengthy issue of the Czech territorial debt to Poland was a matter of a governmental meeting (in September 2007 and in July 2009). The government also frequently decided to discuss several issues related to Russia. In January 2007 one such discussion was in reaction to the interruption of the oil supplies from Russia.<sup>11</sup> Also, the two bilateral treaties with Russia that were mentioned above (setting the framework for helicopter modernization) were discussed more thoroughly than other treaties. Another Russia-related issue appeared on the governmental agenda early in 2009 in relation to the gas crisis, and yet another one made it to the agenda in August 2009 in relation to the endless process of solving the Russian debt to the Czech Republic. In 2008, with regard to Russia, the government chose to issue an official statement in reaction to the situation in Georgia (the views expressed were moderate, but they clearly sided with the Georgian view – for details see Chapter 9 *Russia in the Czech Foreign Policy*). To issue an official statement in matters of foreign policy is not a direct instrument of executing foreign policy. Rather, it is a more subtle expression of opinion. However, the Czech government only very seldom issues an official statement in relation to foreign policy – this task has usually been handled by the MFA for the most part. Thus, when the government decides to take this step, it usually means that the issue at stake has a high significance. During the observed period the government issued only a handful of statements. Besides the ‘Georgian’ statement, there was, for example, the statement in reaction to the situation in Tibet, which reflected the Czech Republic’s long term priorities in international human rights protection (March 2008). Reflecting the pro-European stance of the caretaker government of J. Fischer, the government issued two official statements in September and November 2009 urging the Czech President to respectively sign the Lisbon Treaty and declare a governmental commitment to finalizing the Lisbon Treaty ratification.

An indirect instrument for influencing foreign policy lies in the fiscal authority by which the government decides about the allocation of finances for the MFA in the budget proposal. Among the regular competences of the government, there is the right to approve or refuse foreign trips of the Prime Minister, the President and the Minister of Foreign Affairs as well as to approve visits of top foreign officials. In most cases, questions related to these topics have been decided on without any (recorded) controversy. It is also in the hands of the government to choose members and mandates for governmental delegations to other international organizations. Every regular government meeting begins with information about current European developments and ends with information about any trips abroad or visits by foreign representatives that took place during the past week. Thus the government is kept informed about the actual course of events in foreign policy.

To sum up, the Czech government plays a key role in shaping the CFP. It contributes to the very framework within which foreign policy is produced, it overviews and coordinates the ways foreign policy is executed and it has at its disposal a wide range of instrument of either direct or indirect involvement in the foreign policy making. While it is true that the government plays a key role in the Czech foreign and Euro-

pean policy making, it is also true that the proportion of work related to these policies in the entire workload of the government is rather minor. During the years 2007–2009 the government almost always acted in a consensual and unified manner. The most important – and also dividing – issues during this period were the Czech EU presidency, the U.S. radar, Kosovo’s independence and the Lisbon Treaty. The government of Jan Fischer adopted an even more consensual approach, and foreign policy – with the exception of the Lisbon Treaty – literally disappeared from the broader political and public context.

### *The diplomacy of the Prime Minister(s)*

The top level diplomacy executed by Prime Ministers is the most direct instrument for influencing foreign policy. Most importantly it can play a double role: 1) it proactively works towards the particular foreign policy orientation and goals of a given Prime Minister and his government; 2) it sustains continuity and sets the political ground for lower levels of diplomacy (i.e. for the MFA or other ministries). Both dimensions were clearly visible in the pattern of diplomatic activities of both M. Topolánek and J. Fischer. For example, in the first half of 2007 M. Topolánek’s diplomacy reflected a tendency to vitalize the Czech diplomacy towards anticipated allies in the process of the reform treaty negotiations (and later in the process of the Lisbon Treaty negotiations). Thus, the Prime Minister carried out several visits to and receptions of top policy makers from countries like the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark and the United Kingdom, which are countries that had a supposedly like-minded approach towards the institutional reform of the EU at that time. During the entire period of M. Topolánek’s government, a very active diplomatic approach towards the U.S. was adopted. In 2007 M. Topolánek met with the U.S. President G. Bush (June 2007) and the Minister of Defence R. Gates (October 2007). The Czech Prime Minister met with President Bush again in 2008 (on a bilateral basis) and in April 2009 M. Topolánek met with the new American President Barack Obama. In addition to these meetings, there were numerous meetings with other representatives of the U.S. executive and legislative branches. Due to Poland and the Czech Republic’s similar foreign policy views, their shared fate in the negotiations over the AMD and the close ideological profiles of the Czech and Polish governments, there was a strong leaning of Prime Minister Topolánek towards Poland. Another strong priority of M. Topolánek was his focus on energy security and on the countries that are traditionally linked with this issue, namely those in the Caspian region. In 2008 the Prime Minister focused more on supporting the declared priorities of the upcoming Czech EU presidency, namely on the Balkan countries. Thus, as opposed to 2007, in 2008 M. Topolánek met with a number of representatives of Balkan countries. Interestingly, the Middle East diplomacy of the Prime Minister was also more intensive in 2008 than in previous years. As the presidency drew nearer (in the second half of 2008) M. Topolánek also conducted a series of trips to most of the EU countries in order to bilaterally discuss the Czech priorities with as many European leaders as possible.

While the Czech Republic had 14 foreign trips and 34 visits of foreign guests in 2007, in 2008 the figures were 30 trips and 40 visits. These figures suggest strong dy-

namics in the volume of the Prime Minister's diplomacy, which were linked to the upcoming EU presidency. This was confirmed during the presidency itself – only during the first five months of 2009 Prime Minister Topolánek undertook some twenty foreign visits. Among the most important diplomatic peaks of the presidency belonged the series of rather successful negotiations between Moscow and Ukraine during the January 2009 gas crisis (for details see Chapter 9 *Russia in the Czech Foreign Policy*). Roughly around the same time, the Prime Minister undertook a trip to Egypt. This was followed by a flight to Israel with the top EU representatives which was aimed at resolving the Gaza crisis. This trip was less successful (see Chapter 12 *The Middle East, the Mediterranean and Afghanistan in the Czech Foreign Policy*) but nonetheless it provided an excellent diplomatic opportunity. Other top diplomatic meetings that Prime Minister Topolánek participated in were the G-20 members' meeting in Berlin, the subsequent G-20 summit in London, the NATO summit in Strasbourg and Kehl, and, of course, the two EU Council summits that M. Topolánek was presiding over. This very list illustrates that the Czech EU presidency brought unprecedented opportunities for the Czech Prime Minister as he was able to participate in events and meetings that were open to Czech representatives only during the Czech EU presidency. Despite some reservations, M. Topolánek's diplomacy can be characterized as successful, including the way he managed to act as the EU Council President. Probably the single most important shift was the gradual calming of his rather euro-sceptical rhetoric towards more moderate positions.

Jan Fischer's diplomacy was determined by the Czech EU presidency from the outset. As a breach of the tradition in which a new Prime Minister's first visit is to Slovakia, Jan Fischer chose to travel to Brussels first (May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2009). But after the end of the Czech EU presidency it was clear that Jan Fischer decided to devote his diplomacy to the European Union as much as possible, and this priority was reflected also in his bilateral visits. It has to be underlined that Jan Fischer fully confirmed the previous diplomatic orientation of M. Topolánek, be it in his emphasis on the U.S. or in his straightforward support for firm Czech-Israeli ties (e.g. during his visit to Israel in July 2009 or when he received the Israeli Minister of Defence Ehud Barak in October 2009). If there are some distinct features of Jan Fischer's diplomacy, they are his strong pro-European accent and also his efforts to travel to some distant regions that are more difficult to reach for Prime Ministers with deeper (party) political duties at home, as these journeys are very time consuming. An example of such a trip was his September 2009 visit to Mongolia, the Philippines, Hong Kong and Macao.

As was already mentioned, the Prime Minister's diplomacy does not only mirror particular priorities but it also lays the political ground for continuous diplomatic efforts and goals at lower levels. This dimension of the Prime Minister's diplomacy concentrated mostly on building favourable conditions for good neighbourhood relations as Central Europe has been a continuous priority of the Czech foreign policy for the past 20 years. Both M. Topolánek and J. Fischer made no exception to this rule and approached the Central European region very actively. Especially M. Topolánek's diplomacy contributed to progressing with some long-term issues between the Czech Republic and Austria. He also set a very pragmatic and cooperative tone in the relations

with the German chancellor Angela Merkel and Germany as such (as Germany later proved itself to be one of the most important supporters of the Czech EU presidency).

Diplomacy occupies a very limited space in the Prime Minister's overall agenda, which has at least two consequences. Firstly, in comparison with governmental bodies like the MFA, the Prime Minister cannot act continuously and systematically towards a particular goal or country. His influence is concentrated to a single visit or meeting, and foreign policy issues can be creatively touched by the country leader only within this narrow time frame. Secondly, except for several limited issues of particular interest (e.g. energy security in the case of M. Topolánek) the Prime Minister is heavily reliant on the expert bureaucratic and political consultants of the Office of the Government. These actors execute considerable influence on the nature of the agenda of the Prime Minister's diplomacy, even though this should not be generalized. Besides, we should not forget the role of the MFA in providing expert and political advisory assistance to the Office of the Government. The quality of the Prime Minister's diplomacy thus depends to a large extent on the quality of communication and coordination with the MFA (and other governmental agencies). According to information and sources, there were no significant problems during the observed period in this respect.

## **THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AS AN ACTOR OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY**

As mentioned above, the government plays an overall executive and coordinating role in the CFP. Yet the day to day foreign policy business is mostly handled by the MFA. While it is true that the Topolánek government's decision to establish a special office for European affairs took up a rather substantial part of the MFA's responsibilities, during the entire observed period it firmly retained a key role in the Czech foreign policy making. This section will not go into the details of the particular role of the MFA as this information is provided in other chapters of this volume. The goal of this section is merely to provide a general overview of its function and to outline some attempts at its reform under the Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg (January 2007–May 2009). The MFA is a central organ of the state administration for foreign policy and it also coordinates foreign development cooperation and external economic relations. The MFA is responsible for coordinating activities stemming from bilateral and multilateral cooperation (with the exception of issues belonging to the portfolio of the Ministries of Justice and Finances). In particular (among others), the MFA coordinates the activities of ministries and other central government authorities in the field of foreign relations to ensure that all obligations arising from international treaties and the Czech Republic's membership in international organizations are fully respected, it ensures the protection of Czech citizens abroad, it administers and manages Czech embassies abroad, it coordinates and provides for the preparations and negotiations of international treaties (and it also monitors the abidance by these treaties) and it bestows licences for export and import of military equipment.<sup>12</sup> Besides these executive and coordinating roles the MFA gathers information from terri-

tories and international organizations, evaluates it and provides an expert knowledge basis as well as policy advisories for other governmental bodies, including the President and the parliament. Another permanent function of the MFA lies in issuing statements commenting on or reacting to world affairs or bilateral issues that appear in the day-to-day foreign policy making. Thus the MFA makes sense of the Czech foreign policy stances toward diverse world political issues.

For the past twenty years there have been countless attempts at (re)organizing the way the MFA is managed. According to O. Pick ‘every newly appointed minister had his own idea of how the structure of the ministry should look. Section names were changing, deputy ministers were being assigned different tasks, agendas were relocated to newly named departments, but in the end everything kept going just like before’.<sup>13</sup> Some of the reforms were more substantial and some were rather cosmetic but any change has direct consequences for the policy making. Also Minister K. Scharzenberg declared in early 2007 a strong will to push through a thorough structural reform that would change the entire bureaucratic structure of the ministry. The ultimate goal was to impose a new business-like management which would bring more responsibility for individual actors and more effectiveness to the MFA. Part of this reform was also meant to touch the (comparatively) over-extensive network of the Czech embassies abroad and improve the system by which electronic information is stored, shared and processed.<sup>14</sup> However, during 2008 the realization of all of the important reforms was increasingly delayed as the huge bureaucratic structure displayed strong tendencies to resistance and inertia. As a result, only minor changes in the IT management were carried out. All other changes gradually came to a halt, including the long awaited overhaul of the embassies network. The Minister of Foreign Affairs in J. Fischer’s government – Jan Kohout – once and for all stopped all reforms and took back some of the structural reforms that had already been already carried out. There are at least three poignant areas that need to be addressed in order to run the MFA more transparently and effectively. These are the question of the embassies network and its effectiveness, the issue of diplomatic rotations, and the general issue of deciding about personal policies and personal questions within the MFA. Solving all three issues would significantly enhance the process of foreign policy making. However, for all of them a strong political will is needed because power over personal questions and over embassies’ assignments entails a considerable political and bureaucratic influence. Besides that, a new general civil service law as well as a particular law for diplomatic service is urgently needed. Yet, the fact that for a decade there has been no progress in this field prompts caution.

## **THE PRESIDENT AS AN ACTOR OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY**

Despite his limited real executive powers, the Czech President enjoys considerable autonomy in the field of foreign policy making. He represents the country externally, yet he is not responsible to any other constitutional or political authority. In the past twenty years, during the presidencies of Václav Havel and Václav Klaus, this auton-

omy kept providing for numerous discords and collisions between the President on one side and the government on the other. In the first year of the coalition of M. Topolánek (2007) it seemed as if the traditional controversies could be warded off because of the fact that the President and the Prime Minister came from the same political party and shared the same ideology. Indeed, during 2007 there were many signals that the Czech foreign policy could be void of its typical double-track nature.

Yet, after the government leaned more firmly toward supporting the Lisbon Treaty and openly stated that the Czech role in the EU presidency will be a moderate one instead of an assertive one, the traditional clashes reappeared – already in 2008. The fact that President Klaus (re-elected in January 2008) will not seek re-election (and thus the support of parliamentary parties) in 2013 did not contribute to his cooperativeness either. It has to be stressed that in the regular foreign policy business the President fulfilled his constitutional duties without any hesitation and that his diplomatic activities were generally supportive of the goals of the Czech diplomacy. This is especially true of his strong diplomatic emphasis on Central Europe and the Balkans and of his foreign trips, which were prepared in a close cooperation with the MFA in order to support Czech (mostly business) interests abroad. This is especially true of his Asian and African trips. Also, during the Czech EU presidency the President acted in accordance with the government, and the coordination between him and the government was fairly good and effective.

President Klaus leaves the majority of the foreign policy issues (for example, the security dimension of the Czech foreign policy) uncommented and does not creatively step into most of the foreign policy areas. However, there are several areas and fields where V. Klaus holds strong opinions (especially the EU, global environmental changes, his concept of neutrality and his stance towards Russia) and it is there that he does not hesitate to assert his own position – even in a direct clash with the government. During 2007 there were only a few such moments if any. In 2008 V. Klaus adopted a position that differed from that of the government on the issue of Kosovo's independence, he was very vocal about the Russian-Georgian conflict (siding in his interpretations with Russia rather than the government) and most importantly he began to openly oppose the Lisbon Treaty, which the government signed and promised to ratify. Similarly, the President was outright in declaring his hesitation to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Still, while the principal accord between the government and the President was harmed, the President did not use his authority to directly boycott some of the government's intentions in 2008. In 2009 this situation changed. The President's autonomy in foreign policy matters was further augmented by the disintegrated, polarized and weak position of the overall political context. In December 2008 President Klaus gave up his function of honorary chairman of the ODS, and the breach between him and Topolánek's government grew larger. After Prime Minister Topolánek unambiguously promised to finish the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty and gradually leaned towards a more positive approach to the EU (mostly in relation to the upcoming EU presidency), V. Klaus was more and more vociferous in his opposition to the government's line toward the EU. An open executive clash appeared only after the government of M. Topolánek was replaced by that

of J. Fischer. The President collided with J. Fischer over the issue of whether the so-called ‘Irish exemption’ is subject to parliamentary approval (V. Klaus’ position) or whether the decision of the government will suffice (J. Fischer’s interpretation, which prevailed in the end). The sharpest and most unprecedented controversy, though, was that of the President’s refusal to sign the Lisbon Treaty, which was already ratified in both Chambers of the parliament. Due to the assertive and skilful work of Prime Minister Fischer and of the Governmental Office for European Affairs, the President’s opposition was surmounted. However, the way the President acted opened questions as to the limits of his constitutional authority. Moreover, the unpredictable posing of the new conditions before the signing of the Lisbon Treaty yet again rendered – after the fall of the government in the middle of the EU presidency – the Czech Republic as an incalculable partner. Besides this, in relation to his objections to the Lisbon Treaty, V. Klaus referred to the so-called Beneš decrees (which, among others, enabled the transfer of the borderlands Germans and the confiscation of their properties). By doing this, V. Klaus jeopardized the long-term Czech foreign policy strategy towards the Central European region, which is based on focusing on the future instead of the past. Thus, the President risked unleashing a historical agenda which is very sensitive for the entire Central European region. It goes without saying that his steps were not discussed or coordinated with the MFA or the government. Obviously, it is correct for the President to bring a clear if controversial voice to the dialogue about the future of Europe and the world. Open discussion is the condition of any meaningful and legitimate community. However, the President’s contribution should be carried out in a cultivated way, ideally in coordination with other parts of the policy making process, in the spirit of the constitutional order and also in a way that is acceptable for foreign partners.

Regarding the last point, there has been an undeniable pattern during the observed years that suggests that V. Klaus is not a particularly popular partner for bilaterally oriented visits in the so-called ‘old member’ countries. Analysing the President’s travel calendar for 2007–2009, one finds a clear tendency to travel to Central European countries (including Germany and Austria), Eastern European countries (including Russia), the Balkans and some more distant non-European destinations. The foreign visitors received by President Klaus were of a similar composition. Besides this, many of his journeys abroad are not dedicated to typical bilateral meetings. Instead, these trips are conceived as presentations of V. Klaus’ private opinions on selected issues, mostly on the global climate changes or some economic or European issues. For example, out of roughly twenty foreign trips in 2008, five were devoted to his speeches and presentations instead of classical diplomacy. No matter what the reasons of this orientation of the Presidential travel schedule are, it is true that in the world of diplomacy, it is a serious fault if one is unable to obtain an official bilateral invitation from the most important European or NATO partners for a considerable period of time.

The President’s imprint on the foreign policy in 2007–2009 is rather controversial. His activities in the regular foreign policy business are low profile and non-controversial, but also non-creative. There are a few areas where V. Klaus used all his formal and informal powers to stand against the government, but in consequence this was



more harmful than helpful. Last but not least, his inability to serve as a political and diplomatic representative of the Czech Republic in the most important EU and NATO countries gives the Czech Republic a sense of unwelcome isolation.

## THE PARLIAMENT AS A CZECH FOREIGN POLICY ACTOR

The role of the Czech parliament (consisting of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies) will be analysed at three levels:

1. The constitutionally defined competences of the parliament
2. Informal instruments and the parliament as a platform for discussion and negotiation about foreign policy
3. Parliamentary diplomacy

From a constitutional point of view, Czech foreign policy is by and large not determined by legislative acts. During 2007–2009 there have been only a very few new laws directly linked to foreign policy. The most important one was a law on foreign development cooperation that was introduced into the parliament in 2009 (for details see Chapter 19 *Development Cooperation in the Czech Foreign Policy*). Of the two Chambers, it is the Chamber of Deputies that is more linked to the executive branch as the government is responsible to the Chamber of Deputies and it is this Chamber that can issue a non-confidence vote. Also, the Chamber of Deputies approves the state's budget, which can have an impact on foreign policy. On the other hand, during 2007–2009 the Senate profited from the fact that the top executive foreign policy actors (the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs and the Minister of Foreign Affairs) had either previous or ongoing experience as senators. Besides this, the Senate consciously builds its image as a mentor of the Czech foreign policy, and its chairman during 2007–2009 (Přemysl Sobotka /ODS/) particularly kept this task as one of his priorities.<sup>15</sup>

The legislative role of the parliament in the foreign policy is limited to several areas – the parliament ratifies international treaties, it approves the emplacement (or transit) of foreign military troops on Czech territory and it approves operations of the Czech military abroad. The sheer majority of international treaties passes through the parliament with ease and without any interest from the lawmakers, attracting some technical remarks at best. There were some 50 treaties in the parliament in 2007. Around 20 of them were bilateral, and around 30 were multilateral. In this year, there were only two treaties that generated some interest in the Chamber of Deputies. Both of them were designed to provide certain assistance to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. Both treaties were challenged by Communist deputies as the Communist Party traditionally opposes the work of the ICTY. The situation in the Senate was even calmer as a comfortable majority of the senators belonged to the coalition, and the political situation in the Senate was not as polarized as that in the Chamber of Deputies. Thus, in 2007 the parliament did not use its legislative authority to stop an international treaty. Neither did it threaten to do so. This situation changed in 2008, when the parliament ratified around 30 treaties (more than half of

them were multilateral) and again most of them were ratified without any problem or discussion. Yet, the government sent three treaties to the parliament which provoked fierce discussions and strong opposition. Two of them were the so-called ‘radar’ treaties with the U.S. that were to provide a legal ground for placing the American AMD radar on the Czech soil (for details see Chapter 7 *The United States in the Czech Foreign Policy*), and the third one was the Lisbon Treaty (for details see Chapter 3, *The European Dimension of the Czech Foreign Policy*). The ‘radar’ treaties were eventually withdrawn from the parliamentary ratification process out of a fear that they would be refused, and it took more than a year to get the necessary approval for the Lisbon Treaty. A less polarizing but still considerably burning issue was the ratification of the *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court* (for details see Chapter 16 *The Multilateral Dimension of the Czech Foreign Policy*), and there were even six coalition deputies (all from the ODS) who voted against its ratification. In 2009, the parliament approved some 50 treaties of similar composition as those in the previous two years and with a similar level of (dis)interest on the part of the lawmakers. Most importantly, the Lisbon Treaty was ratified after a series of debates in both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. Interestingly, the Chamber of Deputies approved the treaty even without a positive recommendation from the constitutional and foreign policy committees, which were unable to find a common position. The situation was even more uncertain in the Senate, as a considerable group of ODS senators were known for their unenthusiastic stance towards the treaty. All these cases proved that under circumstances of non-consensual foreign policy matters being subjected to a legislative body with a fragile coalition majority, the parliament can play a decisive role in the foreign policy.

The parliament is endowed with a significant power to (dis)approve the Czech military missions abroad and station or transfer foreign military troops on the Czech territory. As for the latter, there was no recorded controversy. Both Chambers are regularly informed about foreign military transfers and exercises and there are no debates on this issue. In contrast, sending Czech military troops abroad has been a potentially polarizing issue. In the fall of 2007 the parliament was discussing a governmental plan for foreign military missions in 2008, and especially the opposition Social Democrats stressed (both in the Foreign Committee and during the plenary meeting of the Chamber of Deputies) that the Ministry of Defence should work out a thorough long – or mid-term strategy for the foreign deployment of the Czech military forces. Also, there were objections against the increasing number of Czech soldiers – especially within the U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom (but the Senate approved the missions without greater objections). Thus, already in 2007 this issue generated a heated and intense debate. However, this state of affairs only further escalated in 2008. The government failed to answer the opposition’s plea, and the Ministry of Defence did not submit any mid-term plan. Instead, without much formal or informal discussion, in October 2008 the government submitted a plan for the Czech military missions in 2009. The opposition heavily complained that it was not consulted and that the plan calculates precisely on an increase of the number of special forces under Operation Enduring Freedom, which was previously denied most fiercely. There was a series of

informal talks leading to a compromise. However, the coalition-controlled Senate decided to approve the original plan, which did not reflect the compromise. The same plan was added to the agenda of the Chamber of Deputies only on December 19<sup>th</sup>, that is, a mere 11 days before the plan was expected to take place. The Social Democrats interpreted this step as an undue and unfair pressure and decided to boycott the entire plan. During the key session on December 19<sup>th</sup> the plan did not get the necessary approval and all the existing Czech missions fell into the peril of having to draw off the troops by the end of the year. The government at its extraordinary meeting used its authority to extend the duration of the missions by 60 days, and a compromise was quickly worked out. However, the entire situation only proved the lack of political responsibility and the lack of a willingness to communicate, which potentially led to not only Czech soldiers but also the Czech reputation abroad being threatened (for details see Chapter 4 *The Security Dimension of the Czech Foreign Policy*). In 2009, when the plan for Czech foreign military missions in 2010 was negotiated, the picture was different again. J. Fischer's interim government was obliged to submit the plan by the end of June 2009 and it was requested to include a strengthening of the European dimension of the Czech forces' deployment. As the proposal fulfilled both obligations it was very quickly processed in the Chamber of Deputies and approved on June 16<sup>th</sup> even though the discussion went about in a mutually denunciatory spirit.

Beside these legislative powers the parliament is also responsible for transcending the European legislation that is added to Czech law. There are important differences in the ways the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate handle this issue. While in the Chamber of Deputies the European legislation hardly ever makes it to a plenary meeting as approval by the European committee equals plenary decision, the Senate holds on to the necessity to approve European legislation by a plenum. Thus, there are considerably more discussions devoted to the European legal acts in the Senate than in the Chamber of Deputies.

By and large, this exhausts the constitutional powers employed by the parliament during 2007–2009. To this list we should add the non-confidence vote of the Chamber of Deputies in March 2009 – that is, in the middle of the Czech EU presidency – which affected the international standing of the Czech Republic. The parliament can influence foreign policy by some other non-legislative instruments. Among the most formal instruments belongs issuing statements that articulate some foreign policy postures. This instrument is only very rarely used, and one of the very few times when it was used was in a declaration of the Chamber of Deputies in 2008 that touched on the situation in Tibet.<sup>16</sup> In October 2009 the Senate chose to issue a strong statement demanding the de-occupation of Georgia and condemning attempts to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It is similarly seldom that one of the Chambers issues a decree urging the government to take some specific action in the field of foreign policy. As these decrees are not legally binding, their impact is rather impotent. This was, e.g., the case of a decree of early 2008 that urged the government to consider all other options before officially recognizing Kosovo. With the unique support of a large majority of the deputies, the Chamber of Deputies voted for in favour of this decree. Another instrument lies in the ability of deputies to subject members of the government to

interpellation. During the observed period this option was utilized quite often (i.e. there were about 200 interpellations touching upon foreign policy issues a year). The questions and interpellations were diversified, yet the majority focused on the most acute topics of the day. The problem is that members of the government, the rest of the deputies and, needless to say, the general public did not pay much attention to the interpellations, and therefore the impact of this instrument was impaired to a great extent.

Both Chambers should also serve as a natural political platform for exchanging views on foreign policy. Unfortunately, this is precisely the function that the parliament has been severely lacking during 2007–2009. There were several reasons for this. First, there was the unwillingness of the coalition parties to face foreign policy-oriented discussion in the plenum, especially in the Chamber of Deputies. Second, there was the permanent readiness and indeed the tendency of the opposition to unnecessarily politicize and polarize any given foreign political issue (again, particularly in the Chamber of Deputies). Third, and perhaps most importantly, there is a general disinterest on the part of the crushing majority of the lawmakers. The situation is slightly better in the case of committees that are relevant for foreign policy. In the case of the Chamber of Deputies, these are primarily and most importantly the Committee for Foreign Affairs, the Committee for the European Affairs and also the Committee for Defence and Security. Especially during international treaty ratification the treaty might fit into the portfolio of other committees, like the Committee for Economic Affairs or the Committee for Environment. In the case of the Senate, the most relevant committees are the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Defence and Security Committee and the Committee on EU Affairs. Our analysis continually focused on the Chamber of Deputies' Foreign Affairs Committee and it suggests that its role was to act as a moderator of different views. As the committee's meetings most usually take place outside of the limelight, its debates are mostly pragmatic and business like without the traditional emotional and polarized touch of the plenary meetings. Our analysis also shows that the role in the legislative process is crucial for the work of the Chamber of Deputies in the field of foreign policy. Every single international treaty is subjected to the Foreign Committee. The committee also has its word in other legislative acts touching upon foreign policy, including those of the budget chapter of the MFA. The Foreign Committee serves as the closest connection between the MFA, its information and its expertise on one side and the lawmakers in the Chamber on the other. The MFA's representatives, ministers and deputies are regular visitors to the committee's meetings. This is not to suggest that the committee is somehow a powerful actor when it comes to influencing the executive branch directly. On the contrary, the committee quite regularly issues a decree urging the MFA to take some specific step but in the vast majority of cases these decrees are completely ignored by the MFA as they are of a non-binding nature and the committee does not have any power to enforce its will. The Foreign Committee tried to influence the MFA in issues like Kosovo's independence, the Czech–U.S. 'radar' treaty negotiations, the embassies network, the nomination of ambassadors, the reform of the MFA, etc., yet these decrees were mostly ignored and the results were disappointing. Therefore, it is extremely important that the committee and its chairman have a strong informal position and that there are strong

informal links and channels between the members of the committee and influential MFA's officials. Therefore it is necessary that there is as much personal continuity in the committee across different electoral terms as possible. Unfortunately, the composition of the committee after the 2006 elections did not mean much continuity – influential figures left for the European Parliament (Jan Zahradil, Miloslav Randsdorf) or left politics altogether (Jan Kavan, Vladimír Laštůvka). The relatively unknown opposition deputy from the ČSSD Jan Hamáček was appointed as chairman. The fact that many of the influential politicians and foreign policy experts left the committee and the fact that after eight years the committee chairman was not selected from a coalition camp meant a disruption of the personal continuity as well as a slight weakening of the position of the committee as such. However, the new chairman proved to be skilful and moderate enough to ensure that the work of the committee would be effective and pragmatic. He was also able to establish strong informal links to some individuals in the MFA's top level management. The work of the committee was negatively affected by the political vacuum in the second half of 2009 when the members (according to the open records) almost resigned on opening debates on any of the foreign policy issues and concentrated merely on passing through international treaties.

The third instrument that the members of parliament can use in foreign policy is the so-called parliamentary diplomacy. It is difficult to assess the importance of parliamentary diplomacy as these activities can only very seldom offer some tangible and measurable outcomes. Therefore, the media as well as the public are very critical of the foreign trips of the Czech deputies and senators, often accusing them of abusing public money for personal travelling. Yet, the significance of parliamentary diplomacy should not be underestimated. Meetings among members of parliament under ordinary circumstances are not as tied by protocol and executive responsibilities as their meetings during regular diplomatic business. Therefore, if skilfully prepared, parliamentary diplomacy can set and discuss topics that are difficult to discuss on the executive level because of their sensitive nature. Parliamentary diplomacy can also bestow important political impulses in the regions or agendas that are not regularly covered by executive diplomacy. Parliamentary diplomacy plays an irreplaceable role in building a social network among members of parliament and also in getting otherwise disinterested lawmakers into the foreign policy agenda. However, there are several conditions to be met for the parliamentary diplomacy to be successful. First, members of parliament should pay firm attention to the agenda, they should get thorough briefing from experts and they should require supporting materials from the MFA. Second, it is best when the trips are prepared in coordination with the MFA as the ministry is able to determine the territories and topics to be discussed. Third, there should be some coordinating mechanism among particular committees and also between the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate in order to prevent sending two or more separate delegations to the same country in a short period of time (which is usually perceived negatively by the partners). Unfortunately, these conditions are rarely met entirely. There were several attempts to set up some coordinating mechanism between the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies but they did not really work, although there were some exceptions. The coordination with the MFA was better, as there were sev-

eral trips prepared in close coordination with the MFA. One example of this was the Foreign Committee's delegation to Canada in 2007. In 2008 there were trips to Mexico, Guatemala, East Timor, Indonesia and Azerbaijan. The Foreign Committee consciously focused on rather distant territories and countries with the aim to support previously underestimated bilateral relations or to provide political support for some of the newly adopted territorial priorities of the MFA (this is especially the case with African countries). There were some differences between the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, and the most important one lies in the fact that the Senate's chairman P. Sobotka (ODS), as opposed to the Chamber of Deputies' chairman M. Vlček (ČSSD), intentionally focused on foreign policy and especially on the Central European region, which played an important role in his diplomatic agenda. The diplomacy of both Chambers was heavily influenced by the EU presidency as it was aimed more at EU countries. It was also during the presidency that both Chambers were obliged to coordinate their activities most closely.

## CONCLUSION

Our analysis revealed several findings. First, during the examined period there were unsatisfactory political conditions for the CFP from the outset of the work of M. Topolánek's coalition government. Second, the gradually worsening political context eventually led to devastating failures of the Czech foreign policy. Third, despite the poor political conditions the administrative and executive component of the CFP worked effectively and satisfactorily. Fourth, the lack of a comprehensive political framework and of politically determined goals for foreign policy sometimes leaves too much autonomy for the executive branch (including the President), which proved to be harmful especially during the second half of 2009.

Our *policy* analysis found that the Czech government has a privileged position in the foreign policy making as it has the authority to arrange some of the very processes through which the CFP is made and it has an exclusive executive authority to decide about most of the regular foreign policy issues. The expert background for the foreign policy was provided mostly by the MFA, which was also responsible for the execution of the foreign policy. By the decision of the government a new Office for EU Affairs was established. It took over a substantial part of the European agenda from the MFA. It served both as an expert background for the government and the Prime Minister on the one hand, and an executive body and the main coordinator of the Czech EU presidency on the other. Our analysis revealed that the Czech President mostly acted in accordance with the government's intentions and supported the governmental line with his own diplomacy. Yet, a strong autonomy in the foreign policy field provided the President with numerous possibilities to formulate his own foreign policy preferences and to assert them even in a direct clash with the government, which brought about negative consequences for foreign policy. The parliament is not endowed with extensive power to influence the day-to-day foreign policy agenda but its role is crucial in those fields where the legislature has the authority to act independently. It was

illustrated that due to this authority it is necessary for any government to seek a broad political consensus in order to push through its intentions.

To assess the three analysed years from a longer term point of view, it is clear that the Czech foreign policy was able to sustain some basic continuity and conserve good external conditions for the Czech Republic. On the other hand, one cannot hide the fact that these three years were also shamefully wasted as no comprehensive politically motivated strategy was worked out, the Czech Republic was unable to progress in clearly defining its position within Europe, and it also lost its chance to present itself as a dependable leader during the EU presidency. Behind all of these setbacks lay the disinterest and lack of responsibility of the majority of the Czech politicians.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> *Koncepce české zahraniční politiky na léta 2003–2006*. On-line: ([www.mzv.cz/servis/soubor.asp?id=4191](http://www.mzv.cz/servis/soubor.asp?id=4191)).
- <sup>2</sup> Programové prohlášení vlády. On-line: ([www.vlada.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=20780](http://www.vlada.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=20780)).
- <sup>3</sup> Programové prohlášení vlády. On-line: ([www.vlada.cz/cz/jednani-vlady/programove-prohlaseni-programove-prohlaseni-vlady-cr-58369/](http://www.vlada.cz/cz/jednani-vlady/programove-prohlaseni-programove-prohlaseni-vlady-cr-58369/)).
- <sup>4</sup> Usnesení vlády České republiky ze dne 21. května 2008 č. 635 k návrhu na uznání Republiky Kosovo a o navázání diplomatických styků s Republikou Kosovo. On-line: ([racek.vlada.cz/usneseni/usneseni\\_webtest.nsf/0/3996AA9DDE0132FFC12574D000203539/\\$FILE/635%20uv080521.0635.pdf](http://racek.vlada.cz/usneseni/usneseni_webtest.nsf/0/3996AA9DDE0132FFC12574D000203539/$FILE/635%20uv080521.0635.pdf)).
- <sup>5</sup> See Drulák, Petr (2009): *Politika českého nezájmu aneb Rekviem za české předsednictví*. Mezinárodní politika, 7/2009, pp. 4–6.
- <sup>6</sup> Gajdoš, M. (2007): *Vláda jako aktér české zahraniční politiky*. In: Kořan, Michal–Hrabálek, Martin (eds): *Česká zahraniční politika: aktéři, struktura, proces*. Brno: Mezinárodní politologický ústav, p. 55.
- <sup>7</sup> Usnesení vlády ČR, 5. 10. (č. 1249). On-line: ([kormoran.vlada.cz/usneseni/usneseni\\_webtest.nsf/0/A2ED56CB867B21BBC125764D00258234/\\$FILE/1249%20uv091005.1249.pdf](http://kormoran.vlada.cz/usneseni/usneseni_webtest.nsf/0/A2ED56CB867B21BBC125764D00258234/$FILE/1249%20uv091005.1249.pdf)).
- <sup>8</sup> Gajdoš, M. (2007): *Vláda jako aktér české zahraniční politiky*. In: Kořan, Michal–Hrabálek, Martin (eds): *Česká zahraniční politika: aktéři, struktura, proces*, op. cit., p. 43.
- <sup>9</sup> Interview with a deputy-chairman of the Chamber of Deputies, Jan Kasal (KDU-ČSL), 12. 2. 2009; interview with the chairman of the Foreign Committee of the Chamber of Deputies Jan Hamáček (ČSSD), 5. 3. 2009.
- <sup>10</sup> Statement for the Czech News Agency, 27. 8. 2008.
- <sup>11</sup> Usnesení vlády ČR č. 43 ze dne 9. 1. 2007. On-line: ([kormoran.vlada.cz/usneseni/usneseni\\_webtest.nsf/9d960a7bf947adf0c1256c8a00755e91/9192dbed5d0200b8c12572600043a55f?OpenDocument](http://kormoran.vlada.cz/usneseni/usneseni_webtest.nsf/9d960a7bf947adf0c1256c8a00755e91/9192dbed5d0200b8c12572600043a55f?OpenDocument)).
- <sup>12</sup> § 6 of the Law No. č. 2/1969 establishing ministries and other central authorities of state administration.
- <sup>13</sup> Pick, Otto: *Závěr: Co se podařilo a co ne*. In: Pick, O.–Handl, V. (eds) (2004): *Zahraniční politika České republiky: úspěchy, problémy a perspektivy*. Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, p. 253.
- <sup>14</sup> Interview with Secretary General of the MFA (responsible for the reform) M. Čermák, 18. 3. 2007.
- <sup>15</sup> See Kořan, Michal (2007): *Domestic Politics in the Czech Foreign Policy*. International Issues and Slovak Foreign Policy, Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 23–46.
- <sup>16</sup> *Viz. Stenographic record of the 28th meeting of the Chamber of Deputies, April 1st, 2008*. On-line: ([www.psp.cz/eknih/2006ps/stenprot/028schuz/28-9.html](http://www.psp.cz/eknih/2006ps/stenprot/028schuz/28-9.html)).

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## Chapter 2

# The media Context of the Czech Foreign Policy in 2007–2009

*Vlastimil Nečas, Lenka Vochocová*

The information revolution in the twentieth century had an essential impact on the ways of asserting political interests and influencing voters – not only during pre-election campaigns. It was particularly the massive onset of television in the second half of the last century which brought about a significant change in the relation between politics and the media, referred to as mediatization.<sup>1</sup> Political or media studies are thus confronted with the question of the relation between the media and politics in the present-day western democracies. Theoretical as well as research works analysing this relation fall within the sphere of political communication and, in more general terms, the region of exploring the theories of media effects. A considerable number of diverse concepts have emerged as a result in the course of the systematic investigation of the manners in which the media have been influencing individuals and society (approximately since the end of the 1930s).<sup>2</sup>

In political communication, as in media studies and social sciences in general, two basic approaches to investigating the effects of the mass media can be identified – one objectivist, and the other constructivist. In keeping with most objectivist theories, the so-called objectivist journalism regards news as objects in a real world which exist independently of media organizations. The journalist's job is to look for news and record it impartially. An obvious course of action is elimination of subjective influences by means of operational control mechanisms applied by editorial boards. Such action should then result in the most accurate reflection of reality possible. The metaphor of the media as a mirror of the world and society is frequently used in this context. Similar assumptions are the point of departure of, for instance, Habermas's well known idea of the media as a potential platform for an open and rational discussion involving a large variety of public representatives. These ideas are amply criticized *inter alia*<sup>3</sup> from the position of constructivist theories which perceive man as an actor, an active contributor to the creation of reality. The perception of the world is determined by our subjectivity, our knowledge and the experiences we acquired so far and encoded in language systems. These paradigms – or archetypes – constitute our ideas of the world. According to constructivist theories in media studies, the media



and journalists create reality rather than objectively reflecting it.<sup>4</sup> Many communication theories and models of disseminating information in society have constructivist foundations too.<sup>5</sup> The concept of the spiral of silence, developed by the German sociologist Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann, can be included among the key concepts which constituted and continue to influence media studies and communication research. According to Neumann, the mass media are an essential source of information about the surrounding world for individuals in a society. And although the author emphasizes the determining role of interpersonal communication, she ascribes to the mass media the ability to confirm the ideas and attitudes of individuals, while the media contents at the same time make it possible for their recipients to test majority attitudes, or the relevance of their own views, in relation to the general opinion climate. The mass media, the selection of events and the manners of informing about them thus can send the spiral of silence spinning and define the predominant attitudes in society. The relations between the media, politics and the public are also the subject of the concept of agenda setting. The research into agenda setting is based on a search for the relation between the setting of media contents and public preferences, and the assertion that the media are able to shape public attitudes through defining the order of priority of the topics which the public regards as important.<sup>6</sup>

The purpose of the introductory paragraphs is to outline for the reader the possible contexts in which the influence of the mass media on society can be contemplated, while a large part of the tradition of researching the impacts of the media concerns political communication, or the influence of the mass media on the electoral behaviour and political decisions made by the public.<sup>7</sup> In this context it is also useful to read the results of the studies and the general conclusions presented below. Although we focus only on analyses of media contents, it can be presumed that the stereotypes and the media agenda become transferred into the public agenda in general. This is by no means meant to suggest that the media are capable of directly influencing public opinion and preferences; nevertheless, the above-described theories confirm their ability to set the topics, i.e. to stake out the field of discourse and define the semantic frameworks, which the public subsequently accentuates and considers important.

In the following section we will try to describe, with the help of several examples, the tendencies observable in the Czech media in dealing with foreign policy topics. We proceed from four media researches undertaken in the course of the past four years. The first is a discursive analysis of the debates on the ‘Euroconstitution’ project in the Czech media during the period between 2005 and 2007. The second and third sources are analyses of the media coverage of Czech foreign policy in 2008 and 2009. The fourth source is a case study of selected foreign policy events in 2009, as they were presented in the Czech media. Even though the studies were conducted at different points of time, which means that they were conducted on different samples and in different media, their conclusions are the same in certain respects and bear out the characteristic features of the Czech media as concerns the coverage of foreign political events. The typical and recurrent common features can be summed up as follows:

- The foreign policy reporting of the Czech media appears as considerably **personalized**. It is dominated by Czech political actors, allowing only a consid-

erably limited access to other actors, whether from the civic and academic spheres or from abroad.

- Another common feature is **thematic convergence** – in terms of the priority themes covered, the agenda of the different media proved to be similar to a large degree. However it might seem that different media will prefer different themes, from the macro-analytical point of view, there is hardly any difference. What may vary is the contextualization of particular themes, but their preferential treatment and prioritization by the monitored media do not differ.
- The third common feature is **emotionalization**. Quantitative and especially qualitative analyses of public communication concerning domestic and foreign policy topics on the pages of Czech dailies point to a long-term trend of departure from a strictly rational debate (objective argumentation, presentation and interpretation of facts) and a shift towards emotionally tinged texts of commentary and news reporting types (Vochocová–Křeček, 2007; Nečas, 2006).

In the next chapter we will describe the individual researches in greater detail, while devoting the main part of our attention to the last case study, which offers an insight into the media stereotypes and metaphors used in connection with two cardinal events of Czech foreign policy in 2009.

## THE EUROCONSTITUTION DEBATE IN THE CZECH MEDIA

The research focused on the characteristics of the debate about the ‘Euroconstitution’ project which took place in the Czech media in the period from the French and Dutch ‘no’ to the Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe (TCE) to the political agreement on the Reform Treaty (between June 2005 and June 2007). The study combines quantitative and qualitative analyses of six Czech printed media. The total sample from the 25 months included 1049 articles, which were used as the basis for the quantitative analyses. For the purpose of the qualitative analysis, 40 articles were selected from the total sample. The selection for the qualitative analysis takes into consideration the frequency of certain types of articles in the coverage cycle. The chief aim of the analysis was to identify the dominant actors, the topics and the framing of the media debate on the Euroconstitution.

### *The Actors*

The results testify to the presence of three types of actors. Member-state actors are in the dominant position, representing almost 80 percent of all appearances by the three types in the media. Far behind the national actors are representatives of European institutions, of the European Parliament and of the European Commission (e.g. Angela Merkel, Jo Leinen). The debate about the future of the Euroconstitution in the Czech media that was included in the research took place primarily at the level of national actors. International actors entered the debate only rarely, and they neither introduced any new topics nor initiated follow-up discussions.

Czech President Václav Klaus definitely appears as an important actor in the analysed texts. The second most important position is occupied by Angela Merkel, followed by the leaders of the two strongest parliamentary parties – Mirek Topolánek, then Chairman of the Civic Democratic Party, and Jiří Paroubek, then Chairman of the Czech Social Democratic Party. President Klaus may be considered a dominant initiator of and a dominant commentator on European topics in the analysed text sample. His standpoints are often viewed as extreme in the Czech context, but he manages to set up the topics in the media agenda. The other actors frequently react to him.

### *The Topics*

The topics dealt with in the analysed texts were encoded into a total of 196 categories divided into three main thematic areas: EU policies, EU institutional architecture and the constitutional process: past, present and future. Of the thematic groups which we monitored, the smallest amount of attention was paid to EU policies, a somewhat higher amount of attention was paid to EU institutions, and the highest amount of attention was paid to topics relating to the ratification process and changes of the EU Constituent Treaty. The absolutely most frequent topic was its reform, followed by continuation of the ratification process and the discarding of the TCE.

### *Conclusions*

The debate in the analysed media contents was thus in the hands of national actors, with occasional rather passive entries of international actors. The debate was markedly domestic, as it was reduced to interactions among national actors, almost exclusively Czech politicians. As far as the presence of political and non-political actors is concerned, the Czech media debate on the Euroconstitution was thus imbalanced. A gender imbalance in favour of male actors was evident too. The debate was characterized by a strong politization and personalization, and an overwhelming predominance of domestic actors from the two most powerful political parties.

## **TELEVISION COVERAGE OF CZECH FOREIGN POLICY**

Two other researches of the media coverage of Czech foreign policy were conducted in 2008 and 2009. They were extensive, mainly descriptive quantitative analyses by means of which we tried to define the basic contours of the media discourse on foreign policy in the two years and, in the first place, identify the dominant topics, actors and priority destinations of the media's interest. In both years under investigation we analysed the reporting agenda of three Czech nationwide television stations, or more precisely, their chief news broadcasts, concentrating only on the coverage of events relating to foreign policy. In 2008 the analysed sample consisted of 1066 items, and in 2009 the number of relevant contributions rose to 1526. The dominance of the public Czech Television, in terms of the space devoted to the coverage of foreign policy events, the variety of the topics and the actors present, was evident in both years.

*The Actors*

In terms of the actors present, the television coverage of foreign policy events in 2008 was to a large extent personified and reduced to the presence of several Czech representatives of political parties. International actors appeared only sporadically in the coverage. As regards institutional actors, those representing Czech political parties again predominated. In 2009, the situation was very much the same (see Table no. 1). There was also little difference among the TV channels monitored as concerns the identification of the most important foreign policy actors. The results are not surprising, as those who were identified as the most important actors are top politicians of the Czech Republic: the President, the former and the current Prime Ministers, and the leaders of the two strongest political parties. Their views and attitudes to the given topics are no doubt important, but nevertheless, the appearances of these five persons represent more than a quarter of all of the appearances of the actors in the analysed sample.

**Table no. 1: Priority Actors**

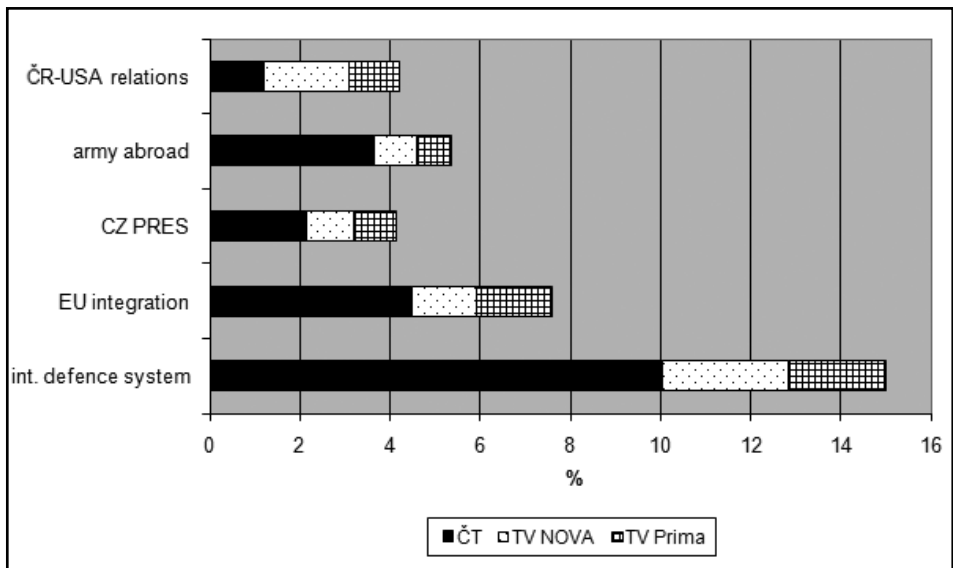
| <b>2008 (N = 3024)</b> |            |            |            |             |                |
|------------------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|----------------|
|                        | ČT         | TV Nova    | TV Prima   | total       | % of the total |
| Topolánek M.           | 160        | 68         | 68         | 296         | 9,79           |
| Klaus V.               | 91         | 42         | 40         | 173         | 5,72           |
| Paroubek J.            | 71         | 25         | 38         | 134         | 4,43           |
| Schwarzenberg K.       | 68         | 20         | 29         | 117         | 3,87           |
| Vondra A.              | 54         | 15         | 20         | 89          | 2,94           |
| <b>total</b>           | <b>444</b> | <b>170</b> | <b>195</b> | <b>809</b>  | <b>26,75</b>   |
| <b>2009 (N = 4632)</b> |            |            |            |             |                |
|                        | ČT         | TV Nova    | TV Prima   | total       | % of the total |
| Klaus V.               | 166        | 94         | 98         | 358         | 7,73           |
| Topolánek M.           | 168        | 80         | 92         | 340         | 7,34           |
| Fischer J.             | 93         | 61         | 48         | 202         | 4,36           |
| Paroubek J.            | 94         | 50         | 55         | 199         | 4,30           |
| Obama B.               | 67         | 38         | 30         | 135         | 2,91           |
| <b>total</b>           | <b>588</b> | <b>323</b> | <b>323</b> | <b>1234</b> | <b>26,64</b>   |

Thus, a situation which is typical of Czech political reporting keeps recurring – namely a strong personalization, with the appearances of relevant actors reduced to the presence of a few members of the Czech political elite. The list of the principal actors who appeared in broadcasts concerning foreign policy was limited to Czech politicians, the Prime Minister and the leaders of the two strongest political parties. For representatives of the civil society, the specialist public, foreign actors and a number of other actors, however relevant, the chance of crossing the threshold of media attention was very limited.

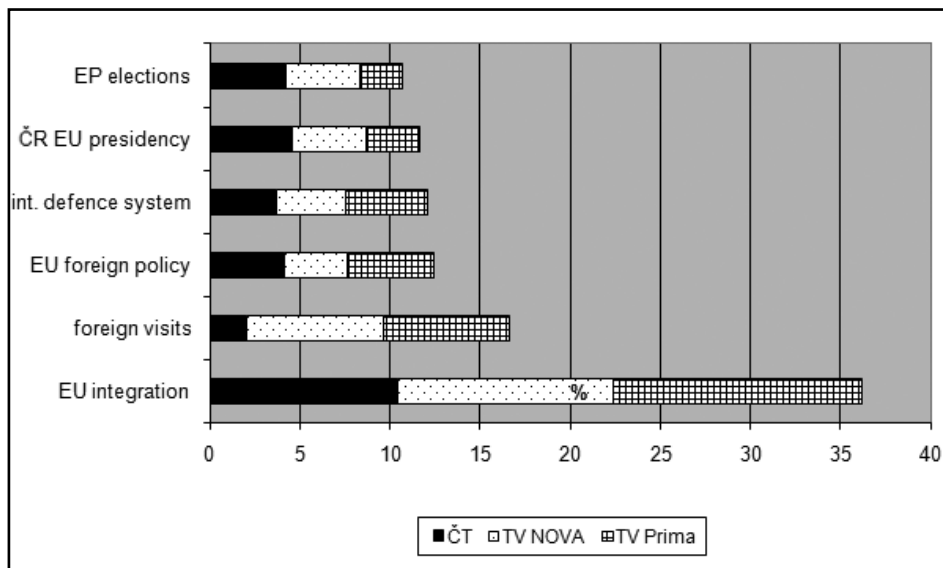
### *The Topics*

The thematic agenda of the media monitored in 2008 was not very varied (see Graph no. 1). Most contributions regarding foreign policy could be boiled down to five thematic areas: the international defence system, EU integration, preparations for the Czech EU presidency, foreign missions of the Czech army, and relations between the Czech Republic and the United States. The highest amount of attention from the media was devoted to the international defence system – mainly the project of building an American radar on Czech territory. References to this topic formed more than 30 percent of all cases covered, and at the same time the topic was the chief theme in the monitored media. In 2009 the situation was similar (see Graph no. 2).

**Graph no. 1: Dominant topics 2008 (N = 1066)**



All three of the TV channels regarded foreign policy from the same angle. There was agreement on all six of the principal topics, though the public Czech Television paid markedly higher attention to them. Over one third of all the contributions concerned topics relating to EU integration – including the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. The second most frequent topic was visits of foreign notables to the Czech Republic, which often attract media attention. The April visit of US President Barack Obama to Prague no doubt contributed a great deal to the 17 percent share of this topic in the total amount of foreign policy-related contributions. As in 2008, in 2009, a prominent topic of the media coverage was the plan to build a base of the international defence system in the Czech Republic; it was, however, overshadowed by the massive ‘European agenda’ and drew media attention mainly in the course of September and October, when the United States announced that it was dropping the project.

**Graph no. 2: Dominant topics 2009 (N = 1526)**

## CONCLUSIONS

Considering the presented results of the analyses made in 2008 and 2009, we can note that the media coverage of Czech foreign policy was markedly personalized, and access to the relevant broadcasts was granted mainly to the Czech political elite. The monitored channels produced a more or less unified stream of thematically limited information which was commented upon by a fixed spectrum of debaters.

The tendencies which we describe as typical of the media's treatment of foreign policy topics are also clearly evident in the results of the quantitative analysis of the media coverage of two major events in 2009: the September decision to abandon the plan for building a radar base in the Czech Republic and the signature of the Lisbon Treaty in November. The aim of the case study was to reveal the semantic structures in which the Czech media framed these events. We concentrated in the first place on the actors present and the discursive formations which the media created and emphasized. For each topic we included in the analysed sample relevant front-page texts and opinion columns from three Czech dailies and two Czech weeklies.<sup>8</sup> On the basis of key words,<sup>9</sup> we filtered the relevant contributions out of the contents of these media in the period of the highest media interest. The applied method of qualitative analysis proceeds from the basic principles of the established theory according to Strauss and Corbin (2000) – namely an open and axial encoding, the aim of which is, to put it simply, to identify individual phenomena in the texts, to groups them into categories, and to name the relations between these categories.

## THE DECISION TO ABANDON THE PLAN FOR BUILDING A RADAR BASE IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

A cursory glance at the contents of Czech dailies and weeklies after President Barack Obama informed the Czech Premier that the planned anti-missile shield would not be located in the Czech Republic leaves the following impression: the world is once again divided into spheres of influence of the two most powerful actors – the United States and Russia. One (the USA) has betrayed the Czech Republic and plunged it under the yoke of the other (Russia). The situation could be compared to that in which our country found itself in 1938, 1948 and 1968. A more detailed analytical look at the media contents reveals several basic trends in reporting about this event. Typical for most of them is a polarization of the actors, with ‘we’ (the first pole) meaning the Czech Republic, the Czech Republic plus Poland, or, in the broadest sense, the Czech Republic as part of Europe in its entirety, and ‘they’ (the other pole) being represented particularly by the United States and Russia, although in exceptional cases, Germany also represents this pole, and France and England sometimes represent it in a historicizing parallel. The ‘we’ versus ‘they’ dichotomy is also present at the level of the conflict between the supporters and the opponents of the radar.

### *Betrayed Europe – History Repeats Itself*

#### *The Czechs as an Aggrieved Partner*

The most prominent texts in terms of both form and content are metaphorical texts of a strong emotional tinge that express disappointment over the US decision. In these, President Obama, the personification of the United States, is described as a traitor who ‘as if it were some irksome crumb (...) swept away a project from which no small part of this country’s population expected a safer future’, thus ‘betraying precisely the hope which many Czechs, whom history had taught a bitter lesson, placed in him. (...) He turned his back upon us.’<sup>10</sup> In such texts, the Czech Republic itself is put into the position of an offended, rejected partner who will remember the betrayal for a long time to come.<sup>11</sup>

#### *The Czech Republic and Europe in Historical Parallels*

The feeling that the Czechs have been let down and abandoned is intensified in some texts by historical similes referring to the Munich trauma. Their emotionality is often further strengthened by references to popular literary texts functioning as metaphors of a deserted, betrayed country: ‘“Ding dong rings the bell of betrayal – whose hands have set it swinging? Sweet France, proud Albion – and we loved them ...” This is how, in 1938, the poet František Halas described, in his collection *Torzo naděje* (A Torso of Hope), the behaviour of Czechoslovakia’s allies, who, by signing the Munich Agreement, contributed to the extinction of interwar Czechoslovakia. Some of them still keep the spirit of Munich alive. Unfortunately, contrary to “Halas’s” year of 1938, they are joined by most of the Czech public.’<sup>12</sup> A similar impact is produced

by texts in which the ‘betrayed we’ is extended to the whole of Europe (with the exception of Russia). From their viewpoint, Obama ‘put domestic problems and a new readiness to accommodate Russia above ensuring the security of Europe and the Euro-Atlantic bond which is crucial for the freedom of the old continent’.<sup>13</sup> In the quoted text Prime Minister Topolánek evaluates the US decision as an unwelcome present for the Czechs on the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of World War II and the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the collapse of the totalitarian regime in their country. He develops the historical parallel on the basis of almost mystical calculations and suggests that the current situation is reminiscent of that in which Czechoslovakia found itself at the sunset of the First Republic.<sup>14</sup> Some texts apply the metaphor of ‘a new historical trauma’ to Poland as well, which in this concept is an expansion of ‘the betrayed “us” – Central Europe’, and according to the media, Poland is symbolically even more stricken than the Czech Republic: ‘... communicating similar news to Poland on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Russian aggression is a manifestation of bad taste. Or rather, it is proof that the history of Central Europe and our traumas regarding Russia are below the resolution level of the current American government.’<sup>15</sup>

Historical parallels are also offered by writers who perceive this event more positively and point out that this step of the United States might be ‘a hand which the West is holding out to Moscow’, as it similarly held out its hand to it at the time of ‘the détente or the lessening of tension between the West and the East’.<sup>16</sup> The most optimistic texts even regard the event as ‘a victory of the will to continue cooperating in the field of international security’ and refer to the similar situation in 1978.<sup>17</sup> In exceptional cases, some media texts directly react to the use of historical parallels and reject them either neutrally, as unsubstantiated, or, like in the instance of the following text, as needlessly calling forth real threats (even if an emotional rather than rational appeal is evident in this text too): ‘People who make comparisons with the situation in 1938 or 1968 show an absolute lack of common sense rather than a better knowledge of history. High-sounding words should be used sparingly, because declamations about the end of democracy may easily bring about the end, and they don’t even need to be three thousand words long.’<sup>18</sup>

### ***The Russian Threat – ‘the Post-radar Period’***<sup>19</sup>

The theme of the Russian threat appears in the media texts as a direct result of the United States’ decision to drop the plans for the anti-missile defence in Central Europe. Some articles (such as the above-mentioned ones) perceive this step as a road towards calming the political tension and a higher level of international security. Others emphasize, without offering more profound arguments, the power or strength of Russia and the effort of the United States (very often personified by President Obama) to ‘avoid provoking the Kremlin’.<sup>20</sup> According to some of ‘us’ (meaning the Czech Republic and Poland), ‘an ally on whom we relied has betrayed (...) and traded us for his better relations with Russia – a country which we have good reasons to fear.’ In other words, he has ‘sold the Czech Republic and Poland down the river’.<sup>21</sup>

Other texts combine the popular historical parallels with anti-Russian (and also pro-German) rhetoric and attacks against domestic political opponents:



‘We still live next-door to Germany, with Russia round the corner. These countries pursue their big-power interests, which cannot be identical with ours. The concession the Americans made to Russia yesterday therefore looks dangerous. (...) A victory of the people indeed! Will it take us as much time to recover from it as we needed for recovering from February 1948?’<sup>22</sup>

*Vis-a-vis* the rather abstract ‘Russian threat’, some writers point out that Russia will probably (or quite certainly) not endanger us militarily,<sup>22</sup> but it is getting more room for asserting its economic (and political) influence in Central Europe.<sup>23</sup> Such texts caution against economic and especially energy dependence ‘on Moscow’.<sup>24</sup> Texts which place certain hopes in further military cooperation with the United States mostly draw attention to the fact that a potential new system ‘will have a different character than the one planned so far. It will not be permanent, and thus it will not be possible to perceive it as a safeguard against Russian expansionism’.<sup>25</sup>

### ***The End of the Radar Project as a Call for the Czechs and Europeans to Grow Up***

A number of articles point out the submissive, undignified and ‘provincial’ tone of the reactions to the situation which has evolved.<sup>26</sup> They call upon us (in this context, ‘us’ represents either the Czech Republic on its own or the entire European Union) to make use of the ‘Obama lesson’ for standing on our own feet. In connection with the European Union, Stanislav Komárek uses the rather strong metaphor of ‘protectorate’: ‘Moreover, though the European Union presents itself as a state, it has neither a unified army nor a common foreign policy. A spent continent needing some sort of “protector” to be able to function at all is a depressing prospect. Where there is a protector, there is a protectorate as well.’<sup>27</sup>

The authors of such texts regard ‘stabilization of the political situation’,<sup>28</sup> closer cohesion in the frame of European cooperation and the NATO, and ‘consolidation of our constitutional and legal order’ as ‘the most reliable defence against the spreading of Russian influence’.<sup>29</sup> They emphasize the need to arrange the domestic policy affairs of the Czech Republic in such a way as to make sure that our country becomes a supportive but not a disruptive element of European integration.<sup>30</sup> Another historical reference to the form of Czech statehood – getting rid of our dependence on the ‘mighty oak’ as a metaphor of self-defence against Russian influence – thus recurs in the texts: ‘We do not need any mighty oak to coil ourselves around. We need to be an oak ourselves – at home as well as in the European concert. Perhaps the Obama lesson will help us to grasp this fact.’<sup>31</sup>

Some authors also reject the ‘black-and-white vision of the world as bi-polar, with the repulsive Russian bear on one pole and the nice American elephant on the other’, which has ‘totally captivated plenty of people’.<sup>32</sup> For them the story of the radar is thus one of ‘a debate ill managed, which has failed to remain to the point, rational and dispassionate’.<sup>33</sup> According to these commentators, because of its size and geographical situation, the Czech Republic is destined to have a ‘pragmatic view of the world. It has to know its way in it well, and to choose tools which it realistically has at its disposal; that means, in the first place, integration in the EU and NATO’,<sup>34</sup> which will make it possible for it to develop a ‘reasonable partnership with Moscow’.<sup>35</sup>

### ***The End of the Radar Project as a Road to Conciliation?***

The writers of the texts pointing out that both the advocates and the opponents of the radar (in the Czech Republic) are now faced with further challenges which should bring the two camps together see the event as a chance for conciliation at different levels. Similarly references to further cooperation appear in texts which concentrate on international relations, perceive the United States' decision as conciliatory towards Russia, and assess the first Russian reactions.<sup>37</sup> Quite optimistic is the tone of texts which inform that 'scientific cooperation of the United States with the Czech Republic' relating to the planned construction of an anti-missile defence base will continue.<sup>38</sup>

However, for many actors, the event has remained associated with further creation of barriers, whether at the personal level (the dispute between Václav Havel and Jiří Paroubek<sup>39</sup>) or the level of disagreeing national opinion groups and international power struggles, rather than with conciliation.<sup>40</sup>

## **SIGNATURE OF THE LISBON TREATY**

The political situation in which Czech President Václav Klaus kept postponing adding his signature to the Lisbon Treaty after its approval by both Chambers of the Czech Parliament was construed by the media in the form of several simple images or stories. All smack of a spirit of competition; their actors and the consequences of their acts are described emotionally, with the use of ornate metaphors. Prominent among the actors is Václav Klaus, who (depending on the chosen perspective) is depicted as an opponent of the whole of Europe, a man standing against the rest of the Czech population, a man standing against his political rivals, or, on the contrary, a statesman defending national interests – or simply as a person striving to go down to posterity. The European Union is most often described as the embodiment of the only 'living' entity (Europe or Brussels), but on other occasions it is described as composed of individual countries, their representatives, or their sum total ('the head of the Union'<sup>41</sup>). The authors of some more analytical texts try to help the readers find their bearings in the problems of the commitments or advantages ensuing from the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty. Yet the overall impression created by the coverage of the event corresponds to a large extent with the view of one of the writers, who regards the whole European project as a matter of faith rather than convictions based on facts and arguments.<sup>42</sup> The authors of the media texts mostly view the Lisbon Treaty from a critical perspective, coming to the conclusion that Václav Klaus in fact cannot betray his own convictions or the convictions of a handful of individuals, the whole nation/country, or the whole of Europe, regardless of whether he signs the Treaty or not.

### ***A System Error***

The topic of the Lisbon Treaty in articles of general character became the starting point for criticism of the system – whether the all-European one or the constitutional system of the Czech Republic. At European level, the critics point to the fact that a country the size of the Czech Republic essentially does not have an alternative to

membership of the European Union and participation in the ‘main stream of integration’, and that the whole European project is based on the ‘faith of romantics’<sup>43</sup> rather than on arguments. Martin Komárek sees a weakness of the EU system in its excessively democratic nature and its efforts to reach a compromise. He describes Václav Klaus as a ‘capricious man’ who ‘could undermine the most successful international project in the history of mankind’.<sup>44</sup> But in a text of a later date, Komárek appreciates the ‘viability and strength’ of the European Union, which, thanks to a minor concession made by Václav Klaus, who ‘has negotiated a trivality’, will gain much more in the long run: ‘Because it is the twenty six [EU members] that have won. True enough, it sat up and begged when the tamer with a moustache cracked a whip, but it will gain much more in return for the small embarrassment.’<sup>45</sup>

### ***Václav Klaus vs. the Czech Republic***

Many texts criticize Václav Klaus for his long term efforts to misuse his role as President of the Czech Republic, or for his avoidance of the execution of some duties arising from the Presidential office,<sup>46</sup> and put Václav Klaus on one side against the government and the Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic on the other. Some texts call upon the Government to ‘confront the President’<sup>47</sup> because further concessions only ‘strengthen his feeling that he is an absolute monarch’.<sup>48</sup> Others note that the government is in an uncertain or nervous position in relation to Václav Klaus<sup>49</sup> or describe the tension between the President and judges of the Constitutional Court<sup>50</sup>, and in the headlines they use the word ‘struggle’. Some authors again assess the situation from the viewpoint of the overall political atmosphere in the country, arriving at the conclusion that the Czech Republic lacks the political culture of Euro-American civilization, which could ‘plunge it (...) not only into its pre-November [1989] status but also into a world where the rules of the jungle are still applied in one way or another’.<sup>51</sup>

### ***Václav Klaus vs. Václav Havel and Presidential Comparisons***

A number of texts view the topic as an intensification of the latent (or not publicly manifested) dispute between Václav Klaus and Václav Havel, as the last drop which has caused the situation in which ‘Havel will not keep silent’ and will express his concern about the steps taken by the current President: ‘No wonder that the ex-President who brought the Republic into NATO and to the gates of the European Union perceives Klaus’s jockeying as jeopardizing the most substantial achievements of his foreign policy.’<sup>52</sup> They stress Havel’s pro-European attitude,<sup>53</sup> and many compare the attitudes of the Presidents from the viewpoint of personal honour – a readiness to resign their posts or, on the contrary, keep them despite any disapproval of the steps that, as the heads of state, they were forced to accept. Havel’s abdication after the split-up of Czechoslovakia, of which he disapproved, is given as a positive example, while the ‘manliness’ of Václav Klaus, who stayed in office despite his disapproval of the Lisbon Treaty, is challenged: ‘A real man in his place would say “Sorry, gentlemen, I will never sign it” and resign. Instead he started playing some sort of tawdry game with Europe and the Czech Republic, pulling a fast one on them. (...) It is good that the Castle has not sunk the Lisbon Treaty – but what can one think about the Castle

lord? That he has not resigned only in order to enjoy his presidency for another three-and-a-half years?’<sup>55</sup> Another Czech President with whom Václav Klaus is compared is Edvard Beneš, in whose footsteps Klaus in a way follows, according to Jan Štětka, as concerns the solving of diplomatic situations and the reactions to them.<sup>56</sup>

### ***Klaus the Blackmailer, Divider and Germ Carrier***

Most of the texts on the topic can be categorized without much exaggeration on the basis of the umbrella label assigned by the authors to Václav Klaus, whether explicitly or implicitly. Klaus is thus described as a ‘parlour blackmailer’ who ‘blackmails the European Union and has virtually taken an overwhelming majority of the country’s adult population hostage’ – those who ‘want to live in the West, not under Putin’, who ‘believe in normal prosperity and decency, not in backwater patriotism’.<sup>57</sup> The quoted article indirectly compares Klaus to terrorists because ‘in order to achieve his aim, he will do anything’.<sup>58</sup> Other writers concentrate on the disintegrating aspect of Klaus’s activities: ‘“We” ve had the President as the Liberator and the President as the Architect, so why not the President as the Divider?’<sup>59</sup> The motif of division also recurs in articles which metaphorically compare ‘Klaus’s influence’ to that of a naughty pupil who ‘draws the model one (Slovakia) over to his side’,<sup>60</sup> or to a ‘germ carrier’ spreading the ‘germ of Beneš’s decrees’,<sup>61</sup> which can cause epidemics.

### ***Klaus the Populist and Spotlit Dancer***

A clearly egoistic dimension is ascribed to the behaviour of Václav Klaus regarding the signature of the Lisbon Treaty by writers who see it as an effort to draw attention to his person and presidency by demanding an unnecessary exception.<sup>62</sup> Some suggest, or explicitly note, that for this purpose Klaus is ready to do almost anything, ‘even cause outrage and revulsion’,<sup>63</sup> use the populist argument of claims raised by Sudeten Germans,<sup>64</sup> ally himself with the Communists and the Social Democrats of Jiří Paroubek, or let himself be burnt at the stake: ‘It seems that for such a memorial of his so far unimpressive performance as President, Klaus would not only ally himself with the Communists and Jiří Paroubek, but even let himself be burnt at Constance.’<sup>65</sup>

### ***The Czech Inferiority Complex, the Aggressive Impotence of the Czech Standpoint, and the Consequences***

The standpoints of the authors play a prominent role in texts which speculate about what might happen after the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty or its rejection by the Czech side. Those who are unsympathetic to the European Union often militantly warn against damage to the interests of the Czech Republic and call for ‘resisting the undemocratic pressure’ on the part of the European Union, which in essence shifts power to itself through the Lisbon Treaty.<sup>66</sup> A variant of this standpoint opts for a historicizing reference to 1938: ‘If the Lisbon Treaty comes into effect, it will not establish a European paradise but trigger off a tough struggle for positions. The question is what stand will be taken by those who unreservedly supported its adoption. It might well happen that once again we will blame others for our misfortunes and poets will again write about the “ringing bell of betrayal”.’<sup>67</sup> Other authors draw atten-

tion to threats emerging from a rejection of European integration, by means of similarly powerful references ironically warn against the construction of a new curtain ‘which will protect us from incursions of Sudeten Germans’ and warn of a ‘Presidential dictatorship’ of Václav Klaus and Jiří Paroubek or a dismantling of the Czech economy by the Russians.<sup>68</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In the introduction, we assume three characteristics typical of the media coverage of Czech foreign policy: personalization, emotionalization and thematic convergence. Then we seek to support our assumptions, using the examples of four researches. On this basis we can note that both quantitative and qualitative analyses proved that the coverage of political events in the media is highly personified, which means that it is viewed through the prism of personal or political interests of Czech political elites and their mutual disputes. As concerns the diversity of the actors present and topics covered, the Czech media produced a considerably reduced and more or less unified stream of news commented upon by a relatively limited spectrum of debaters, mainly Czech politicians. For non-political, non-governmental and international actors, access to the debate was considerably limited.

The results of the qualitative analysis of the media reporting on two foreign policy events in 2009 point to tendencies of the printed media to present major political events as power conflicts between individuals or groups, rather than negotiations on public affairs supported by arguments, to a large extent personalizing the political events, i.e. viewing them through the prism of personal or political interests of Czech political elites and their mutual contentions, which are often depicted as explicitly personal, irrational and irrelevant. The media texts suggest a bi-polar division of the world (or at least Europe) into the spheres of influence of the USA and Russia, reminiscent of the Cold War period, and without a factual anchoring refer to a number of historical traumas of the country or the region, which they use as a warning against potentially undemocratic political developments in the Czech Republic. In practice, Habermas’s classical tradition, which promotes rational discussion as a desirable form of public debate, is thus replaced with the generally criticized persuasion through the agency of emotional appeal, which, however, some theoretical traditions regard as a less restrictive form of public discourse.

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> For instance, see Livingstone, S. (2008): *On the mediation of everything*. On-line: ([www.icaheadq.org/conferences/presaddress.asp#\\_ftn1](http://www.icaheadq.org/conferences/presaddress.asp#_ftn1)).
- <sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Bryant, J.–Zillmann, D. (2002): *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research*. London: Routledge; Miller, D. (2007): *Media Pressure on Foreign Policy: The Evolving Theoretical Framework*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

- <sup>3</sup> See Crossley, N.–Roberts, J. M. (2004): *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- <sup>4</sup> See, for example, Tuchmann, G. (1978): *Making news: a study in the construction of reality*. London: Free Press.
- <sup>5</sup> For more information, see, e.g., Berger, P. L.–Luckmann, T. (1999): *Sociální konstrukce reality*. Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury; Reifová, I. (2004): *Slovník mediální komunikace*. Praha: Portál.
- <sup>6</sup> See, e.g., McCombs, M. E.–Shaw, D. L. (1972): *The agenda-setting function of the mass media*. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36, pp. 176–187; Nečas, V. (2006): *Agenda-setting: teoretická východiska*. In: Kunštát, D. (ed): *České veřejné mínění : výzkum a teoretické souvislosti*. Praha: Sociologický ústav AV ČR; Noelle-Neumann, E. (1993): *The Spiral of Silence*. Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press.
- <sup>7</sup> Vreese, C.H. de (2005): *Framing Europe*. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis.
- <sup>8</sup> The dailies were *Mladá fronta DNES*, *Hospodářské noviny*, and *Právo*. The weeklies were *Ekonom* and *Respekt*.
- <sup>9</sup> 1) Radar base – key word: radar; 2) Lisbon Treaty – key word: Lisbon Treaty.
- <sup>10</sup> *Obrátit se k vám zády? To nikdy, sliboval*. *Mladá fronta DNES*, 18. 9. 2009.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>12</sup> *Obamovo mnichovanství a 'vítězství' českého lidu*. *Mladá fronta DNES*, 18. 9. 2009.
- <sup>13</sup> *Nenechme USA obrátit se zády*. *Hospodářské noviny*, 18. 9. 2009.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>15</sup> *Jak nám uplavala možnost žít v bezpečí*. *Mladá fronta DNES*, 19. 9. 2009.
- <sup>16</sup> Hanák, Jiří: *Hloupé a nedůstojné*. *Právo*, 22. 9. 2009.
- <sup>17</sup> 'In this respect the situation resembles that at the end of 1987, when Reagan and Gorbachov signed the memorable treaty on withdrawing medium-range missiles from Europe. Some columnists then also affirmed that it was a success scored by Moscow at the expense of Washington. In the end it appeared that it greatly benefited the lessening of international tension.' (*Kdo tedy vyhrál and kdo prohrál*, *Právo*, 18. 9. 2009.)
- <sup>18</sup> Tabery, Erik: *Příliš drahé jádro*. *Respekt*, 29. 9. 2009. Editorial, p. 3.
- <sup>19</sup> 'Relinquishing the project of building an American radar in Brdy [a region of Central Bohemia] may stimulate further invasion of Russian capital into the Czech Republic. (...) Many see it as a political breaking point. A "post-radar" period is starting.' (*Plíživý návrat před rok 1989*. *Ekonom*, 24. 9. 2009. Politics and business, p. 32.)
- <sup>20</sup> 'Because Obama's priority is to "reset" the relations with Moscow. Therefore he will not do anything by which he might provoke the Kremlin, and the anti-missile defence of Central Europe – which Russia is once again beginning to appropriate as its sphere of influence – was very provocative. (...) Realistically we have to admit that the current American administration will in all likelihood exchange its above-standard relations with its small allies in Central Europe for peace and cooperation with Moscow.' (*Mezi radarem a Moskvou*. *Hospodářské noviny*, 18. 9. 2009.)
- <sup>21</sup> *44 slov*. *Hospodářské noviny*, 18. 9. 2009.
- <sup>22</sup> *Obamovo mnichovanství a 'vítězství' českého lidu*. *Mladá fronta DNES*, 18. 9. 2009.
- <sup>22</sup> *Házená*. *Právo*, 18. 9. 2009.
- <sup>23</sup> 'Thanks to our NATO and European Union memberships, the danger is not of a military nature. But it lies in the economic and political influence of Russia, our energy dependence on it, and the penetration of organized crime into politics.' (*Zrada, nebo výzva k dospělosti?* *Hospodářské noviny*, 29. 9. 2009.)
- <sup>24</sup> *Mezi radarem a Moskvou*. *Hospodářské noviny*, 18. 9. 2009.
- <sup>25</sup> *USA chlácholí znepokojené Čechy*. 19. 9. 2009.
- <sup>26</sup> *Hloupé a nedůstojné*. *Právo*, 22. 9. 2009.
- <sup>27</sup> *Zlomené dvacetiletí*. *Hospodářské noviny*, 23. 9. 2009.
- <sup>28</sup> *Jak dál po konci brdského radaru*. *Hospodářské noviny*, 22. 9. 2009.
- <sup>29</sup> *Zrada, nebo výzva k dospělosti?* *Hospodářské noviny*, 29. 9. 2009.

- <sup>30</sup> *Americká lekce naivním Čechům*. Právo, 22. 9. 2009.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>32</sup> *Rekvie za radar*. Právo, 18. 9. 2009.
- <sup>33</sup> *Sebrali nám radar*. Právo, 18. 9. 2009.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>35</sup> *Žádná prohra – jen nová výzva pro Čechy a Poláky*. Právo, 20. 9. 2009.
- <sup>37</sup> *Rusko zrušilo odvetné rakety u Kaliningradu*. Právo, 19. 9. 2009.
- <sup>38</sup> *Obama zrušil radar*. Hospodářské noviny, 18. 9. 2009.
- <sup>39</sup> *Havel napsal Paroubkovi*. Právo, 19. 9. 2009.
- <sup>40</sup> *Jak dál po konci brdského radaru*. Hospodářské noviny, 22. 9. 2009.
- <sup>41</sup> *Klaus vyhrál, Evropa (asi) také*. Mladá fronta DNES, 31. 10. 2009.
- <sup>42</sup> *Lisabonská bitva romantiků*. Hospodářské noviny, 4. 11. 2009.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>44</sup> *Husité to nedokázali. Porazí Evropu Klaus?* Mladá fronta DNES, 14. 10. 2009.
- <sup>45</sup> *Klaus vyhrál. Evropa (asi) také*. Mladá fronta DNES, 31. 10. 2009.
- <sup>46</sup> Švehla, Marek: *Co s ní*. Respekt, 19. 10. 2009. Commentaries, p. 12.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>49</sup> ‘“Nervousness prevails not because of the additional condition, but because of the uncertainty about whether that condition is the last one.” That was how Czech Prime Minister Fischer summed up the mood in the EU. The President did not comment on it.’ (*Vláda nevěří Klausovi, chce záruky*. Hospodářské noviny, 13. 10. 2009.)
- <sup>50</sup> *Boj ale pokračuje!* Hospodářské noviny, 4. 11. 2009.
- <sup>51</sup> *Duchů, jež jsi zplodil...* Právo, 27. 10. 2009.
- <sup>52</sup> Leschtina, Jiří: *Havlova palba na Hrad*. Hospodářské noviny, 16. 10. 2009.
- <sup>53</sup> Kubita, Jan: *Havel proti Klausovi*. Hospodářské noviny, 12. 11. 2009.
- <sup>55</sup> Hanák, Jiří: *Drek a med*. Právo, 6. 11. 2009.
- <sup>56</sup> ‘It is Europe’s back luck that Klaus (...) has never worried himself about his fair, diplomatic rivals. (...) It was only a policy of brute force that ever drove him into a corner in the past. In this respect too, Klaus follows in the footsteps of Beneš, who, in the 1930s, felt like a pike in a paddling pool among the Geneva diplomats until his heroism was undermined in 1948 by the gloomy, uncouth militiamen in the streets of Prague.’ (Štětka, Jan: *Klaus z Poděbrad*. Ekonom, 15. 10. 2009. Politics and business, p. 36.)
- <sup>57</sup> Komárek, Martin: ‘... behaves like a parlour blackmailer.’ Mladá fronta DNES, 13. 10. 2009.
- <sup>58</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>59</sup> *Jestli vůbec jde o Lisabonskou smlouvu*. Mladá fronta DNES, 29. 10. 2009.
- <sup>60</sup> *Zlobivé Česko strhlo proti EU i dosud vzorné vzorné Slováky*. Mladá fronta DNES, 19. 10. 2009.
- <sup>61</sup> *Bacilonosič Klaus*. Hospodářské noviny, 2. 11. 2009.
- <sup>62</sup> *Klausova výjimka nic neřeší*. Hospodářské noviny, 2. 11. 2009.
- <sup>63</sup> Kratochvíl, Jiří: *Tanečník*. Respekt, 2. 11. 2009, p. 65.
- <sup>64</sup> Štětka, Jan: *Klaus z Poděbrad*, op. cit.
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>66</sup> *Lisabon poškodí Česko*. Mladá fronta DNES, 20. 10. 2009.
- <sup>67</sup> *Lisabon a ‘sudetoněmecké’ téma*. Právo, 26. 10. 2009. [The ‘ringing bell of betrayal’ is evidently a reference to Halas’s poem ‘Song of Anxiety’ in the collection Torso of Hope, in which the author reacts to the signature of the Munich Agreement.]
- <sup>68</sup> Macháček, Jan: *Varianta Rusko soft*. Respekt, 19. 10. 2009. Economy, p. 34.







**PART II:  
The European  
and Security Dimensions  
of the Czech Foreign Policy  
in 2007–2009**



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## Chapter 3

# The European Dimension of the Czech Foreign Policy

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During the years 2007–2009 the European integration process has had a big impact on the political agenda of the Czech Republic. The Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2009 provided the country with an administrative challenge as well as an opportunity to make the country visible within the EU. The presidency had an impact on the way European policy is handled within the Czech administration and was also a topic that attracted public interest to European affairs. The preparations for the presidency led to an upgrading of the work of the Committee for the EU, which is the body under the Czech government that set the long term priorities for the Czech work within the EU even if the Czech Republic has not presented a new strategic document concerning the long term orientation of the Czech Republic within the EU since 2004, when such a document was accepted by the then Social Democrat led coalition government. The governments in office have regularly presented their long-term positions on various fields of the integration process – i.e. the Europe 2020 strategy, EU budget reform, reforms of the common agricultural policy, etc. The increased importance of the European agenda can also be seen on the ever more frequent meetings of the Committee for the EU – a trend that was maintained even after the end of the presidency.

The Lisbon Treaty (LT) was the second big issue that dominated both the political and the public debate on the EU as well as the actual agenda during the period (the presidency being the first). Both the presidency and the LT were issues in the political divide on the EU within the Czech Republic. Traditionally, there is a more pro-European camp consisting of the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD), the Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL) and the Greens (SZ), and a more euro-sceptic camp consisting of the Civic Democrats (ODS) and the Communist Party (KSČM). Gradually, however, and primarily as a consequence of the ODS becoming more pragmatic, this clear division has become blurred. The political dispute over Lisbon complicated the ratification process of the treaty and also had some impact on the overall reputation of the Czech presidency. Even if the actual outcomes of the presidency were rather positive in many respects – the Eastern Partnership, the way the presidency solved the gas crisis and the legal guarantees for Ireland – it will probably be remembered mainly

for speculations about the impact of Czech euro-scepticism and the media turmoil after the fall of the government in the middle of the presidency.

## **THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT**

The ideological bases of the political parties clearly affect their positions on European integration. In the following we will first look at how Czech politicians have discussed the future direction of the EU during the last three years and thereafter we will turn to how they view the future of the Czech Republic within the Union.

### ***The Future of the EU***

The discussion on the future of the European Union during the period mainly focused on the Lisbon Treaty. This debate consists of three parts: 1) visions about the future institutional organisation of the EU, 2) views on what should be the main tasks of the EU in Europe and 3) visions about the EU in the world.

As we already mentioned above and as various studies testify, Czech political elites remain divided in their positions towards political integration. On one side we have small centrist parties like the Christian Democrats and the Greens, who strongly favour the deepening of the integration and support the institutional reform (a more powerful European Parliament, qualified majority voting in the Council, etc.). The Social Democrats support the deepening of European integration and the institutional reform streamlining the decision-making process. They strongly advocated the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. But even if the ČSSD party programme<sup>2</sup> includes parts which could be described as ‘federalist’, the party is not too visionary about the future of the EU, and its positive view on institutional reforms can be credited to a successful Europeanisation of the party (within the Party of European Socialists). The party has a rather EU-reluctant electorate which puts limits on how far the party can agree with a deepening of the European integration project. Both the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats refer to the EU as a solution to problems caused by globalisation in their party programmes – especially in regard to the European welfare states.

On the other side of the spectrum are the Civic Democrats, who opposed the deepening of European integration and most of the institutional innovations introduced by the Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe (TCE). They link the EU with a superficial intervention into the market and simultaneously with an unwanted intervention of a supranational authority into the national domain. They reject any strengthening of the European Parliament and they are also negative to increased use of qualified majority voting in the Council of the EU. Nevertheless, their electorate traditionally supports European integration, including the institutional reforms with pragmatic reasons. Even though the party continues to prefer the intergovernmental model of the EU, in 2009 we have witnessed a pragmatic adjustment in the official position of the party which supported the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. The party openly clashed with its founder Václav Klaus, who remains faithful to his ideological conviction that

the institutional reforms are heading in an absolutely wrong direction for both the EU and the Czech Republic.<sup>3</sup> The Communists provide for an alternative understanding of the EU as a neo-liberal project, and for that reason the party was the only one to reject EU membership in accordance with the 2004 membership conditions. Since then, however, the Communists also came to accept the Czech EU membership but they were, for instance, still against the Lisbon Treaty.

During 2009 a number of smaller political subjects were also newly created. A few of them primarily devoted their attention to European issues and aimed at gaining seats in the European Parliament after the elections in 2009. Some of these subjects were eurosceptical, such as the Free Citizens' Party, Liberstas.cz and Sovereignty, or pro-European like the European Democratic Party. These parties, however, have so far had a rather limited influence on the broader debate on the Czech Republic in the EU. For the future other almost new political subjects might be of greater relevance, such as TOP 09 and the Public Affairs, even if they are parties that are not primarily oriented towards European policies.

If we turn to the second dimension and the question of what should be the EU's primary tasks, we find the following differences in broad terms. Whereas ODS emphasise their support for the idea of a single European market and the four freedoms of movement, the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats describe the EU in terms of a possible way to protect the social welfare state from the pressures of economic globalisation. A fraction of the Communists would also accept the EU as a potential instrument to protect the country from the negative consequences of globalisation, but the mainstream view in the party is rather that the EU as it looks today is rather a part of the problem than of the solution.

Only regarding the third dimension we find something close to a consensus among the Czech political elite. Especially regarding the issue of future enlargement of the EU, all Czech political parties are in principle positive to such a process. The Christian Democrats are an exception in the sense that they reject a potential enlargement to Turkey, which the other parties accept.<sup>4</sup> Also if we look at the more general role of the EU in the world, there is a near consensus on the need of a strong EU – for instance, in negotiations with Russia (especially regarding the question of energy security). In the yearbook on Czech foreign policy in 2007 a distinction was made between Atlanticism, Europeanism (continentalism), internationalism, and autonomism.<sup>5</sup> These categories show that the Atlanticists, primarily the ODS, stress the importance of NATO and are sceptical to the EU as an alternative to this alliance. The Europeanists, the Social Democrats, emphasise the EU as the most important organisation, even if they would not be NATO-critics by any means. The internationalists, represented by the Christian Democrats and the Greens, are clear supporters of both organisations. Finally, the autonomists (the Communists) are anti-NATO and eurosceptic.<sup>6</sup>

### ***The Integration of the Czech Republic in the EU***

There are at least two competing understandings of what should be the role of the Czech Republic in the EU on the more general level. The crucial question seems to be whether the Czech Republic should at all times protect its formal decision making

power or whether the reduction of its own voting weight can be in the national interest of the country. To a large degree this division corresponds with the general support for a more intergovernmental or supranational EU, as discussed above, but with one difference. At this level it is not crucial what visions of the EU the different actors have, but whether it is acceptable or not that the Czech Republic can be outvoted by the other members of the EU. Quotations such as the following were quite common in the debate on the Lisbon Treaty: ‘...it will not take long before we will be outvoted in a regular and democratic way based on the LT and in the name of the European interest.’<sup>77</sup> This quotation indicates that opponents of the LT doubt the possibility of a European interest, which is linked to the traditional ODS view of the EU as a tilt-yard of interests<sup>8</sup> with the dominant characteristic of all the EU member states being primarily concerned with protecting their own interests. For this reason the Civic Democrats prefer to speak of their view on the EU as ‘eurorealist’ which they view as a part of a ‘realist’ concern for the promotion of the Czech national interest. This is where the ODS draws the conclusion that it is always necessary to seek to maximise the Czech Republic’s own national sovereignty and voting powers. At the same time, they promote their program as the only ‘realistic’ solution to Europe’s problems. The ODS fits into the definition of *euro scepticism* provided by Kopecký and Mudde. The ODS is no complete *Euroreject* party, instead, they ‘support the general ideas of European integration, but are pessimistic about the EU’s current and/or future reflection of these ideas’.<sup>9</sup>

Other parties might agree or disagree with the general description of the EU but they are more optimistic of the possibility of EU institutions serving all European interests and thus also the Czech interest. Thus, on the general level we have a conflict between those that believe that the Czech government should also in a narrow sense protect the Czech influence and those who believe in the possibility of realising Czech interests through the EU.

The most radical interpretation of the Lisbon Treaty’s impact on the Czech Republic was the view of President Klaus that the treaty means the end of the country as a sovereign state.<sup>10</sup> Klaus also initiated the so-called Czech opt-out from the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The discussions on the Charter showed the potential of the question of German property claims for the Czech EU debate. Even if most legal experts were clear on the point that the Charter never could affect the validity of the Beneš decrees and thus open up the way for German property claims in the Czech Republic, this turned out to be an issue where rather few Czech politicians were willing to challenge the President. Even if most of the political parties were of the opinion that the treaty would not affect the decrees, they still found it necessary to support a declaration of the parliament stating that the Charter can not be used for challenging property conditions caused by the Beneš decrees.<sup>11</sup> This issue shows that the relations to Germany and the Czech Republic’s past remain a crucial component for the debate on the country’s integration into the EU.

In general the discussion on the Czech integration policy had the character of disputes on whether the government, in particular during the time of the three coalition cabinet led by the ODS, is marginalising the country within the EU due to the euro-

sceptic faction of the ODS and the failure to ratify the Lisbon Treaty. The Social Democratic opposition presented alternative priorities prior to the presidency, in which the ratification of the LT and the social dimension of the integration project were mentioned as well.<sup>12</sup> In the aftermath of the fall of the government during the presidency, both sides criticised each other for marginalising the Czech influence in the EU.

It should also be mentioned that EU related topics receive rather little attention in the Czech political debate. In the parliament if we exclude the work in the committees on European affairs in the Senate and the in the Chamber of Deputies there is very little debate on these issues. In plenum European issues are discussed rather rarely. And when they are, for instance in relation to the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, the discussion gives the impression of being partly uninformed and a lot of space is devoted to accusations between governing and opposition parties regarding who is to be blamed for delayed voting etc. In general European affairs are viewed as secondary to domestic politics. A clear proof of this was how the Chamber of Deputies voted the government out of office in the middle of the Czech presidency in 2009.

## **THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: AGENDA AND EVENTS**

### ***Institutional reforms and the protracted Lisbon Treaty ratification***

The reform process, which took the rejected Constitutional Treaty as a base for negotiations, intensified during the German presidency in the first half of 2007. The Czech government adopted an official position towards the institutional reforms on 25 April 2007,<sup>13</sup> anticipating tough negotiations. Even though the then government of Mirek Topolánek was no keen advocate of the reform process, it (for pragmatic reasons) wanted the whole debate to be over so that the EU could focus on substantive issues, including the enlargement agenda.<sup>14</sup>

The government was very sensitive to the possible weakening of voting power of the Czech Republic within the Council. Thus, it advocated ‘the balance between the principle of the equal representation of citizens and the principle of equal representation of states’.<sup>15</sup> The government promoted the transparency of the decision-making processes and more intensive involvement of national parliaments. The government strongly opposed the state-like symbolic dimension of the institutional reform (such as the terms ‘minister of foreign affairs’ and ‘constitution’). Secondly, the government rejected the stand-alone Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU and proposed that the EU sign the European Convention on Human Rights. The Czech government proposed an innovation: the so-called ‘two-way flexibility’ allowing not only shifts of competences from the national to the European level, but also the return of certain competences back to the national level.

The reform process culminated in the adoption of the LT, which was negotiated during an Intergovernmental Conference that commenced on 23 July 2007. The treaty was signed on 13 December 2007 in Lisbon. In line with the initial Czech position, the treaty refrained from the state-like symbolism. The ‘two-way flexibility’ became

the key political demand of the Czech delegation. The provision eventually made it into the text, but in a watered down version (in this version, the mechanism is non-obligatory).

The ratification of the LT dominated the agenda for the next two years and the issue significantly affected both the internal politics of the Czech Republic and its image in Europe. Paradoxically, the discussion about the LT intensified only after the government led by Mirek Topolánek signed the final text of the treaty in December 2007. The situation eventually led to the renegotiation of the terms under which the Czech Republic accessed the treaty.

In 2008, the ratification of the LT was the centerpiece of the Czech discussion about European integration. Prime Minister Topolánek only very reluctantly backed the treaty, balancing between pressure from the pro-European opposition (ČSSD) and the coalition partners (KDU-ČSL and the Greens) on one side and the eurosceptical dissidents within his own party (loyal to President Klaus) on the other. The parliamentary debate began in March 2008. Shortly after that, the Senate referred the treaty to the Constitutional Court. The court was asked to review the constitutionality of six specific points of the EU's reform treaty (see below).

The Senate decision immediately attracted EU-wide attention and sparked a domestic debate about the consequences of the step for the Czech Republic (not least for the upcoming Czech presidency).<sup>16</sup> The Czech debate about the fate of the LT became even more heated after the negative Irish referendum (13. 6. 2008). Pro-European politicians described the referendum as a negative step threatening further development of the EU. On the other side, President Klaus expressed his gratitude and argued that 'Europe should thank the Irish people for slowing down the current erroneous processes towards more unification'. The government as a whole did not call for the suspension of the ratification process in the Czech Republic.

On 26 November 2008 the Constitutional Court ruled that the reviewed provisions of the LT are consistent with the constitutional order of the Czech Republic.<sup>17</sup> The treaty was not ratified after the ruling and the parliamentary debate was postponed until February 2009. Nevertheless, the positive ruling of the Constitutional Court in the end convinced and silenced some of the eurosceptics in the Senate and paved the way for the approval of the treaty.

In February 2009 the parliamentary debate resumed with a new compromise proposal on the table: the so-called 'binding mandate'. The binding mandate prevents the Czech government from approving any transfer of powers to the EU without the parliament's agreement (see the section dedicated to actors). The political agreement on the 'binding mandate' cleared the way for the approval of the treaty in both houses of the Parliament. The Chamber of Deputies approved the treaty on 18 February 2009 and the Senate added its stamp in a closely observed vote on 6 May 2009.

In the second half of 2009 the ratification process has been delayed due to a second submission to the Constitutional Court by a group of 17 senators, which was quickly dismissed by it. On the other side, the determined opposition of President Klaus posed a more serious challenge. President Klaus delayed his decision on the LT and eventually requested the Czech opt-out from the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU.



After achieving this goal and after the Constitutional Court's rejection of the senators' complaint, President Klaus ratified the Lisbon Treaty.

To sum up, the ratification of the LT was (together with the Czech presidency of the Council) a key item on Czech Republic's European agenda. The debate surrounding the process exposed the basic assumptions and ideological preferences of the political parties and individual politicians in regard to European integration (see the corresponding section of this chapter). During the observed period, the Czech debate about European institutions shifted from substantial issues (Czech Republic's position within the EU and the EU's institutional setup) towards fundamental disputes about the interpretation of the Constitution and the roles of individual institutions in the foreign policy decision-making process. While the compromising proposal for the 'binding mandate' moderately strengthened the Parliament and clarified its relationship with the executive,<sup>18</sup> the row over the ratification and the inaction of the President sparked a constitutional tug-of-war between individual institutions. The ratification process in the Czech Republic received wide coverage by the European media and probably influenced the long-term image of the Czech Republic within the EU.

### *The Czech EU Presidency – a General Perspective*

For the whole three year period the Czech political scene and the administrative apparatus were busy preparing and executing the Czech EU presidency. The preparations started as early as late 2006, when the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was headed by A. Vondra, the future Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs. In the anticipation of the presidency, the position of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs was established, and it was endowed with the coordination task not only during the planning phase but also in the course of the Presidency term itself.

During the preparatory phase, most of the time and energy was concentrated on the formulation of Czech priorities for the presidency and training for the staff in the various ministries and country representations. The first tentative document outlining the political priorities of the Czech government was approved by the government on 28 February 2007. The document testifies that even though the government had been dominated by the eurosceptical ODS, it approached the challenge with great enthusiasm and ambitions. The government was aware that the management of the presidency would affect the image of the state for many years to come and planned to act as a critical but constructive and reliable partner. The presidency was seen as a unique opportunity to shape EU policies and 'leave a national footprint' in the EU.<sup>19</sup> The government decided to combine Czech national interests with EU's goals and formulate 'ambitious but feasible' program priorities.

The government chose a motto for the Presidency ('Europe without Barriers') overarching a set of (initially six) general priorities. The motto and the overall direction of the proposal clearly reflected the ideological background of the centre-right government. While the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs retained a coordinating role, the sectoral ministries (the administrative apparatus of the state) played the key role in further elaboration of the priorities. Some feedback has also been received from the academia and NGOs.

The year 2007 saw a lengthy process of repetitive amendments and selections culminating in the formulation of the ‘one plus four’ priority areas. The key priority ‘Europe competitive and open’ was supplemented by the priorities in energy policy; budget reform; external relations; and internal affairs and justice.<sup>20</sup> Those priority areas (accepted in October 2007) served as a basis for the negotiations with France and Sweden about a common 18-month program. During 2008 the political priorities were further reduced and reformulated into what has become known as ‘the three Es’: Economy, Energy and European Union in the world.<sup>21</sup> The administrative apparatus (diplomats and bureaucrats) produced a detailed but equally ambitious working programme (‘sectoral priorities’) of the Presidency.

In late 2008 the government held political talks with the main opposition party (ČSSD) about a possible ‘ceasefire’ during the presidency but these negotiations reached a dead end – the opposition felt left out from the formulation of political priorities, and key political partners (ODS and ČSSD) accused each other of not being interested in the conciliatory agreement. This failure had serious consequences during the presidency itself.

The presidency started amid fears among the European politicians and media of the small and supposedly eurosceptical Czech Republic’s lack of willingness and ability to fulfil all the duties of the presidency at the time of the gathering financial crisis and other challenges.<sup>22</sup> Right at the beginning, the Czech government faced three serious crises (‘three Gs’: Gas, Gaza and the Global financial and economy crisis) and was forced to modify her initial priorities (for the assessment of individual program priorities see the following sections in this chapter).

On one side, the Czech Republic was able to deliver important substantive contributions in some of the policy areas. In line with the Central European tradition, the Czech Republic disposed of a capable administrative and diplomatic apparatus, and the organisational and logistic aspects of the presidency were appreciated.<sup>23</sup> In most policy areas, the expertise and the effective management of the agenda by Czech bureaucrats and diplomats have been assessed positively.<sup>24</sup>

On the other side, Czech political elites (as a whole) received a scathing assessment. Before the start of the presidency, the attention focused on President Klaus as a symbol of radical euroscepticism.<sup>25</sup> In the first half of the term, the innovative and active style of the Czech political leadership (such as the shuttle diplomacy during the gas crisis – see below) has been welcomed. But on other occasions, the activism and courage of Czech political representatives transmuted into gaffes and harangue. Apart from individual excesses, the overall image of the Czech Presidency was severely shaken by the vote of non-confidence on 24 March 2009 and the fall of Topolánek’s government.<sup>26</sup> The fall of the government received unequivocally negative assessments in both the European and the Czech press and apparently confirmed some of Europe’s fears and prejudices about the euroscepticism and unpredictability of the Czech political scene. The botched Czech Presidency played into the hands of the supporters of the permanent EU presidency<sup>27</sup> and did not make things easier for the subsequent ‘new’ member states’ presidencies.<sup>28</sup>

***Focusing on Further Liberalisation of the Single Market***

During the examined period, the Czech government promoted liberalisation in many areas, including the agricultural policy, budget reform and the streamlining of the European regulation. Czech diplomacy also highlighted the need to preserve the competition rules on the internal market and strengthen the external competitiveness of the EU. As a small, export-oriented state, the Czech Republic has always nurtured the idea of ‘four freedoms’. Czech intentions to remove the remaining barrier hindering the full potential of both the Single Market and the External Trade Policy were eventually expressed in the slogan of the Czech EU presidency: ‘A Europe without barriers’.

Generally speaking, the Czech Republic has been a keen supporter of further services liberalisation. Czech politicians closely followed the heated European debate about services liberalisation in 2006. In the early stages of the preparations for the Czech EU presidency, the central-right government considered restarting the formal debate on services liberalisation during the presidency<sup>29</sup> but this plan was largely watered down due to external factors.

A short glance at the preparatory period provided above illustrates the importance of economic issues for Czech representatives. Reflecting its neoliberal background, the Topolánek government initially pondered about advancing further liberalisation on the single market (including the services), budget reform, liberalising the Common Trade Policy and other liberalising measures as a way to strengthen EU’s competitiveness on a global level.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, the gathering global financial crisis forced the Czech Republic into playing the role of a defender of the existing status quo rather than the role of a promoter of further liberalisation. As Zemanová and Abrahám noted, ‘the Czech struggle for removing barriers turned rather into a struggle for preventing new barriers from occurring’.<sup>31</sup>

Already in late 2008, during the negotiations of the European Recovery Action Plan, the liberal government of Mirek Topolánek fought (along with other liberal-minded member states) against massive financial injections into the collapsing bank sector. During the Czech presidency, the Czech government continued with the defence of the liberal principles underpinning the Single Market against protectionist anti-crisis measures in an attempt to avert large scale interventions and subventions. The fight against protectionism transformed into an open Czech–French row after President Sarkozy’s suggestion that French car makers should repatriate their Central European investments and jobs back to France.

The presidency has been largely successful in achieving the goal of fighting protectionist measures. It organised an informal European Council summit in March, which discussed the response to the financial crisis. The summit mentioned the fiscal impulses needed to recapitalise the EU economy, but at the same time the member states pledged to respect the rules of the single internal market, the competition rules and the Stability and Growth Pact, especially when it comes to long-term sustainability of public finances.<sup>32</sup> On the other side, thanks to its neoliberal, non-interventionist approach, the Czech presidency has been criticised for taking little initiative regarding further anti-crisis measures.<sup>33</sup>

### *The Energy Comes Before the Environment*

The Czech government's approach to the issues of energy, environment and climate change reflects the power imbalance between the pro-business and nuclear-energy-friendly ODS and her small coalition partner – the Greens. The governmental representatives from the ODS openly supported further development of nuclear energy<sup>34</sup> (promoting the idea of 'low-carbon energy' rather than 'renewable energy') and prioritised competitiveness (of European and Czech business) over environmental issues and the fight against climate change. Between 2007 and 2009 the Czech and Slovak Prime Ministers jointly hosted the European Nuclear Energy Forum organised successively in Bratislava and Prague in order to relaunch discussions on nuclear energy in Europe.<sup>35</sup>

In 2008 the government showed strong interest in the negotiations of the so-called 'climate and energy package' that aims to combat climate change and increase the EU's energy security. It raised critical objections under the banner of keeping European countries (i.e. their energy companies) competitive. The government sharply criticised the Commission's plan to start a full auctioning of pollution allowances in the power sector as early as 2013. In line with the position of Czech energy company ČEZ, the Czech Republic (and other new member states) sought an exemption which would allow poorer EU countries (those who get more than 30 percent of their energy from coal and with a GDP per head lower than 50 percent of the EU average) to hand out a part of the allowances for free even in the third trading period, 2013–2020.<sup>36</sup>

During the examined period we have recorded an ever intensifying debate about the energy security of the EU (and the Czech Republic), which eventually culminated during the Czech Presidency. In contrast to other issues on the European agenda (such as institutional reform), the idea of energy security (including the support for nuclear energy) is rather consensual in the Czech Republic, at least when the two biggest parties are concerned. Secondly, within the rich agenda of energy-related issues, the Czech government put political emphasis on the security and geopolitical aspects of the energy policy, while the environmental aspects and the fight against climate change have been deliberately sidelined by key political leaders.<sup>37</sup> Thirdly, the geopolitical priorities of Czech Atlanticists and their traditional fear of Russia largely influenced the Czech definition of EU's energy security. Since the first gas row between Ukraine and Russia (in early 2006), Russia has been accused of using her 'energy weapon' as a tool in her 'neoimperial foreign policy' aimed at restoring Russia's sphere of influence in Central and Eastern Europe. The dependence on energy supplies delivered from and through Russia was perceived not only as an economic issue, but as a direct threat to EU's security, (geo)political independence and core values.<sup>38</sup>

Right at the very beginning of its tenure, the Czech Presidency had to face the interruption of gas supplies from Russia, which severely affected customers in East European and Balkan countries, including several EU member states. Despite the above mentioned aversion towards Russia, Prime Minister Topolánek, acting on behalf of the EU and in tandem with the Commission, was able to launch a cool-headed and highly effective shuttle diplomacy between Russia and Ukraine. The Czech mediating efforts

were eventually successful. After protracted wrangling between Ukraine and Russia, both parties reached an agreement about the gas metering stations between Russia and Ukraine and, on 18 January, an agreement about the resumption of gas supplies.<sup>39</sup>

The Czech Presidency promoted some long-term measures for strengthening EU's energy security. Firstly, it pushed forward the establishment of a common energy policy, i.e. by concluding discussions on the 2nd Strategic Energy Review and promoting the preparation of the 2010–2014 Energy Action Plan. Secondly, it advocated a common EU position towards Russia on energy issues and successfully promoted concrete measures for the diversification of the gas supply routes. The revitalisation of the withering Nabucco project became a tangible contribution of the Czech Presidency to the EU's 'pipeline geopolitics'. The Nabucco project has been formally endorsed on 8 May 2009 at the Southern Corridor Summit with the poetic epithet 'New Silk Road'. Despite some remaining challenges down the road (no guarantee of sufficient gas supplies), the Presidency was able to secure €200 million for the Nabucco project by including it on the list of energy infrastructure projects financed from the European Economic Recovery Plan.<sup>40</sup>

On the internal market front, the Czech presidency successfully concluded negotiations between the member states and the European Parliament on the so-called third energy liberalisation package aimed at liberalisation of the EU's electricity and gas sector.<sup>41</sup> According to the compromise wording of the final text, individual member states are free to choose from one of three options of market regulation: ownership unbundling; Independent System Operator; and Independent Transmission Operator.<sup>42</sup>

To sum up, the Czech Presidency succeeded both in advancing its own goals and in meeting EU-wide expectations. Czech representatives and diplomacy successfully managed the imminent gas crisis in June 2009 and promoted long-term measures addressing the security of energy supply. Czech political representatives acted like 'Europeanists in spite of themselves'. Despite the 'eurorealist' rhetoric and repute of the main coalition party (ODS), her government self-confidently promoted the deepening of the European integration in the energy area. By advocating a common position towards Russia, by securitising the threat of energy dependence and by engaging the EU in pipeline geopolitics, the Czech 'eurorealists' in fact contributed to the establishment of the EU as a global political actor.<sup>43</sup>

### ***EU's External Relations***

Further EU enlargement has been a long-term priority of the Czech Republic and a steady ingredient of Czech European policy. On the political level, most major political parties continuously express their support for EU enlargement.<sup>44</sup> The EU enlargement is accepted by all major political forces as beneficial for both the EU and the candidate (neighbouring) countries.

The Czech support focuses first and foremost on the Balkan countries. Due to the Czechs' long-term historical and cultural bonds to the region and due to contemporary attractiveness of the territory for both Czech tourists and businesses, the entry of the Balkan states made it to the top of the list of Czech Presidency Priorities. In 2007, the Czech decision-makers envisioned the conclusion of negotiations with Croatia, the

beginning (or continuation) of accession talks with Macedonia and a clear articulation of the European perspective for Serbia.<sup>45</sup> The final Presidency priorities listed the EU enlargement as a part of the European Union in the World priority area. The final wording was less optimistic and focused primarily on Croatia. Turkey, mentioned as ‘a strategic ally of the EU’, has been sidelined, even though the Presidency expressed its willingness to continue the talks. The potential membership of Turkey causes some controversy (the Christian and Democratic Union–Czechoslovak People’s Party opposes the Turkish EU membership).<sup>46</sup>

At the beginning of 2009 the Czech Presidency was caught by surprise by the escalation of the border dispute between Croatia and Slovenia and the subsequent Slovenian blockage of the Croatian accession negotiations. The Presidency got its hands off the issue, relegating the conflict to the status of a bilateral issue, and let Commissioner Rehn play the role of a mediator. The Presidency recorded only very limited success in passing the Albanian application to the Commission, receiving the Montenegrin application and opening one chapter in the negotiations with Turkey. Except for the conference ‘EU Enlargement – 5 Years After’, which commemorated the successes of the past enlargement round,<sup>47</sup> the enlargement agenda was hardly visible and gave way to the Energy Security, the Eastern Partnership and other agenda highlighted by Czech politicians. The Czech Republic failed to get an EU consensus for some of its priorities referring to the Western Balkans; especially the Benelux countries and Germany remained hesitant towards any steps that could be interpreted as leading in the direction of further enlargement.

The ideological background of Topolánek’s government was definitely ‘Atlanticist’ (see the chapter devoted to the security dimension). The Czech government planned to strengthen transatlantic ties during the Czech Presidency, presuming that the continuing engagement of the USA in Europe is indispensable for both Czech and European security. The transatlantic priority took the form of a strong but abstract political proclamation of the need to keep and develop a multifaceted transatlantic cooperation between the USA and the EU. The Czech priorities lacked substantive content and proposals.

Ideological assumptions and concrete proposals made by the new American administration (in economy, foreign policy and security) collided with those of the Czech government. The Czech EU presidency publicly clashed with the American administration over the economy, arousing questions about the Czech ability to represent the EU as a whole.<sup>48</sup> The tangible results of the ‘transatlantic priority’ were limited to organising the first meeting of President Barack Obama with all the EU leaders in Prague.

In reaction to the escalation of violence in Gaza in late December 2008, the Czech Presidency tried to mediate a ceasefire and establish a ‘humanitarian corridor’ by sending a mission headed by Minister Schwarzenberg, which was accompanied by key EU officials. Yet these brokering efforts were watered-down not only by a parallel mission by French President Sarkozy, but also by the pro-Israeli statements of Czech political representatives and officials. Well ahead of the presidency, Czech political representatives stressed that the deepening of the EU-Israel integration was to

become one of the Czech Presidency priorities.<sup>49</sup> The Czech government adhered to this priority even in the aftermath of the Gaza crisis and entered into an open split with the Commission and other EU member states over the continuation of the EU-Israel talks.<sup>50</sup>

Concerning the Eastern neighbourhood of the enlarged EU, the Czech diplomacy supported the Swedish-Polish plan (released in May 2008) for the development of the Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy (i.e. the strengthening of the cooperation between the EU and six Eastern European and Southern Caucasus countries). The initiative was hailed for strengthening ties with the East and welcomed as a tool to balance French plans for the Union for the Mediterranean.<sup>51</sup>

The Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy was just one of several topics in the priority area 'EU in the World'.<sup>52</sup> But in the end, the Eastern Partnership became the most visible success and identification mark of the Presidency. The Czechs 'fulfilled their role' and 'ensured [the] final acceptance'<sup>53</sup> of the initiative during the March meeting of the European Council (the initiative was endowed with €600 million). The Eastern Partnership was during the summit on 7 May 2009, which was nevertheless struck by low attendance on the part of the leaders of the biggest EU member states.

The Czech Republic was able to push forward several initiatives in the area of EU's external relations (energy security policy, the Eastern Partnership), but it often failed to represent the EU as a whole.

### ***Entry into the Schengen Zone and the Postponement of the Euro Adoption***

One of the most important items on the agenda of the past three years has been the entrance of the Czech Republic into the *Schengen zone*. The entry into the Schengen zone was one of the most vivid and tangible benefits of the EU membership for the Czech citizens.<sup>54</sup> The key negotiations took place already during autumn and winter 2006. It was agreed that the schedule of the Schengen zone enlargement would be observed even though the development of the second generation of the Schengen Information System was running late (the Council of the EU accepted the compromising Portuguese proposal for the so-called 'SISone4all').

During 2007, the final stages of the evaluation of the country's readiness took place. The Czech Republic joined the Schengen zone at midnight between 20 and 21 December 2007 when the passport checks at its land borders were abolished. The passport checks on the flights to and from the Schengen zone disappeared on 30 March 2008.<sup>55</sup>

In contrast to the entry into the Schengen zone, Czech politicians, experts and other involved actors are divided on the issue of the *Euro zone*. The Social Democrats, the small centrist parties (Christian Democrats, the Greens) and the business partners, for pragmatic reasons, support the idea of an early euro adoption. On the other side, the Civic Democrats continue to raise objections to the idea of the euro adoption and employ the strategy of procrastination. The Civic Democrats were inspired by the ideological and substantive critique of the euro project by President Klaus. Klaus, as an opponent of political integration, criticises the common currency for being a 'political

project' and argues that the EU does not constitute an Optimal Currency Area. Moreover, right-wing politicians fear the loss of national sovereignty over monetary policy.

The timing of the euro adoption has been continuously discussed throughout the past three years. But no progress has been achieved. In August 2007 the Government adopted the Czech Republic's Updated Euro-area Accession Strategy and the original unofficial term for implementing the euro in the Czech Republic of 2009–2010 was abandoned.<sup>56</sup> In 2008, the ČSSD chairman Paroubek put forward 2012 as a possible date for the euro adoption.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, the government of Mirek Topolánek has always been 'euro-sceptic'<sup>58</sup> and postponed all the necessary decisions, including the decision to join the Exchange Rate Mechanism II (a two year membership in the ERM II is required prior to the euro adoption). Even though the government repeatedly vowed to set the date of the euro adoption (in late 2008 the then Prime Minister Topolánek promised to set the date for the end of 2009),<sup>59</sup> no political decision has been adopted yet. Moreover, until 2008 the Czech Republic was more or less fulfilling the Maastricht criteria,<sup>60</sup> but the global financial and economic crises worsened the outlook for the government debt.

The lack of progress in the adoption of the euro contrasts sharply with the Czech Republic's very smooth entry into the Schengen zone (in the accession agreement the Czech Republic formally signed up for both projects). The Schengen entry was a consensual and highly depoliticised issue. In fact, the ODS-led government picked up the Schengen entry as a showcase illustrating the benefits of the EU for ordinary citizens.<sup>61</sup> Political elites perceived the entry into the Schengen zone as an 'abolition of barriers' and not as an example of 'loss of sovereignty' (in border controls, visa policy and de facto in immigration policy). In contrast, the perceived 'loss of sovereignty' (in monetary policy) has been the main political obstacle for the adoption of the euro. No progress was achieved despite the technical readiness of the Czech Republic and the heavy lobbying by the business community (see the section dedicated to actors).

## **THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: IDENTIFICATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF KEY ACTORS**

In the following part we will look at the concrete activities of the single actors involved in the formulation of Czech European policies. We will also look at how the missions of these actors have changed during the three years in which we have followed their activities. In 2007 the new position of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs was constructed. The main intention of this new position and its body within the Government's Office was to prepare for the Czech Presidency. After the end of the presidency this unit still exists, even if its tasks have slightly changed and the minister in charge is no longer a deputy Prime Minister. Also the ratification of the LT has affected the competences of the actors involved in formulating Czech European policies, primarily since the ratification of the treaty led to a change in the rules of procedure for the two Chambers of the parliament.



***The Prime Minister and the Committee for the EU:***

The Prime Minister is involved in the shaping of Czech integration policy primarily in his capacity of being the chairman of the Committee for the EU.<sup>62</sup> The Committee can either meet on the level of its members or on the working level. The Committee defines the broader strategies and positions toward the principal issues discussed in the EU institutions. On the working level the Committee decides on the instructions for COREPER, mandates for ministers in Council meetings and other materials that are connected with the current EU agenda.<sup>63</sup> On the lowest level of the institutional hierarchy, the so-called sectoral coordination groups (resortní koordinační skupiny – RKS) have been established at every ministry. These sectoral coordination groups draft the instructions for the working groups of the Council, COREPER and the Council meetings.

Until October 2006 the Committee for the EU only met on the level of deputy ministers. At that time, however, there was a change in the status of the Committee which was related to the preparations of the Czech EU presidency. The second change of the status came after the end of the presidency.<sup>64</sup> The changes were rather moderate. The only substantial change worth mentioning is that there are now two equal deputy chairmen of the Committee (the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for European Affairs).

The Committee for the EU at the government level met approximately once a month in 2007 and 2008, during the presidency the Committee met nearly every week, and the frequent meetings continued thereafter. Thus, we can state that the involvement of the highest level of the government in European affairs has increased as a consequence of the presidency. In order to deal with the multitude of issues on the EU agenda the Committee can, on the working level, use a tacit procedure for mandates for both COREPER I and II and also for negotiations in the Council. This tacit procedure has been criticised for narrowing down the possible debate and criticism from other ministries, etc.<sup>65</sup>

Especially during the presidency the Prime Minister, the Office of the Government and the Committee for the EU were heavily involved in the work with the EU related agenda since this agenda to a large degree overlapped between the ministries (for instance, regarding energy security, the economic recession, etc). These coordination activities were under the auspices of the deputy Prime Minister (later minister) for European affairs (see below). Yet, the Prime Minister was personally involved in the work during the presidency as well. Among the issues where a Czech Prime Minister left an imprint were the gas crisis in the beginning of 2009, which was handled by Mirek Topolánek, and the so-called Irish guarantees regarding the LT (Jan Fischer). Thus the two Czech Prime Ministers that were in office during the Czech presidency were also the Presidents of the European Council during that period, and both chaired one European Council – in March and June.

During the presidency Mirek Topolánek first faced accusations of not being active enough, probably as a consequence of the very communicative approach of his predecessor in the office of chairman of the European Council (French President Nico-

las Sarkozy).<sup>66</sup> The change of government in May made Jan Fischer President of the European Council. In European press there were a lot of speculations about how this change would affect the presidency. Yet, it seems the change had a rather small effect on the actual work of the presidency, since at the time of the fall of the government the agenda for the rest of the presidency was already set for a long time, and consequently the officials could carry on with their work.<sup>67</sup> Yet, with the change of the government the presidency lost a face, and the episode was clearly negative for the public reputation of the presidency.

### ***The Office of Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs and its Subdivision***

In the beginning of 2007 Alexandr Vondra was appointed Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs. This new office had as its task to coordinate the activities of the government regarding the preparations of the Czech presidency, regarding the negotiations on the new treaty later known as the Lisbon Treaty, and regarding the general planning of Czech European policy. The subdivision was also in charge of the contacts with the permanent representation in Brussels regarding the presidency both during the planning period and during the actual presidency.<sup>68</sup> In order to fulfil these functions the deputy Prime Minister got a new subdivision for European affairs to have at his disposal in the Office of the Government. At the end of 2009 the staff of the subdivision was reduced.<sup>69</sup> There was also a change in the tasks outlined in the rules of procedures for the subdivision, but the general coordination mechanism remained with the subdivision even after the end of the presidency.<sup>70</sup> In this context it is important to note that at the working level the minister for European affairs is the chairman of the Committee for the EU.<sup>71</sup>

The subdivision should deal with issues where several resorts are involved, or where it is unclear where the issue shall be handled. Since 2007, gradually the unit has played an increasingly important role for the coordination of Czech European policy in cases where A) the central Czech long term priorities were concerned or B) there were conflicts between different ministries. Among the issues where the subdivision got heavily involved were institutional issues (e.g. the Lisbon Treaty), climate change, energy, the enlargement of the EU into the Western Balkans, and the European Neighbourhood Policy. It is in the competence of the unit to deal with all broader strategies of the EU such as the Lisbon Strategy and the Baltic Sea Strategy. However, in general, strategies referring to external relations of the EU are in the competences of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During the presidency it was this unit that, among others, led the work with the so-called Irish guarantees regarding the Lisbon Treaty.<sup>72</sup>

There have been three different ministers (or Deputy Prime Ministers) in charge of the subdivision since 2007: in the coalition government in office from 2007–2009, Alexandr Vondra and, then in the so-called apolitical care-taking cabinet that lasted from 2009–2010, Štefan Füle and Juraj Chmiel. To some degree the establishment of the position in 2007 might be linked to the fact that it was established by a coalition government where one of the smaller parties had the foreign ministry, whereas European affairs was then given to the major party of the coalition – the ODS. It remains to be seen what will happen with the position and the subdivision when the

next regular government will come into office. However, given that such an office is by no means unusual in Europe it could well be that the office will continue to operate in a similar way.

### *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

The establishment of the position of a Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs in 2007 to some degree limited the competences of the MFA regarding European policy.<sup>73</sup> However, the MFA continued to play an important role for defining the mandate for the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC). According to the latest change of the statute of the Committee for the EU the foreign minister is now also one of two equal vice chairmen of the Committee for the EU on the level of the government and the vice chairman of the working level. In the beginning there were some conflicts and uncertainties regarding the division of competences between the MFA and the Office of the Government but gradually such disputes seem to have been less frequent, and there is no evidence of such problems during the Czech presidency.<sup>74</sup>

The MFA plays a crucial role in the making of the Czech position on the EU's external relations. In the years prior to the presidency a lot of the work on the MFA was also oriented towards this task.<sup>75</sup> The transatlantic relations, the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe are the three priority areas in the external relations of the EU.

The MFA is also an important actor since it is the gestor of the Permanent Representation in Brussels, and thus the MFA, together with the subdivision for European Affairs, led the representation during the presidency.<sup>76</sup> During the studied years three sections in the MFA dealt with the EU: the EU General Affairs Department (EUGA), the EU Policy Department (EUPO 1 and 2), and the Secretariat for the Preparations of the Presidency. The last section was cancelled at the end of 2009.<sup>77</sup>

The MFA was in charge of the external relations of the EU during the presidency. A big challenge for the ministry was how to handle contacts with third countries – especially since this included countries with which the Czech Republic had very little experience – for instance Pakistan or Jordan. The launching of the Eastern Partnership in May 2009 in Prague was considered a success for the Czech Republic and also for the work of the MFA.<sup>78</sup>

From 2007, the Foreign Minister was Karel Schwarzenberg, who was nominated by the Greens. After the fall of the government during the presidency he was replaced by the former deputy minister Jan Kohout. This change, however, had a rather marginal impact on the concrete work of the MFA during the presidency.<sup>79</sup>

The Czech Permanent Representation in Brussels and the Czech representation in EU member states and in countries outside of the EU were crucial for the management of the presidency. If we look at Czech representations abroad in general, the presidency was very demanding in areas outside of the EU, especially in places where the Union is active regarding either the processes of enlargement or within the neighbourhood policy (the Western Balkans, Turkey and the countries in the Eastern Partnership) and in countries where the EU plays an important role in the transformation process, i.e. countries where the EU has its special representative such as Mac-

edonia, Kosovo, Moldavia, Georgia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In all these cases the Czech Republic had the difficult task of coordinating the activities of other member states and other bodies.

### *The President*

The President is involved in the preparation of government's strategies, positions and instructions for the EU Council meetings through the Committee for the EU. The Office of the President of the Republic (i.e. the President's administrative apparatus) is an associate member of both the working and the government level of the Committee for the EU and participates on the discussion about more general and strategic issues.<sup>80</sup>

The consistency and effectiveness of Czech foreign policy depended on a fragile structure of gentlemen's agreements and informal communication channels. An agreement has been made over the representation of the Czech Republic in the EU institutions (the President attends the informal meetings of the European Council).<sup>81</sup> Informal but regular meetings between the key figures (the President, the Prime Minister and the minister of foreign affairs) have been arranged in order to coordinate Czech foreign policy.

These informal regulatory and communication structures eroded in the course of Topolánek's term. The informal coordination meetings ceased in 2008 and the mutual hostilities between Topolánek and Klaus have been exposed to the public. Klaus' safe distance (or even isolation) from the treaty negotiations and the everyday European multilateral diplomacy allowed him to play the role of an outspoken critic, provocateur and self-appointed EU dissident.<sup>82</sup> The President's request for the opt-out from the Charter (October 2009) only testified the lack of communication on strategic issues of the European agenda between the government and the President. Despite the lack of coordination in the key questions, the President and the government were able to reach an agreement about chairing the June European Council and the summits with third countries during the Czech EU Presidency.

On the European level, the President put stress on bilateral relations with individual member states in the immediate vicinity and on personal ties with their heads. Relations with the representatives of EU institutions remained cool and formal at best, but they often ended in sharp diplomatic disputes like the meeting with MEPs in December 2008.<sup>83</sup> The Czech President clashed with the European Parliament also through his provocative speech in the European Parliament in the early days of the Czech EU Presidency.<sup>84</sup> His sharp critique of the EU and its institutions prompted a walkout by a large number of MEPs, although he was also cheered by right-wing and eurosceptic deputies because of it.<sup>85</sup>

With regard to the subject area, the Czech President focused on abstract, conceptual and strategic issues of European integration, especially on the institutional design of the EU. He has also questioned the merits of the common currency<sup>86</sup> and he sharply criticised EU's measures on the fight against the climate change (carbon dioxide reductions).<sup>87</sup>

Since the ideological background and the substance of his positions are discussed elsewhere, we would like to focus on the procedure and the concrete steps taken by

the President. In the aftermath of the negative Irish referendum (June 2008) the President called for a halt to the Czech ratification process and used all his means to achieve this goal. Most of the time he shielded himself with the pending Irish referenda and the pending reviews of the Treaty by the Czech Constitutional Court. The tin roof got hotter in May 2009 when the lower Chamber made clear its approval of the Lisbon Treaty. In a dramatic public appearance President Klaus described the vote as ‘yet another failure of an important part of our political elites of the type which we know all too well from other crucial moments of our history’.<sup>88</sup> He accused the political elites of cowardice and a betrayal of long-term national interests. The serious accusations and the disregard for the Parliament’s will brought about a backlash from the Parliament (see below).

President Klaus and the senators loyal to him reacted with a series of counter-measures. In June 2009 Klaus argued that the document specifying the so-called Irish guarantees is an ‘international political treaty’.<sup>89</sup> Thus, he expected the Prime Minister to ask for the full powers to conclude such a treaty and the parliament to approve these guarantees for Ireland.<sup>90</sup> The President’s legal opinion was dismissed by the government.<sup>91</sup> In an attempt to relieve the President from political pressures, a group of 17 Senators loyal to him asked the Constitutional Court to review the ‘binding mandate’ (the objection was swiftly swept aside by the Court) and on 29 September they filed a second petition to the Constitutional Court to review the Treaty of Lisbon.<sup>92</sup>

The final act of the drama was surprisingly short. On 8 October 2009 Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt (the holder of the EU presidency) reported about Václav Klaus’ new request, which came up during their phone conversation.<sup>93</sup> Following this leak, President Klaus disclosed his demand for a Czech opt-out from the Charter of Fundamental Rights.<sup>94</sup> He argued that the Charter could serve as a backdoor for property claims by Sudeten Germans evicted from Czechoslovakia after the end of WWII. The negotiations were eventually reopened and Prime Minister Fischer was relegated to the role of a mere mediator between President Klaus and the rest of the EU. After brief but intense talks the Czech Republic gained a political formula in which Protocol 30 of the Treaty would apply not only to the United Kingdom and Poland but also to the Czech Republic (the so-called ‘opt-out’ will be appended to the next treaty that enlarges the EU). Even though the media and the politicians repeatedly described the deal as an ‘exemption’ or an ‘opt-out’ from the Charter of Fundamental Rights,<sup>95</sup> Protocol 30 in fact represents a mere ‘interpretation clause’.<sup>96</sup>

Shortly after that, the Constitutional Court ruled that the ratification of the LT did not violate the Czech constitutional order and Klaus signed the Lisbon Treaty.<sup>97</sup> The President sharply criticised the ‘political opinion’ of the Court and warned that ‘with the Lisbon Treaty taking effect, the Czech Republic will cease to be a sovereign state’.<sup>98</sup> Until the very last moment President Klaus played his heroic role of 1) the sole defender of Czech national interests and 2) the last standing EU dissident. He admitted considering resignation over Lisbon’s ratification, but then he reached the view that the LT does not mean the end of history and that there are ‘more battles to come’.<sup>99</sup>

### *The Parliament*

The Parliament's function is threefold: it discusses motions for EU legislation and documents (through the 'early-warning system'); it examines the government's instructions and mandates for the meetings of the Council of the EU or the European Council; and it discusses nominations for important posts in European institutions.<sup>100</sup> The parliament also implements the European legislature into the Czech legal system.

On the EU level, the Czech Parliament participates in the Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the European Union (Conférence des Organes Spécialisés dans les Affaires Communautaires et Européennes des Parlements de l'Union européenne – COSAC).<sup>101</sup> The Czech Parliament had a busy schedule during the Czech EU Presidency. Among other events, the Parliament (specifically the Community and European Affairs Committees of both its Chambers) organised the XLI. COSAC meeting, which took place on 10–12 May 2009.<sup>102</sup>

### *The Chamber of Deputies*

A key organ of the Chamber of Deputies (CoD) in the European agenda is the Committee for the European Affairs. The resolutions of the committee stand for the decisions of the Chamber of Deputies as a whole (the Senate needs to adopt its resolutions in plenary sessions – see below). The parliamentary debate about the EU agenda has been complicated by the fact that the post of the Chairperson of the Committee on European Affairs of the Chamber of Deputies has been vacant since December 2007. The Committee got a chairperson at the beginning of April 2009 when Kateřina Jacques (the Greens) was elected for the post on the second attempt.<sup>103</sup> In June 2008 the ČSSD cancelled a gentleman's agreement about 'pairing off' missing deputies. The agreement ensured that the absence of a coalition deputy (for example, a minister travelling to Brussels) would be counterbalanced by the absence of an opposition deputy.

Not surprisingly, the most important item on the European agenda of both Chambers has been the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty.<sup>104</sup> The first reading in the CoD took place in the second half of March 2008 and the beginning of April 2008. At that time, the Senate was preparing a constitutional review of the Treaty, and the deputies from the ODS were able to adjourn the discussion on the Lisbon Treaty in the Chamber's Committees until the Constitutional Court's ruling.

After the green light from the Constitutional Court (the end of November 2008), the political parties clashed over the timing of the LT ratification. The extraordinary session of the Chamber adjourned the issue until 3 February 2009, when the accompanying 'binding mandate' was supposed to be ready.

In January 2009, two Committees interrupted the discussion on the Treaty. In reaction, the opposition ČSSD, which favoured a quick ratification of the Treaty, initiated an extraordinary session of the lower house. On 18 February 2009 the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Parliament adopted the Treaty of Lisbon by the required constitutional majority. The Chamber of Deputies complemented its approval with a resolution declaring that the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU does not apply retroactively and does not question the post-war property arrangement (the Beneš decrees).<sup>105</sup>

The position of both Chambers of the Parliament towards the government has been strengthened by the so-called ‘binding mandate of the government’. This special mandate bars the government from transferring Czech national powers to the EU (through the passerelle clause and the flexibility clause introduced by the Lisbon Treaty) without the Parliament’s consent.<sup>106</sup> The binding mandate, implemented through the amendments of the rules of procedure of both parliamentary Chambers, represents a nodal point of a political agreement regarding the ratification of the LT in the Czech Parliament. The amendments of the parliamentary rules of procedures have been accepted by the Chamber of Deputies on 19 March 2009.

### *The Senate*

While the Czech Senate’s power in domestic affairs is significantly lower than that of the Chamber of Deputies, both Chambers stand on equal footing with regard to the scrutiny of EU Affairs. The Senate treats the foreign policy agenda and European affairs as its profile topics.<sup>107</sup>

The key body responsible for the EU agenda (focusing primarily on the scrutiny of the Czech government’s actions in the Council of Ministers and on debates about emerging European legal acts) is the Committee on EU Affairs headed by Senator Luděk Sefzig. In contrast to the CoD, the Czech Senate adopts positions on the merits of the Government’s position *vis-a-vis* the draft legislative act in question via the plenary session.<sup>108</sup> Governmental representatives also inform the Senate about positions taken at the European Council.

The Senate engaged actively in the process of refining the rules of parliamentary scrutiny of the EU agenda of the Czech government (the so-called ‘binding mandate’). The Committees of the Senate discussed the LT during March and April 2008, and the debate culminated in the EU Affairs Committee’s recommendation to review the conformity of the LT with the Czech constitutional order (9 April 2008). After a stormy plenary session, the Senate adopted the petition to review the constitutionality of the LT by the Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic. The Court was asked to review the constitutionality of six specific points of the EU’s reform treaty: the existence of the exclusive competencies of the EU; the flexibility clause; the passerelle clause; the right of the EU to conclude an international treaty through a qualified majority in the Council; the possible conflict between the Charter of Fundamental Freedoms of the EU and Czech constitutional human rights standards; and the EU sanctions regime against a member state violating human rights.<sup>109</sup>

The Senate’s petition represented an important turning point in the ratification process and attracted wide attention both at home and abroad. The Senate pushed the Constitutional Court into playing a more active role in reviewing the primary legislation. On the other side, by submitting the LT to the Constitutional Court, the Senate partially divested its responsibility for taking political decisions to the Court.

The Constitutional Court published its decision on 26 November 2008. It concluded that the articles under scrutiny are not inconsistent with the constitutional order.<sup>110</sup> Nevertheless, the debate about the Lisbon Treaty has been paused in December due to the fine-tuning of the legislature introducing the ‘binding mandate’. The

binding mandate has been incorporated already in the Senate motion of the Act on the principles of conduct and relations between both Chambers and in their external relations (*Stykový zákon*).<sup>111</sup> But because this motion also regulated the Presidential elections, on which no consensus exists, it encountered severe difficulties in the CoD. The ‘binding mandate’ has eventually been implemented through the amendments of the rules of procedure drafted by the Chamber of Deputies. The amendments put both Chambers on equal footing in this regard.

The Czech Senate restarted the discussion on the LT no sooner than in April 2009 (in the meantime the CoD passed the LT and the ‘binding mandate’). In a closely watched and dramatic vote on 6 May 2009, the Czech Senate approved the LT together with the ‘binding mandate’.<sup>112</sup>

The President sharply criticised this vote (see above), and his disregard of the parliamentary approval aroused a widespread criticism from parliamentarians of all colours. Several deputies spoke about the possibility of setting limits to Presidential powers. The head of the Senate Přemysl Sobotka (an ODS heavyweight) described Klaus’ attacks on the senators’ voting as a challenge to the sovereignty of the legislative body, the pillar of parliamentary democracy.<sup>113</sup>

On 31 August 2009 a group of 17 eurosceptical senators challenged the ‘binding mandate’ through the Constitutional Court (but the objection was swiftly swept aside by the Court).<sup>114</sup> In September 2009 (shortly before the second Irish referendum) the same group of senators submitted their motion, which had been awaited for several months, to the Constitutional Court, arguing that the Treaty would infringe the Czech sovereignty. In contrast to the first complaint (filed by the Senate as a whole), the second complaint was more radical and more complex, it received only very limited political backing and its authors openly admitted that its purpose was to delay the process, to provide the President with extra time and to ‘relieve him from political pressures’.<sup>115</sup>

On November 3<sup>rd</sup> the Constitutional Court delivered its second judgment, which found that the ratification of the LT did not violate the constitutional provisions.<sup>116</sup> With a reference to the steps taken by the petitioners, the Court also warned against the risk of abuse of procedural mechanisms before the Constitutional Court. It stated that any future petition to review the constitutionality of international treaties by groups of senators, groups of deputies, and the President of the Republic must be delivered ‘without unnecessary delay’. The Court emphasised that the decision to transfer competences to the EU is a political one since ‘the responsibility for these political decisions cannot be transferred to the Constitutional Court; it can review them only at the point when they are actually made on the political level’.<sup>117</sup>

### ***Social Partners***

The social partners (trade unions and employers or their representative organisations) participate on the formulation of the official EU policy of the Czech Republic primarily through their membership in the tripartite (the Council of Economic and Social Agreement; *Rada pro hospodářskou a sociální dohodu* – RHSD). The members of the tripartite are the Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions (*Českomoravská konfederace odborových svazů* – ČMKOS), the Association of Autonomous Trade



Unions (*Asociace samostatných odborů* – ASO), the Confederation of Industry (*Svaz průmyslu a dopravy* – SP) and the Confederation of Employers’ and Entrepreneurs’ Associations (*Konfederace zaměstnavatelských a podnikatelských svazů* – KZPS). The Czech Chamber of Commerce (*Hospodářská komora* – HK) is also able to exert some influence on Czech governmental positions and the EU-level decision-making process.

The most important body responsible for the EU agenda within the RHSD is the Working Team for the EU, which serves as a platform for discussing concepts, priorities and selected draft laws.<sup>118</sup> Nevertheless, the functioning of the Working Team for the EU has been disturbed by the institutional changes in the government (the establishment of the office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs), and the meetings remained rather formal for some time.<sup>119</sup> The social partners may participate as observers in the meetings of the so-called sectoral coordination groups, where the instructions for the EU Council meetings are being drafted. Czech social partners suffered from a relative lack of expertise compared to the state administration.<sup>120</sup>

In a joint effort with the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Czech entrepreneurial and employer organisations (the Confederation of Industry, the Confederation of Employers, the Entrepreneurs’ Associations and the Chamber of Commerce) established the Czech Business Representation to the EU (CEBRE). Nevertheless, the primary task of CEBRE has been to act as an information service for Czech companies rather than representing the Czech business community and lobbying in the EU decision-making process.

Czech trade unions and institutions representing employers may influence the European legislative process through their membership in the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and through specific pan-European umbrella associations. EESC is a consultative body within the EU institutional structure, and the Czech Republic is represented in all three of its groups (employers, employees and various interests). ČMKOS is an active member of a pan-European umbrella association of trade unions, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), and on the other side of the barricade, the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic participates in BusinessEurope. These pan-European associations serve not only as *lobbying* tools for European trade unions and businesses respectively, but they also provide a platform for *coordinating* actions taken by individual national associations on the domestic level.

In principle there is only one Czech company capable of effective individual promotion of her interests in the European agenda: the state-owned energy company ČEZ. The company maintains a specialised European Agenda Section within its organisational structure and operates a permanent ČEZ Representative Office in Brussels. Czech trade unions, institutions representing entrepreneurs/employers and ČEZ were able to win support for their cases among like-minded Czech MEPs. ČEZ, for example, cooperated with the communist MEP Miroslav Ransdorf (EP’s Committee on Industry, Research and Energy) on the preparation of the amendment to the so-called third energy package.<sup>121</sup>

The direction of power and influence between the nominally state-run ČEZ and the Czech government is a rewarding topic of many speculations.<sup>122</sup> The positions of the

Czech government on most issues (internal market, energy, environment, etc.) generally tend to respect the interests of Czech business and industry – in particular ČEZ, the main energy producer (and the largest contributor to the public budget) The company also cooperates with the government on many high-profile initiatives and conferences (like the European Nuclear Energy Forum).<sup>123</sup>

Czech trade unions paid attention to the working time regulation and the services liberalisation. On the other side, the Czech business and industry community focused on the euro adoption, energy market liberalisation, climate change, administrative burdens reduction and market liberalisation.

The representatives of Czech business and industry, suffering because of the strong Czech crown, lobbied heavily in favour of a quick adoption of the euro. Especially in 2008 the Czech industry leaders pressured the government to at least set a target date for the euro adoption. But as we have already noted, the Czech government successfully resisted these calls.<sup>124</sup> In 2008, the lobbying efforts of the Czech business community focused predominantly on the so-called third energy package. In line with the government's position, Czech entrepreneurial and employer organisations and ČEZ sharply criticised the Commission's plan to introduce the auctioning of pollution allowances.

### ***Other Actors***

In this section we will shortly assess the influence of other Czech actors (regional actors, municipalities, NGOs and individuals) on the Czech Republic's policy within the EU or directly on the EU's decision-making process. The representatives of these special interests do have a limited access to the lowest level of the preparation of the government's instructions for the EU Council as they are being drafted (through sectoral coordination groups or the so-called 'enlarged sectoral coordination groups').

Czech regions and municipalities and their national associations play the rather passive role of consumers of EU's legislation and financial resources, focusing on drawing money from the EU structural funds. With some rare exceptions (the Region of South Bohemia maintains a permanent office in Brussels and is active at the CoR),<sup>125</sup> the lack of administrative and expert capacities prohibits Czech regions and municipalities from more actively lobbying in the EU's legislative process and participating in the preparation of governmental instructions for the Council of the EU.<sup>126</sup> Similarly to the regions and municipalities, the participation of Czech NGOs in the formal process of the preparation of governmental instructions (through RKS) has been very low or varying at best. Moreover, some NGOs like Greenpeace focus on public and media campaigns instead. The interviews with state officials confirm that the influence of NGOs on the government's official policy stands or falls on the NGOs' ability to provide useful expert opinions and inputs.<sup>127</sup>

The non-governmental sector is relatively fragmented, but one can find national associations of NGOs focusing on environmental issues (the Green Circle) and on development cooperation (the Czech Forum for Development Co-operation) which are able to deliver expert opinions and participate in substantive discussions about the Czech government's positions and priorities in the specific areas.<sup>128</sup>

Among the individual NGOs we would like to single out People in Need (PIN), which focuses on a wide range of topics ranging from relief aid and development assistance to defence of human rights and democratic freedom. PIN relies on its long tradition, its multiplicity of programs, its solid expert base and, last but not least, its close ties to the Czech political elite and state administration.

The ex-President Václav Havel stands out as the most influential individual person engaging in the EU agenda from beyond the official circles. In April 2008 the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD) was launched under the patronage of Václav Havel.<sup>129</sup> The EPD serves as the platform for European civil and political society organisations working on democracy assistance.<sup>130</sup> A host of various public intellectuals and authorities stepped into the debate about the LT and the future of the EU. Václav Havel presented his vision during his speech to the European Parliament on 11 November to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Iron Curtain in Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>131</sup>

## THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC SPACE

### *Topics*

The public debates during the last three years have to a large degree followed a similar pattern as the political debate; the two big issues have been the general question of the future of Europe and the Czech presidency. The Czech media has paid a lot of attention to how Czech actors have positioned themselves on the LT since the European discussions on what to do with the failed Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe restarted in 2007. The same year the discussions on the Czech presidency and the presidency priorities also started to gain media attention, and up until the presidency the preparations were a part of the news coverage. During the actual presidency there was a tendency of the Czech media to discuss issues in terms of successes or failures of the Czech political leadership, and for this reason a lot of attention was paid to how the foreign press wrote about the Czech presidency. Other issues have also been present in the public debate, such as, for instance, the euro.

The debates on the LT over the years were mainly the domain of politicians, EU experts and journalists, but on the other hand, the euro, for instance, also attracted the interest of organised business and other entrepreneurs. It is also clear that President Klaus receives a disproportionately big share of the attention in the public discourse. His confrontational views gain attention not only in the Czech press (and the foreign press, which then gives the Czech press a second reason to write about them) but also among experts.<sup>132</sup> Klaus was able to use both the Czech ratification of the LT and the Czech presidency as opportunities to present his euro-sceptical views. At the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009 the Czech news coverage was full of writings about the negative European expectations for the Czech presidency in other European countries, which were based on the information reported by other European media largely due to Klaus' possible impact on the presidency.<sup>133</sup> And when the cabinet fell in the

middle of the presidency the discussions on the possible role of President Klaus for the remaining time of the presidency began again.<sup>134</sup>

### ***The General Structure of the Debates***

If we look at the general structure of how the Czech media write about the European Union, we can identify two dominant characteristics: 1) a tendency to focus on specific Czech issues and 2) a tendency to describe any EU decision as something that took place completely without Czech involvement. We will start with the latter of these characteristics.

Ever since the accession period there has been a tendency to describe EU decisions (where, of course, the Czech government is one of the decision-makers as well) as decisions made by Brussels. Still, six years after the Czech EU accession the EU is often described as a distant norm-maker, and not as an institution for which the Czech Republic has shared responsibilities. The EU decision making is often described in terms of the Czech Republic either greeting or criticising the EU position without taking into account the complex decision making process of the EU. From this general understanding of the EU follows a situation where not only the decisions are the decisions of the others, but where also the money of EU funds is understood as the money of the others. For this reason it is seen as less of a problem if these sources are used in a non-efficient way, etc.

Secondly, there is a tendency towards a Czechification of the EU in Czech public discourse. David Černý's *Entropa* exhibit is illustrative of this phenomenon; in the middle of Černý's Europe you find Klaus screaming out his statements, and the rest of the EU is partly made up of only passive bystanders. When, for instance, the new European Commission was discussed in 2009 it was not so much about what impact the composition of this commission would have on the EU as such but rather about how successful the Czech Republic was in obtaining a good seat, and whether Štefan Füle as Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy received an important position in the end or not. This Czechification is not merely a product of journalists since politicians also contributed to it. A clear example of this was the elections to the European Parliament in 2009. During the campaigns the political parties often referred to explicitly domestic topics without any connections to the work of the European Parliament. And sometimes this was the case even when journalists did their best to move the discussion to European topics.<sup>135</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

There is continuity in the Czech EU policy if we look at the level of the government. The governments have considered the EU agenda their priority independent of their political colour. During the period the EU agenda received increased attention from the highest levels of the government, which is reflected in the changes in the working of the Committee on EU. In the government the largely euro-sceptical ODS had some problems with some of the party's backbenchers but generally took a pragmatic approach towards the broader issues of European integration. We also see a coherent

approach towards some issues that have been stressed during the period such as membership of the Schengen area, further liberalisation of the single market and energy security. Yet, at the same time the Czech political debate on the future of the EU and on the future of the Czech Republic in the European integration process is characterised by an almost total lack of consensus, which has been confirmed by several studies on the topic.<sup>136</sup> Especially the topic of the LT polarised the political elite.

During the studied three years a change can be identified regarding the borderline of the dispute over the EU within the political elite. The traditional dispute between the euro-sceptical ODS, on the one hand, and the pro-European parties – the ČSSD, the KDU-ČSL and the SZ – on the other, was largely replaced by an internal dispute within the ODS during the last year of the studied period – between a pragmatic party leadership and a euro-sceptical President and former party leader assisted by some senators and MPs.<sup>137</sup> Disputes over the EU were also one of the major reasons for why Klaus formally left the ODS at the end of 2008 and also a contributing reason for why some ODS MPs decided not to support the Topolánek government in March 2009. A Czech specificity here is that the very infected political debate on the EU among the political elite paradoxically does not correspond with the preferences of their voters. Among the voters ODS supporters tend to be more positive about European integration than their ČSSD counterparts.<sup>138</sup>

In the chapter we have identified the two main topics on the agenda during the period as the presidency and the Lisbon Treaty. Regarding the presidency the Czech Republic to a large degree took a rather ambitious road with its intentions of making an imprint on the EU. The Czech Republic wanted to present its priorities and also improve its position and reputation within the EU.<sup>139</sup> The Czech Republic managed to realise its priorities where these met with support within the EU and where these related to the existing agenda, e.g. the Eastern Partnership and energy security. On the other hand, on some issues the Czech Republic had a very outspoken approach which did not correspond to the EU consensus, e.g. the Western Balkans or Israel, and in these areas the presidency achieved less. The presidency also had to spend much time on issues which it could not plan for, primarily the global economic recession. However, regarding this task the presidency was largely evaluated rather positively.

The main failure of the presidency was on the level of its visibility and public image. The Czech Republic did not manage to fulfil the intention of using the double anniversaries – twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and five years after the 2004 enlargement – to present the country as a constructive and efficient partner within the EU.<sup>140</sup> There were primarily two reasons for this: 1) the fall of the government in the middle of the presidency and 2) the turmoil surrounding the Czech ratification of the LT, which was fuelled by the many radical comments of President Klaus.

In 2009, after the end of the presidency, the Czech approach towards the EU could return to normal. However, it seems that some of the institutional changes that were brought about by the presidency will remain. The meetings of the Committee for the EU take place on a higher level and more frequently than prior to the presidency planning period, and also the subdivision on European affairs within the Office of the Government so far remains the central unit for EU coordination.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The authors would like to thank Jan Karlas for his work as co-author on the chapters on the European dimension in the 2007 and 2008 yearbooks. In some parts we draw extensively on work done by Karlas, and we recognise this.
- <sup>2</sup> Dlouhodobý program ČSSD [Long Term Programme of ČSSD], 2005.
- <sup>3</sup> For the opinion of Václav Klaus see, e.g., *Václava Klause v Evropském parlamentu* 19. 2. 2009. On-line: ([www.euroskop.cz/47/10874/clanek/projev-vaclava-klause-v-evropskem-parlamentu](http://www.euroskop.cz/47/10874/clanek/projev-vaclava-klause-v-evropskem-parlamentu)); for the opinion of the ODS and the KSČM, see, e.g., *Stenografický zápis 46. schůze Poslanecké sněmovny*. On-line: ([www.psp.cz/eknih/2006ps/stenprot/046schuz/s046057.htm](http://www.psp.cz/eknih/2006ps/stenprot/046schuz/s046057.htm)).
- <sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Beneš, Vít (2008): *Rozšiřování [Enlargement]*. In: J. Karlas (ed): *Jak předsedat Evropské unii? Návrh priorit předsednictví ČR v Radě EU v roce 2009*, pp. 49–67. Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů; Král, David (2006): *Česká debata o perspektivách členství Turecka a Ukrajiny v EU*. Praha: Institut pro evropskou politiku EUROPEUM.
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- <sup>7</sup> Speech in the Chamber of Deputies by Vlastimil Tlustý, *Stenografický zápis 46. schůze Poslanecké sněmovny*.
- <sup>8</sup> Zahradil, Jan–Plečický, Petr–Adrián, Petr–Bednář, Miloslav (2001): *Manifest českého eurorealismu (dokument k ideové konferenci ODS)*. On-line: ([www.ods.cz/docs/dokumenty/zahradil-manifest.pdf](http://www.ods.cz/docs/dokumenty/zahradil-manifest.pdf)).
- <sup>9</sup> Kopecný, Petr and Mudde, Cass (2002): *The Two Sides of Euroscepticism: Party Positions on European Integration in East Central Europe*. *European Union Politics*, 2002, Vol. 3, o. 3, pp. 297–326, page 302.
- <sup>10</sup> *Prohlášení Klause k rozhodnutí ÚS a ratifikaci lisabonské smlouvy*. 3. 11. 2009. On-line: ([www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/prohlaseni-klause-k-rozhodnuti-us-a-ratifikaci-lisabonske-smlouvy/405912&id\\_seznam=](http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/prohlaseni-klause-k-rozhodnuti-us-a-ratifikaci-lisabonske-smlouvy/405912&id_seznam=)).
- <sup>11</sup> *Stenografický zápis 46. schůze Poslanecké sněmovny*.
- <sup>12</sup> *Czech EU Presidency*. ČSSD, 2. 7. 2008. On-line: ([www.CSSD.cz/s14983/s18962/](http://www.CSSD.cz/s14983/s18962/)).
- <sup>13</sup> *Pozice vlády České republiky v rámci jednání o institucionální reformě Evropské Unie [Position of the government of the Czech Republic within the negotiations of the institutional reform of the European Union]*. Vláda ČR, 25. 4. 2007. On-line: ([www.vlada.cz/assets/evropske-zalezitosti/dokumenty/Pozice\\_vlady\\_CR\\_final\\_25.4..pdf](http://www.vlada.cz/assets/evropske-zalezitosti/dokumenty/Pozice_vlady_CR_final_25.4..pdf)).
- <sup>14</sup> Interview with an employee of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, EU General Affairs Department, 7. 2. 2008.
- <sup>15</sup> *Pozice vlády České republiky v rámci jednání o institucionální reformě Evropské Unie [Position of the government of the Czech Republic within the negotiations of the institutional reform of the European Union]*, op. cit.
- <sup>16</sup> See, for example, *Otázky Václava Moravce [Questions of Václav Moravec]*, Czech television (ČT1), 16. 3. 2008.
- <sup>17</sup> See the abstract of the *Decision of the Constitutional Court on the Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community*. The Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic, 26. 11. 2008. On-line: ([angl.concourt.cz/angl\\_verze/doc/pl-19-08.php](http://angl.concourt.cz/angl_verze/doc/pl-19-08.php)).
- <sup>18</sup> Těsnopisecká zpráva z 6. schůze Senátu, 6. 5. 2009. On-line: ([www.senat.cz/xqw/xervlet/pssenat/original/6384/6384](http://www.senat.cz/xqw/xervlet/pssenat/original/6384/6384)).

- <sup>19</sup> *Prioritní oblasti předsednictví České republiky v Radě Evropské unie v prvním pololetí roku 2009* [Priority areas of the Czech Presidency of the EU Council in the first half of 2009]. Government of the Czech Republic, 10. 10. 2007.
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- <sup>21</sup> *Work Programme of the Czech Presidency*. Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU, January 2009. On-line: ([www.eu2009.cz/scripts/file.php?id=6226&down=yes](http://www.eu2009.cz/scripts/file.php?id=6226&down=yes)).
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- <sup>23</sup> Karlas, Jan (2010): *The executive co-ordination of the Czech presidency: unexpectedly effective*. In: Drulák, Petr–Šabič, Zlatko (eds): *The Czech and Slovenian EU presidencies in a comparative perspective*. In print.
- <sup>24</sup> *Switch-off ends Czech's life support presidency*. Financial Times, 16. 6. 2009. On-line: ([www.ft.com/cms/s/0/ec98d840-5a95-11de-8c14-00144feabdc0,dwp\\_uuid=d8cc5c02-3164-11dd-b77c-0000779fd2ac.html](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/ec98d840-5a95-11de-8c14-00144feabdc0,dwp_uuid=d8cc5c02-3164-11dd-b77c-0000779fd2ac.html)); see also *Some wins, but Czech EU presidency seen as chaotic failure*. Earth-Times, 28. 6. 2009. On-line: ([www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/275171,some-wins-but-czech-eu-presidency-seen-as-chaotic-failure.html](http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/275171,some-wins-but-czech-eu-presidency-seen-as-chaotic-failure.html)); Fuksiewicz, Aleksander–Łada, Agnieszka (2009): *The Czech Presidency in the Council of the European Union – the view from Poland*. Warsaw: The Institute of Public Affairs. On-line: ([www.prezycjencjaue.gov.pl/en/files/pliki/download/czechy\\_isp\\_en.plf.pdf](http://www.prezycjencjaue.gov.pl/en/files/pliki/download/czechy_isp_en.plf.pdf)).
- <sup>25</sup> *Vaclav Klaus, trouble-fête de l'Europe*. Le Figaro, 1.1. 2009. On-line: ([www.lefigaro.fr/international/2009/01/02/01003-20090102ARTFIG00001-vaclav-klaus-trouble-fete-de-l-europe-.php](http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2009/01/02/01003-20090102ARTFIG00001-vaclav-klaus-trouble-fete-de-l-europe-.php)); *Fears as Czech Republic takes over helm of EU*. The Guardian, 1. 1. 2009. On-line: ([www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jan/01/czech-republic-eu-persidency-helm](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jan/01/czech-republic-eu-persidency-helm)); *Grumpy Uncle Vaclav*. The Economist, 4. 12. 2008. On-line: ([www.economist.com/PrinterFriendly.cfm?story\\_id=12724780](http://www.economist.com/PrinterFriendly.cfm?story_id=12724780)).
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- <sup>29</sup> *Prioritní oblasti předsednictví České republiky v Radě Evropské unie v prvním pololetí roku*. Government of the Czech Republic, 10. 10. 2007.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>31</sup> Zemanová, Štěpánka–Abraham, Josef (2010): *Achieving unachievable goals? Impartiality, effectiveness, crisis and economic priorities of the Czech Presidency*. In: Drulák, Petr–Šabič, Zlatko (eds): *The Czech and Slovenian EU Presidencies in a Comparative Perspective*. In print.
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## Chapter 4

# The Security Dimension of the Czech Foreign Policy

*Vít Strátecký*

Since the Czech Republic joined the NATO in April 1999, the security agenda of the Czech foreign policy has never been discussed more than between the years 2007 and 2009. Apparently, the major issue at stake was the U.S. plan to build a component of the third pillar of the national missile defense on the Czech territory. The radar debate had significantly impacted both the foreign and the internal political agendas. The Czech diplomacy was involved in complicated negotiations with American partners and also became engaged in discussions over the missile defense issue in the EU and NATO and with Russia. Internally, the radar was established as an important topic of the regional and senate elections in 2008 and arguably influenced the results as the leftist challengers of the American plan swept out their rightist ruling opponents.

However, the dominating theme that contributed to the visibility and recognition of the Czech Republic in the international area should not cause the other relevant issues of the Czech security agenda to be ignored. From the external perspective it should be stressed that the Czech Republic has organized its own Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Afghanistan, which has constituted an unprecedented experience for both civil and military operations. Internally, the radar controversy has ushered in other disputes which have deepened the politicization of the formerly rather consensual Czech security policy. Furthermore the period in focus experienced some major arms acquisitions by the Czech forces that clearly revealed the decayed situation in this sector. Last but not least, the Czech officials have identified energy security, which encompasses both internal and external dimensions, as an essential priority and interest.

The following chapter will look at these topics and some others in more detail, focusing on their strategic, political, and media contexts. It will observe the Czech security culture as it has been defined by the strategic documents and as it has been reflected in the political arena. The picture outlined will result in some general observations offering an identification of both crucial problems and future potentials.

## THE SECURITY DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

### *The Strategic and Conceptual Background*

It has been already mentioned in this volume that the Czech Republic has been somewhat astonishingly lacking a Conception of Foreign Policy. Or to be more precise the Czech Republic has a document of this sort, but it has not been updated since 2006, which was the final year of its former framework and hence the situation is ambiguous in terms of its relevancy. While the several updates would be beneficial, especially in terms of specifying the tools which should be applied to achieve the strategic goal assigned in the area of security, it is definitely worth mentioning that the outdated conception already referred to two important specific issues that have become a reality in the period analysed here. First, the document mentions that the Czech Republic will consider its contribution to the alliance's system of missile defense. Second, the conception reveals that the Czech Republic will strive for the NATO's specialized center focusing on the CBRN protection.<sup>1</sup>

The Security Strategy<sup>2</sup> has not been updated since 2003. The document has five major chapters that gradually focus on the grounds of the Czech security policy, the Czech security interests, the Czech security environment, the strategy of the interests' promotion, and the Czech security system. Quite interestingly the Security Strategy treats energy security only in a very concise manner given how strongly this topic resonated in the debates, particularly in 2008 and 2009.

The Topolánek government committed itself in the Programme Declaration<sup>3</sup> to updating the executive strategic documents. The Ministry of Defence was responsible for the update of the Military Strategy, whereas the Ministry of Interior should upgrade the National Action Plan to Combat Terrorism, the Conception to Combat Organized Crime, and the Conception of Civilian Protection by 2013 with the prospect of 2020.<sup>4</sup> Although all of these documents are relevant I would like to look closely at the Military Strategy as I would consider it as the least successful update.

The new Military Strategy substituted for the former one, which was approved in 2004. However, the time and experience did not materialize in a way that would approximate the Czech doctrine to the similar documents of our EU and NATO allies. The Czech document remains rather general and to a large extent reproduces the passages from the Security Strategy. Focusing on description it clearly lacks a conceptual dimension. Although the length is not a measure of quality, it is worth mentioning that the update lost one third and ended up with a length of only 9 pages. The strategy concisely specifies the guidelines of the Czech army's engagement in foreign missions. However, it fails to reflect them in the parts outlining the principles of the armed forces' development. That said, it should be stressed that the document essentially lacks a vision of the future technical and technological development, financial prospects and requirements, not to mention the attitudes to and the prospects of the domestic security and defence industry.

The Czech EU Presidency presented an opportunity for the strategic debate over the Czech security priorities in the EU context. The Work Programme 'Europe with-

out Barriers' reveals some interesting characteristics in this regard.<sup>5</sup> The motto 'Europe without barriers' should be demonstrated in the triple 'E' principal areas – Economy, Energy, and External Relations. From the security perspective the crucial theme became energy security. However, this issue should not be viewed as an isolated security concept since it played a substantial role while connecting all three of the principal areas. Within the Energy chapter the endeavour to liberalize the energy market was taken as part of the strengthening of the EU energy security situation. This liberalizing notion clearly fits into the framework assigned for the Economy chapter. Nevertheless, the issue of energy security resonated mostly in the area of external relations. It was rather symbolic as the Presidency was at the very beginning confronted with the Russian-Ukrainian gas dispute that heavily affected some EU members. The connection between energy security and EU Eastern policies was symbolized by the Southern Corridor/Eastern Partnership Summit that was initiated by the Czech Republic and was meant to become a crucial event of the Czech EU Presidency.

The short note on the strategic documents will be concluded with a few practical observations. It could be argued that there seems to be a certain gap between the documents and actual policies in the Czech Republic. This assertion regarding the impact of the strategies implies a relatively low level of security culture. First, there does not seem to be a direct link between the doctrinal documents and allocation of resources. This does not mean that the documents are irrelevant but rather that their impact is often mediated by the inconsistent administrative and political processes. As a result the debates on security tend to become risk/threat-evading and consequentially lead to refusals regarding the costs of risk/threat preventions. These decisions both form public perceptions and are formed by public perceptions.

Secondly, the system appears to be already tired of the reforms that preceded the joining of NATO and EU. This issue perhaps explains the lack of strategic debate concerning the role of the Czech armed forces that has been opened only very recently. One of the main issues that have been recently criticized is the preoccupation with the expeditionary (out of area) missions. It should be noted that the Czech Republic has been able to keep its obligation regarding the out of area missions only with greater difficulties. On the other hand a need for resources that must be invested into the expeditionary forces has led to some decisions that have virtually destroyed some potentially important capacities of the army; f.e., the military rescue units that were capable of assisting the fire brigades in cases of natural disasters or major accidents were dismantled. These units disposed with a unique heavy technology that cannot be handled by the fire brigade. This decision highly contrast with the current positions of some politicians who argue that the army should be used much more at home (f.e., assisting during yearly floods). Although the political attitudes seem to be driven by the falling support for the foreign missions among the public, the current debate has revealed some problematic decisions that have appeared to be clearly inconsistent with the priorities outlined in the documents.

### ***The Political Background***

It has been already mentioned that the missile defence issue became one of the cru-

cial subjects of the political arena. Although the very beginning of the U.S.-Czech consultations goes back to 2002, the radar started to be seriously discussed only after the official American offer had been made in January 2007. It should be noted that the circumstances of this move could be considered as driving the political controversies. Following the parliamentary elections held in June 2006 the Czech Republic remained without a government that would be able to acquire a majority in the Chamber of Deputies until January 2007, when the Topolánek government was approved due to the voices of two deputies that came from the Social Democratic camp, the major challenger of the government. The political situation was extremely tensed as the background of this process appeared to be very peculiar. The American offer then came right after the new government supporting this issue had been established, and it immediately started to be attacked by the new real opposition.

The debate reached its highest level in 2008 when it essentially formed the political campaign before the regional elections (no matter that such an issue has only a low relevancy, if any, for the regional decision-making). The ruling Civic Democrats (ODS) fully supported the American plan in accordance with their principal Atlanticist orientation. Their governmental coalition partners, the Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL), shared the same position, and it could be legitimized by their flexible internationalist orientation. Although the Social Democratic politicians (ČSSD) actively took part on the consultations before 2007, they became the strongest opponents of the radar and rigidly fulfilled the continentalist/Europeanist position. It cannot come as a surprise that the Communists (KSČM) strongly criticized the governmental intentions while promoting autonomist foreign political perspectives.<sup>6</sup> From various perspectives the most interesting was the situation of the Greens (Zelení).

The Greens traditionally support the continentalist/Europeanist orientation of the security policy that endorses the development of the European capacities aiming at weakening the dependency on the U.S.<sup>7</sup> The European green parties expressed their view, which was fully consistent with this position, in the Resolution from their all-European meeting in Ljubljana in April 2008 when arguing that the installment of the American system based on the bilateral arrangement is not compatible with the green interpretation of the European Security Strategy and the European Strategy against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. Moreover, the document claims that the realization of the plan would be contra-productive in relation to European security and the protection of Europe's inhabitants.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand the Greens faced a great pressure coming from their governmental partners. Soon after the lost regional elections, Prime Minister Topolánek expressed his commitment to the radar becoming the crucial priority of his government.<sup>9</sup> The long-term strategy of the Czech Greens was based on insisting on the multilateralization (NATOization) of the issue. This strategy, emphasized by the crucial position of the Greens in the Parliament, effectively resulted in the mission of the Czech diplomacy focusing on the NATOization of the Third Pillar.<sup>10</sup> This mission was successfully accomplished during the NATO Bucharest Summit in April 2008, whose Final Declaration mentions that the future NATO system should take into account the existing national systems.<sup>11</sup> However, the interpretation of the incriminated passage



was not unanimous and the Greens remained split on the issue. Quite symbolically the six Green MPs were divided into two opposed groups of equal size when the then party chairman Martin Bursík belonged to the promoters of the plan<sup>12</sup> while the then first deputy chairman (and the current chairman) Ondřej Liška several times expressed his reluctance to support the issue.<sup>13</sup> It should be also noted that a crucial party organ, the Republic Council, was dominated by the opponents, who considered the multilateral anchoring as mentioned in the NATO Declaration to be rather weak and missing the commitment of the common command and control.

The entire debate should have reached its peak during the vote in the Chamber of Deputies that was supposed to approve the bilateral agreements between the U.S. and the Czech Republic. However, this process was abolished by the decision of the new American President Barack Obama to cease the plan of the former U.S. administration. This decision was announced to the Czech Prime Minister Jan Fišer on 17 September 2009. The reactions of the Czech political representatives corresponded to the great amount of political capital invested into the radar issue. The former Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek mentioned in his reaction that the American side only took a chance when the country was destabilized after the fall of his government. One of the principal promoters, the former Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs Alexandr Vondra, who was responsible for the negotiation, expressed a great disappointment as well as hopes that the Americans would at least abide by the agreements. The most expressive statement belonged to the Chairman of the Defence Committee of the Chamber of Deputies Jan Vidím, who referred to Obama's decision as a 'betrayal of allies' and further expressed his frustration and disappointment in the cowardliness of President Obama and his endless policy of concessions to Russia. Also, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs viewed Obama's decision as an accommodating move towards Russia. Cyril Svoboda, the chairman of the last supportive party, the Christian Democrats, recognized the right of the U.S. to re-define its plans and expressed a hope that the transatlantic partnership would remain strong. The Czech President did not offer an emotional comment and stressed that he expected this decision.

The expectation played a fundamental role also for the Greens, whose chairman Ondřej Liška recalled several previous statements of the Greens to the effect that the Czech Republic should not have concluded the negotiation with the leaving Republican administration and should have waited for the new Democratic one instead. Liška also suggested that the development opens room for a truly multilateral solution for the missile defence issue. The Social Democrats interpreted the decision as a proof that the former plan was based on the existence of real threats. Finally, the Communists evaluated the decision to withdraw from the plan as rational in the sense that it might improve the relations between the U.S. and Europe, including Russia.<sup>14</sup>

I have already suggested that the tensed political situation after the elections in 2006 led to the deep political controversies that broke out even in the areas that were more or less consensual up to that point. The most illustrative appears to be the story concerning the governmental proposal regarding the Czech capacities for engaging in foreign missions. Still in the context of the radar controversy, in 2008 the debate over the Czech engagement in Afghanistan irrupted. Visibly, the political dispute flared up

in April 2008, when the Chamber of Deputies discussed the proposal of the Ministry of Defence to continue participation on the Enduring Freedom operation. The issue did not settle, and it led to the unprecedented disapproval of the governmental plan of the Czech engagement in foreign missions that must always be approved by the Chamber of Deputies in advance.<sup>15</sup> It was for the first time in the history of the Czech Republic that this document did not make it through the Parliament by the end of the year. Previously the only negative voices in regard to it came from the Communists and, back in the 1990s, the populists/nationalists (Republicans). This time the oppositional ČSSD voted against it and legitimized its position by the alleged unwillingness on the part of the government to allow parliamentary discussions on strategic issues.

The disapproval of the document could have complicated the situation of the Czech foreign missions. Nevertheless, the Social Democrats made it clear that their refusal was based rather on procedural grounds and approved the document in February 2009.<sup>16</sup> The experience conduced to the initiative of the Minister of Defence Karel Barták, who suggested that the mandate approved by the Chamber of Deputies could last for two or three years. This would allow for more effective economic planning and training of personnel, and it would make the Czech position more transparent. The initiative has already been discussed in the Defence Committee and it seems to have support from both the right and the left.<sup>17</sup> The proposal could have a potential to hinder the abuse of one of the crucial strategic decisions for internal political purposes. On the other hand the longer time frame might actually bring about an even deeper politicization of the approval.

## **THE SECURITY DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: AGENDA AND EVENTS**

### *Missile Defence*

The American plan for the installment of the two components of the Third Pillar in the Czech Republic and Poland should not be viewed in isolation from the development processes within NATO. Following the classified Feasibility Study, the NATO Summit in Riga held in April 2006 set down the so-called ‘Riga tasks’ to deepen the understanding of the anti-ballistic missile protection. The results of these tasks strengthened the Czech supportive position. This context was also determining for the Czech take on the U.S. Third Pillar offer.

Therefore the Czech diplomacy had an intention to connect the negotiation about both systems. This endeavour should have mitigated the negative positions of some EU and NATO allies. In June 2007 the defence ministers, during their Brussels meeting, approved the idea of an inclusion of the U.S. system into the developing NATO system, hence anticipating the Bucharest Declaration.<sup>18</sup>

Although the positions of the major parties outlined above were already formed, the internal situation was relatively calm. Major excitement came only in October 2007, when the U.S. defence minister Robert Gates visited the Czech Republic. After his meeting with the Czech Prime Minister, at the press conference, he alluded

to the fact that the U.S. is considering the presence of Russian soldiers on the base in Brdy.<sup>19</sup> Being apparently sensitive, this issue was a taboo in the Czech debate up to that point. The official position of the Czech diplomacy was holding as there was no sense in speculating over the Russian presence when Russia would not accept the system as such.

Significantly, the Czech Republic made some multilateral efforts to convince the allies and Russia about the positive impact of the Third Pillar. However, the negotiations with the American side were held on a clearly bilateral basis, despite the obvious imbalance. These negotiations resulted in two agreements – the main agreement about the installment of the radar base and the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). The first contract was finalized in May 2008 and the ministers of foreign affairs of both countries, Condoleezza Rice and Karel Schwarzenberg, signed it in Prague on 8 July 2008. The latter contract was finished in mid-September.

The issue of the connection of the U.S. National Missile Defence (NMD) and the NATO Active Layered Theater Ballistic Missile Defence (ALTMBD) also essentially developed within NATO. It should be noted that these systems are strategically compatible and mutually supportive as the NMD protects the territory against the threat of intercontinental ballistic missiles while the ALTMBD focuses on short and medium range missiles.<sup>20</sup> It has been already mentioned that the Czech diplomacy very actively pursued this agenda before the NATO Bucharest Summit and was satisfied with the final outcome.<sup>21</sup>

The revocation of the U.S. plan announced in September 2009 was anticipated by the Czech diplomacy. Although the Americans argued that the reason for the revocation lay in the reframing of the threat from the intercontinental ballistic missiles to short and medium range missiles, the Czech perception implied that the major motivation was the endeavour to reach the new START strategic agreement.<sup>22</sup> Following the visits from Vice President Joe Biden and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Ellen Tausher in October and November 2009, the rumours appeared that the Czech Republic could harbour one of the commands of the future missile defence system. However, the Czech administration did not consider this issue as relevant so far.

### *Afghanistan*

Nevertheless, the missile defence agenda should not overshadow other major achievements within the security dimension of the Czech foreign policy. Most importantly, the Czech Republic decided on the establishment of its own Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan. The general idea behind this step was the endeavour to make the Czech presence in Afghanistan, which goes back to April 2002, as well as the Czech contribution to the out-of-area missions more visible. Following the decision made in 2007 the primary task was to choose the province where the PRT should be built. After considering a few options (Baglan, Kandahar, Uruzgan) the Logar province, which was relatively calm and strategically located in the Kabul proximity, was selected. The members of the first rotation arrived in Logar on the March 19<sup>th</sup> 2008.

The Czech PRT is organized according to the idea ‘as civilian as possible, as military as necessary’, which reflects the characteristics of the Logar province. Hence the

double-headed leadership model was chosen. The leaders of both civilian and military components have different authorities and competences, and the practical functioning thus depends on their mutual communication. The military structure is responsible for the security of the personnel and thus naturally has a security veto. The Czech PRT started to effectively operate soon after the arrival as the leadership decided to take over some projects that were already started by the Americans. The priority projects include the areas of education, agriculture, water management, health care, and good governance. The common ground lies in the Afghanistanization efforts based on connection to the local structures.<sup>23</sup>

### *Energy Security*

It has been already mentioned that the agenda of the energy security was extremely visible during the period in focus. In January 2007 the European Commission introduced a new proposal of the common energy policy that should have been a step towards the single market in the energy areas. This proposal was followed by the Energy Package, which included several legislative changes. Most importantly the package strove for the so-called unbundling, which rested in the ownership separation of the transport routes and production and/or supply facilities. The Czech Republic complies with this requirement in the field of the electricity sector. However, it fails to do so in the gas sector as the government privatized a part of the distribution structure to the RWE Transgas Company.

The debate over the energy security agenda developed in 2008 when the independent expert commission led by the former Czech Academy of Science President Václav Pačes finalized its Report about the situation and its future prospects.<sup>24</sup> The commission consisted of experts as well as politicians and it will be shown later that the discussion of the final report was politicized and lost its formerly considered independent expert perspective.

The energy security, however, became a real issue in July 2007, when the supplies of Russian oil delivered through the Družba pipeline crossing Ukraine and Slovakia were interrupted. The Russian export through the Družba pipeline makes up 5.5 million tons a year and 2 percent of the overall Russian oil export. Many speculations and worries were mostly driven by the fact that the interruption came right after the ministers of foreign affairs Condoleezza Rice and Karel Schwarzenberg signed the main contract related to the radar base. However, this connection was from the very beginning refused by the Russian officials as well as by the Czech Special Envoy for Energy Security Václav Bartuška.<sup>25</sup> This interpretation appeared to be correct as it is less known that the supplies through the Družba pipeline were not fully renewed even by the end of the year. It should be stressed that this event showed that the Czech Republic is not absolutely dependent on the Russian oil as it was able to balance the gap within hours through the supplies coming through the Ingolstadt–Kralupy–Litvínov (IKL) pipeline that is connected to the TAL pipeline.<sup>26</sup>

The Czech EU presidency started with a test of the Russian-Ukrainian dispute over the prices of the gas supplies that heavily influenced the situation in some of the member states (the EU imports 25 percent of its gas from Russia and 80 percent of this

amount flows through Ukraine). The Czech presidency's endeavours were focused on two issues. Firstly, it organized support for the most affected countries through the solidarity of other member states.<sup>27</sup> Shortly the needs of Austria, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia were saturated. Secondly, the presidency became a broker in the negotiation between Russia and Ukraine and helped to establish monitoring capacities. The supplies to the EU were fully restored on 20 January 2009.

### ***NATO***

Apart from the missile defense agenda the Czech Republic was engaged in various activities within NATO. In the first half of 2007 it became a co-chair of the NATO Defence Group of Proliferation, where the Czech Republic pursued particularly the agenda of the cooperation with Ukraine in the area of military transport. In July 2007 the NATO Joint Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defence Centre of Excellence was opened in Vyškov. It is the only Centre of Excellence with this specialization within NATO, and the establishment concluded the process that had started in the Prague NATO Summit in 2002.<sup>28</sup> The Czech Republic has also fully supported the Comprehensive Approach Initiative as it had become a co-sponsor of the Danish initiative called Concerted Planning and Action.

Other Czech activities have been connected with the longer support of the enlargement process. The Czech Republic fully supported the applications of Georgia and Ukraine for the so-called Membership Action Plan (MAP) before the NATO Summit in Bucharest. On the other hand, as mentioned above, the crucial priority for this Summit was the recognition of the national missile defence systems.

The refusal of the MAP for Georgia and Ukraine was critically recalled by some Czech representatives during the August war in the Georgian province of South Ossetia. The Czech Republic generally belonged to the severest critics of the Russian engagement in South Ossetia and explicitly indicated Russia as a part of the conflict.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, the Russian recognition of the independent Abkhazia and South Ossetia was denoted as abusive.<sup>30</sup> Following the war the government decided to transfer 150 million CZK as development aid in 2009 and 2010. Finally, the Czech diplomacy welcomed the decision to establish the NATO-Georgia and NATO-Ukraine Commissions that have been symbolic in view of the similar format arranged for negotiations with Russia. On the other hand the Czech Republic remained silent when the so-called Six Point Peace Plan, which was mediated by the French EU Presidency, was not fulfilled by the Russian side.

Following the so-called Medvedev Plan and particularly the Lavrov Plan from December 2009, the Czech Republic became engaged in the discussion about the new security arrangements in Europe proposed by Russia within the renewed NATO-Russia Council. From this perspective the Lavrov Plan represented a combination of Medvedev's ideas and selected parts from the NATO strategic concepts aiming at enhancing the negotiation in the NATO-Russia Council. The Czech Republic constantly opposes the idea that a legally binding agreement solely on 'hard security' issues should be concluded. Therefore the Czech diplomacy tended to prefer the Corfu process within the OSCE framework, stressing also the soft issues such as human rights and

civil society development.<sup>31</sup> The framework of relations with Russia will also provide a context for the debates on the new NATO Strategic Concept that will be discussed throughout 2010.

Since 1 May 2009 the Czech Republic took over the responsibility for the air-policing mission guarding the air space of the Baltic states. The mission lasted for four months and the Czech Republic for the first time operationally employed the Jas-39 Gripen supersonics that were rented to it in 2005.

### *European Union*

The EU security agenda has already been touched upon by the discussion of the energy security priority or by the notes on the EU Presidency. The priorities of the other members of the Presidency Troika, France and Sweden, differed to a large extent in the security dimension.<sup>32</sup> Apparently, mainly France expressed greater ambitions in the strengthening of the ESDP. Particularly the Czech Ministry of Defence was skeptical regarding the unfulfilled French visions of development of the EU permanent planning and command structure and the employment or at least the trial of the battlegroups. On the other hand the Czech Republic appreciated the French attempt to improve the EU-NATO relations and to break through the stalemate at least on the operational level.

The Czech administration also actively engaged in the process of updating the European Security Strategy (ESS). The Czech stance included four principal positions. First, the ESS should not be totally re-written but rather complemented and updated. This position became consensual on the entire EU level. The other three points concerned the actual content of the document. The strategy should reflect the importance of the energy security more, elaborate more on the potential threat related to migration, and underline the strategic interests of the EU in Eastern Europe.<sup>33</sup> It could be concluded that all of these themes and particularly the first two have been satisfactorily handled by the Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy: Providing Security in a Changing World.<sup>34</sup>

Finally concerning the EU agenda the Czech security policy also reflected upon the development of the European Defence Equipment Market. During 2007 the discussions over the so-called Defence Package were under way. The Czech position specifically stressed the relevancy of the offset programmes. This was important as the general direction of the European liberalization of the defence market aims at superseding the free market burdens, including the offsets. On the other hand the 'smart' offset programmes could actually have pro-market effects in the sense that they would enable especially the SMEs to enter European programmes requiring higher capital shares.<sup>35</sup>

The Defence Package was issued by the European Commission in December 2007. It encompasses two fundamental directives dealing with simplification of the defence transfers within the Community through the common license system and establishing the deeper coordination in the area of public competitions practically aiming at weakening article 296 of the EU Treaty.<sup>36</sup> The Czech Republic will have to implement the directives, and this process will require several legislative changes, some of which will be outlined in this chapter.

***Acquisitions/Army***

During the last three years the Czech armed forces concluded several major acquisitions contracts that raised many questions regarding the transparency of the system. In April 2008 the Topolánek government approved the acquisition of four CASA C-295M military transport aircraft. The product, worth 3.5 billion CZK plus 5 L-159 planes, was selected without the free competition. Moreover, the Ministry of Defence would pay an extra one billion CZK for the three-year service support to the Czech Omnipol Company that was chosen without the public competition.

In September 2009 the army accepted the first 17 armored personnel carriers produced by the Austrian-American company Steyr and completed in the Czech state-owned Vojenský opravárenský závod 025 in Nový Jičín. This event followed the contract signed between the Ministry of Defence and the winner of the repeated public competition, the mediating company Defendia CZ, according to which the Czech state would purchase 107 vehicles for 14.4 billion CZK by 2013. Originally, the Czech Republic planned to acquire 199 vehicles for 21 billion CZK.

Another public competition lacking acquisition was organized in the end of 2009. In October the Ministry of Defence announced its intention to buy some Iveco light armored vehicles for 2 billion CZK. The price was increased several times and the press report made public on 23 December 2009 (!) mentioned 90 vehicles for 3.62 billion CZK. It should be noted that the contract was legitimized by the previous purchase of 15 Iveco vehicles for 499 million CZK that was signed together with the acquisition of 15 Dingo 2 armored vehicles, which was brokered by the MPI Group.

Finally, closely before the end of 2009 the tender for supplying 8 thousand infantry rifles was accidentally announced. The acquisition should reach 1.5 billion CZK. The announcement came as a surprise for the major world hand weapons suppliers. For example, one of the leading world companies, Heckler & Koch, did not take part in the competition due to the short time notice. Similarly, the Italian company Beretta officially requested an extension to be able to provide an offer, but its request was refused. Hence, the final decision was made between the Czech company Česká Zbrojovka, offering a brand new but untested weapon, and the Belgian company FN (FN SCAR), represented by MPI Group, with the former coming out as the winner in early 2010.

With the end of 2010 five top generals of the Czech army resigned and retired 'on their own request'. This unprecedented change did not generate any particular public debate, even if at least three of them were among the candidates for the next Commander in Chief of the Czech forces. It should be also noted that these high officials dealt with the most secret NATO issues and hence their sudden retirement could raise concerns among our allies.

**THE SECURITY DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY:  
IDENTIFICATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF KEY ACTORS**

As is the case with other dimensions of the Czech foreign policy, the crucial actor in the security dimension is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which basically approves

all positions with a foreign political dimension. Within the MFA the crucial structure is represented by the Security Policy Department, which coordinates the Czech foreign security policy. The Security Policy Department consults other regional departments, depending on the agenda. The most common partner of the MFA in the security dimension is apparently the Ministry of Defence. It appears to be important that these two subjects are connected within the Permanent Representation to the EU and the Permanent Delegation to NATO. The significance of the Brussels offices for the functioning of the ministries in Prague is much greater than it would appear at first glance. Due to the system of rotation many civil servants oscillate between Prague and Brussels. Especially in Brussels the diplomatic community stays quite close together so as to allow for building stronger professional relationships that would enhance the cooperation after the civil servants' return to the ministries in Prague.

Effective communication seems to be essential as these two institutions often represent different views and positions. For example, during the discussions about the PRT, the MoD preferred a variant of the support of the Dutch forces in the Uruzgan province. This solution, however, was in contradiction to the MFA's plan to make the Czech presence more visible. From this perspective the MoD is sometimes perceived as a less flexible and conservative institution that tends to refuse any changes. On the other hand, when the military capacities are projected, the MoD is fully responsible for providing a mission with organizational, logistic, and financial support that is apparently much more challenging than the reflection of its political significance. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the Czech MoD perceives the NATO agenda as fundamental and tends to neglect the security projects of the EU. Although the 'Europeanization' of the MoD has arguably moved forward, the resistance has not been overcome. The process of the development of the Czech battlegroup when the MFA had to create pressures on the MoD so that it would act might serve as an illustration.

The PRT experience has been also enriching in a different regard. The responsibilities of the resorts are determined by the Resolution of the Czech Government<sup>37</sup> and operationalized by the memorandum signed by the deputy ministers. The MoD is responsible for the security situation, while the MFA accounts for the coordination of development aid and projects. Both ministries also debated the competencies of both heads of the PRT on the ground. In practice this meant harmonizing the requirements of the military operation and its understanding of the operation in terms of the NATO ISAF mandate with visions of the civilian part regarding the development endeavours. One of the problems lies in the fact that the military transport specialists need to ensure the tours of the development workers as well as those of the military intelligence.

The MoD is also primarily responsible for the acquisition policy, which is one of the major issues discussed in this chapter. Not only from this perspective the MoD is sometimes considered to be a politically overlooked resort as it rather brings political costs than benefits. Nevertheless it appears to be clear that the MoD, together with the General Staff of the Army, does not function standardly in this regard. The malfunctioning is apparently caused by the wrong rules and procedures defining the non-transparent system. One of the crucial problems lies in the unprecedented Act 38/1994 that establishes the obligation for the foreign legal entities to hire a broker company that



has appropriate licenses when competing for a Czech governmental contract. Moreover the Czech government apparently overuses the strategic possibility of the urgent operational needs that allow for purchasing things in a faster regime without the public competitions. The combination of these two factors provides for an extremely pro-corrruptive environment, in which the mediating companies could arguably drive the decisions regarding the acquisitions. Additionally, the system is far from being effective, as will be shown below.

Furthermore, following the above-mentioned changes on the EU level the Czech Republic was criticized for avoiding the EU competitions on the basis of article 296/346 while not fulfilling all the conditions for its application. The European Commission considered the arbitrary due to the application of this regulation when purchasing the CASA aircrafts.

The Parliament naturally became the center of the political controversies that were gradually increasing during the period in focus. In October 2007 the Chamber of Deputies experienced the first political exchange concerning the radar issue. It became obvious that the Social Democratic opposition would not support the American plan. It is also worth mentioning that the Greens remained rather silent in this debate.<sup>38</sup> Also the debate about the Government Proposal Regarding the Activity of Forces anticipated some potential future problem, although the framework document for 2008 was accepted.

The situation deteriorated in 2008. In May, during the 30<sup>th</sup> Assembly Prime Minister Topolánek reported on the progress of the negotiation with the U.S. The Social Democrats attacked the government heavily and pointed out, among other things, that Russia was reframed from a threat to a partner, which, according to the Social Democratic deputy chairman of the Chamber of Deputies Lubomír Zaorálek, indicated the future development of the issue.<sup>39</sup> In October, during the 39<sup>th</sup> Assembly the Chamber of Deputies should have been divided about the agreements negotiated with the U.S. The governmental deputies stressed the multilateralization/NATOization of the Third Pillar as it was the crucial condition for the consent of the Greens. This chapter has already mentioned that the Greens remained split while the opposition claimed the MD could not be considered as fully anchored within the NATO structure.<sup>40</sup> After the debate the ratification was cancelled as it became obvious that the government could not push the agreements through.

Already in August 2008 the Chamber of Deputies discussed the governmental proposal to send 100 Special Forces troops to the US-led counter-terrorist operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. Several Social Democrats, including the party chairman Jiří Paroubek, gave the warning during the debate that they would not support a similar proposal in the future unless a deeper debate about the sense and prospects of the Afghan operations would develop. Although this time the Social Democrats approved the governmental plan, the situation remained extremely tensed. As a result the Social Democrats, for the first time in the history of the independent Czech Republic, refused the Government Proposal Regarding the Activity of Forces in December 2008.<sup>41</sup> It has been already mentioned that the Chamber of Deputies additionally approved the governmental proposal in February 2009. With the fall of the govern-

ment in the middle of the Presidency the security agenda virtually disappeared from the Parliament.

The Parliament, however, should also execute several control functions. Regarding the agenda outlined in this chapter, the Defence Committee of the Chamber of Deputies, which had already been led for a few electoral terms by the Civic Democrat Jan Vidím, has a responsibility for it. The stenographic records reveal that the Committee dealt with all the above-mentioned acquisition cases. However, the only discussants were usually Mr Vidím and the Social Democratic MP Antonín Sed'a, who also interpellated the defence minister Vlasta Parkanová in the case of the problematic purchase of the Dingo 2 vehicles. It is worth mentioning that the resolutions of the Committee are usually consensual.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, the Committee did not hold a relevant discussion on the issue of an unprecedented purge of the highest-ranking military officials, although these people left the armed forces at their own request after disposing with top-secret strategic information for years.

The discussion of the energy security agenda has already mentioned the independent expert commission led by Václav Pačes. This commission provides a unique attempt in the Czech environment to involve actors external to the state administration and political representation in the process of policy development and formation. The commission was asked to elaborate an independent and complex analysis of the energy sector on the basis of a non-ideological and expert discussion that would serve as a foundation for the formulation of the Czech energy policy that would include the energy security perspective. The chairman of the commission confirmed that his work remained resistant to political and economic pressures despite the fact that the commission included two delegated experts for each relevant political party. Even if the work survived political pressures, the conclusions of the commission were heavily attacked, particularly by the Greens, who traditionally oppose the usage of nuclear energy, which the commission identified as one of the crucial future resources of energy for the Czech Republic. Having the advantage of temporal distance, I can already confirm that the political elite forgot the final report published in July 2008. However, the potential resuscitation is virtually possible as the final report takes a long-term perspective.

## **THE SECURITY DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC SPACE**

It cannot come as a surprise that the Czech media often overlook important events and processes in the area of foreign policy. Generally, it could be argued that the media cover topics that are strongly reflected in the internal political arena. It is rather difficult to find some information about the foreign missions or the PRT in Afghanistan in the media, even if these have currently been the principal Czech foreign missions. For example, the views on Afghanistan only appeared when the political parties clashed heavily and especially when the framework document for the next year's foreign engagement of the Czech troops was not approved. Additionally, with the radar

issue fading out, the Czech debate regarding other security topics disappeared as well.

It has been already shown that the missile defence issue had a tremendous impact on the Czech political scene and hence the media reported regularly on the development of the negotiation with the U.S. as well as on all events surrounding the issue. This activity could be also explained by the fact that most of the media supported the American plan and hence were more willing to address this topic.

The radar was a hot topic especially in 2008, as the negotiations were to be concluded and the agreements ratified. Moreover, it has been already mentioned that the radar became one of the crucial topics for the regional elections held in October 2008. One of the events that particularly attracted attention was the above-mentioned surprising note about the negotiation with Russians about their possible presence on the planned base made by the U.S. defence minister Robert Gates at a press conference in October 2007. Before then, the possibility that the Russian soldiers might return to the Czech territory had not appeared in the context of discussions about the radar.

The media also recognized the crucial role of the NATOization of the project, which was reported at the Bucharest Summit in early April 2008. Most of the media interpreted the results in the same way as the Czech diplomacy and all the political supporters – i.e. that the NATOization was achieved. The only rather reluctant daily journal in this respect was *Právo*.<sup>43</sup> The media were also the first to offer a dark scenario in July 2008, when the oil supplies from Russia were interrupted right after the signature of the first bilateral agreement between the U.S. and Czech Republic on the American installment on the Czech territory. With the campaign before the election becoming more severe, the radar was almost omnipotent. Nevertheless, one particular event appears to be interesting in my view. In late October 2008, just three weeks before the election, the counter-intelligence Security Information Service published a classified report according to which the Russian secret services became extremely active on the Czech territory and arguably supported some of the radar opponents from the civil society activists' groups. The media heavily reported on this alleged threat. However, virtually none of the articles and reports asked whether it is the most appropriate period of time for the intelligence to come out with such a statement, as it was supported only by the classified report.

Finally, some of the media reacted almost hysterically on the Obama's decision to revoke the Third Pillar plan. Some of the headlines were apparently meant to recall the Cold War times through the Soviet-style metaphores. This reaction was slightly surprising given the fact that the decision was generally awaited. That said the media action resembled more a campaign emphasizing the disagreement with the current U.S. decision.

Quite interestingly, the media shared the political perceptions regarding the prioritization of the energy security and dealt with this topic substantially. The media covered the Russian-Ukrainian and Russian-Belorussian disputes over the prices of the energy resources that influenced the situation in some of the member states. Particularly *Hospodářské noviny* contextualized the analysis with the situation of the Czech Republic from a perspective of its transit routes and reserves. The coverage during the Russian-Ukrainian gas crises on the outset of the Czech EU Presidency was even

more detailed. Interestingly, the analysis of the media coverage of the Presidency revealed that the media were interested in covering the Czech Presidency particularly at its very beginning. The most active daily in this respect was *Lidové noviny*, followed by *Mf Dnes*, *Právo* and *Hospodářské noviny*. The most positive reports were connected with the Czech engagement in the energy crisis. The media became slightly more critical when it came to the Czech engagement in the Gaza conflict, particularly due to the fading of the information after the meeting between the Czech Prime Minister Topolánek and the French President Nicholas Sarkozy. It should be added that the same analysis, which was made in May, showed that the media were much less interested in the May summits dealing with the Southern Corridor and Eastern Partnership. Not only from this perspective the intended crucial events of the Presidency cannot be considered as successful.

The media also captured the publication of the final report following the work of prof. Pačes' commission. Most of the articles and comments focused on the role of nuclear energy and expressed rather skeptical views regarding the chances that the expert commission could break through the governmental stalemate that was based on the fact that the Greens were consistently refusing the extension of the nuclear option.

Some major acquisitions that lacked public competitions and were organized under strange circumstances and unnecessary time constraints finally attracted the attention of some journalists and especially their editors. Regarding the case of Ivecos the articles pointed to a surprisingly high price. Whereas the first 15 vehicles cost 499 million CZK (i.e. one vehicle for roughly 33 million CZK), the next 90 vehicles became more expensive as the Ministry of Defence paid 3.6 billion CZK for them (i.e. roughly 40 million CZK per vehicle). When it comes to the advanced military technologies the prices are rather difficult to compare as the configuration might differ substantially. Nevertheless the difference is rather striking, not to mention the fact that the Norwegian army bought the Ivecos for about 9 million CZK per vehicle two years ago. A similar speculation arose in the Dingo 2 case, where the final price reached 33 million CZK for the Czech Republic while the Bundeswehr paid one third less. Even if the Czech configuration would be much more expensive, there still remains the question of why Czech forces in particular would need more expensive components than other armies. The media also reported on the alleged high profit margin for the brokering companies, although the contracts remain secret, so it is virtually impossible to verify the figures. Finally, the retirement of the high profile generals attracted some attention, although it was contextualized mainly with the scandals concerning the Nazi symbols on the uniforms of some soldiers in the foreign missions. Even if these cases should not be underestimated, it is hard to believe that they would lead to the retirement of several top generals.

## CONCLUSION

The security dimension of the Czech foreign policy has gone through several challenges in the period of 2007–2009. Both internally and externally the most articulated

issue was the missile defence. From the former perspective it became one of the crucial topics for the internal political struggle. Arguably, the controversy over the missile defence issue strongly influenced the regional and Senate elections in autumn 2008. From the latter perspective it appeared as a weekly agenda for the bilateral relations with the U.S. as well, as it partially determined the agenda on the NATO and EU levels. Last but not least the planned Third Pillar was provoking strongly damnatory reactions in Moscow that could not be overlooked by the Czech diplomacy.

Nevertheless, the chapter also attempted to show that several other security-related issues were relevant in the period observed. The Czech Republic has established its own Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan to enhance the recognition of its engagement in the alliance's endeavours. On the other hand the Afghan agenda also became a hostage of the internal political struggles when the yearly plan of the Czech forces' engagement abroad was not approved by the Chamber of Deputies for the first time at the end of 2008. This event has evoked one major general observation claiming that the hostile internal political conditions have affected the sphere of foreign security policy as well. Last but not least the chapter tried to illustrate the unsatisfactory state of the defense resort while pointing to the malfunctioning system of acquisitions as well as to some moves in the area of personal policy hinting at deep instability. Although any prediction is difficult the expected modulation of the political scene would allegedly have positive effects on the foreign security policy. That said, it might provide for conditions allowing deeper reforms in the Ministry of Defence and the army.

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- <sup>24</sup> Zpráva Nezávislé odborné komise pro posouzení energetických potřeb České republiky v dlouhodobém časovém horizontu. On-line: ([www.vlada.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=42575](http://www.vlada.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=42575)).
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**PART III:  
Bilateral Relations with Selected  
Countries and Regions  
in 2007–2009**



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## Chapter 5

# The Visegrad Cooperation, Poland, Slovakia and Austria in the Czech Foreign Policy

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The Czech foreign policy (CFP) towards Central European countries will be analysed as a single (more or less) coherent dimension of the Czech foreign policy where the multilateral and the bilateral cooperation are closely intertwined. This chapter analyses the Czech Republic's involvement in the Visegrad cooperation and its bilateral relations with Poland, Austria and Slovakia. However, to be sure, the next chapter (Vladimír Handl) analyses the CFP towards Germany, which, from the Czech foreign policy point of view, is considered to also be a part of Central Europe.

### **CENTRAL EUROPE IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT**

The newly formed government of M. Topolánek (January 2007) entered into the Central European politics with all the bilateral relationships essentially settled (but with several exceptions in the case of Austria, as will be seen below) and with an above-standard level of communication within the Visegrad group (V4 – Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia). Similarly to the the case of the CFP in general, there is no strategic grasp on the Czech Central European policy. Traditionally, governmental programme declarations confined themselves to generally sounding declarations of the need of good neighbourhood relations. Neither the *Conception of the foreign policy of the Czech Republic for the years 2003–2006*<sup>1</sup> nor the government programme declaration from early 2007 stepped beyond this general meaning. This is rather unfortunate because the state of the Central European relationships is unprecedentedly good and it creates a great potential for further mutually beneficial cooperation in great many fields. Yet, capitalizing on this potential requires looking at the Central European politics from a broad, politically determined strategic point of view, but such a view has been missing so far. There is absolutely no political discussion on Central European

issues as if the state of affairs were taken for granted without any need to go much further. This is not to say that political actors would have no interest in Central Europe. Rather on the contrary – both executive and parliamentary diplomacy is very active in this matter, there is a dense network of communication on the top political level, and each and every successive government recognizes the importance of Central European diplomacy. Thus, traditionally, all Czech top political actors (e.g. the prime minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the president, the chairmen of the chambers of the parliament) meet with their Central European counterparts several times a year and this fact greatly contributes to the exceptional level of the Central European relations. The intensity of the diplomatic contacts can even be said to have an increasing tendency. This is especially due to the EU membership, the Czech EU presidency, and the financial and economic recession in 2008 and 2009.

This intensive diplomatic involvement of the top political actors partly counterweights the lack of a political framework but the problem that there is no other politically motivated discussion which would provide the Czech Central European policy with a firm political background persists. The Central European policy is thus mostly driven by the MFA and its specialized departments that act without much of a strategic framework. Under these circumstances it is hardly possible to fully exploit the potential of the favourable conditions in the Central European region for deep strategic cooperation. Also, despite the unproblematic running of the Central European politics, from time to time conflict situations appear. Lacking a comprehensive strategic and political framework, the Czech Republic has a tendency to act in an emotional way and rather on the basis of short-term considerations instead of taking into account long-term interests (see below). With a more deeply ingrained sense of the strategic political framework of the Central European politics, such situations would be easier to manage or would not appear at all.

The new comprehensive debate and strategy should above all consider the following questions. First, how can we best utilize the existing good bilateral neighbourhood relations and the V4 cooperation in order to advance Czech interests in European and security politics and world politics (which, of course, also requires the so far equally non-existent discussion about the Czech interest as such)? Second, what can the Czech Republic contribute to the Central European space in terms of capabilities, ideas and inspirations, and why? Third, what role should the entire region play in the European and world arenas, and what should be Central Europe's contribution to world affairs? This last point is of a special importance because so far the so-called 'new EU members' mostly came up with a reactive approach to European politics without any real positive programme (which even applies to the EU's Eastern policy, which has so far been the most 'positively' defined priority of the Central European region).

## **THE VISEGRAD GROUP IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY IN 2007–2009**

The EU membership (2004) of the V4 countries prompted numerous politicians as well as political analysts to disbelief regarding the future value of the V4 coopera-

tion. Yet, on the contrary, mutual communication and cooperation was boosted up by the fact that all four countries were facing similar post-accession challenges.<sup>2</sup> From 2004 there has been an almost gradual increase of the numbers of V4 meetings, consultations, and projects at political, diplomatic, bureaucratic and public levels.<sup>3</sup> Also, due to the intensive communication during the pre-accession period, solid communication networks among political representatives and diplomatic and bureaucratic actors have been established. For example, during the second half of the Hungarian V4 presidency (that is, the first half of 2009) there were 150 events that were in one way or another linked to the Visegrad group – that means almost one V4 event every weekday. Obviously, this high number does not necessarily mean progress in terms of the quality of the cooperation. In any case, this dense interaction network contributes to socialization and to the formation of a quasi-Visegrad identity which further enhances conditions for the V4 cooperation.<sup>4</sup>

The Czech policy towards the V4 during 2007 was determined mostly by the preparation and later on by the execution of the Czech V4 presidency, which, in turn, was mostly determined by the upcoming Czech EU presidency. The Czech Republic took over the V4 presidency from Slovakia in July 2007. The final programme<sup>5</sup> of the Czech presidency stressed the need to enhance the effectiveness of the V4 group, especially regarding the EU affairs, which would be important especially because of the Czech EU presidency in 2009. Creating a transparent mechanism of cooperation in the EU was aimed at establishing a mutual support of candidacies in the EU (but also in other international organizations), at stabilizing the mechanism of meetings at various levels of the V4 representatives on the margins of important multilateral events, at the strengthening of the tradition of organizing top meetings in the V4 and V4+ formats, and at greater coordination and review of the cooperation among various sector ministries. Also, better PR work of the Visegrad group was included. These procedural priorities were quite ambitious and it took till the Polish and Hungarian presidencies in 2008 and 2009 to at least partly fulfil them.

Stabilizing the mechanism of meetings at various levels is a long term process which also found firmer ground only under the Hungarian presidency (see below). Enhancing the PR standing of the V4 is an extremely difficult task and as such it is a never-ending story with not so satisfactory outcomes. That is partly why in the last months of 2009 it was decided to try to focus on enhancing the standing of the V4 in the EU (particularly in Brussels) as an important element of the overall PR strategy. Still, the fact that the V4, for almost 20 years of its existence, continuously fails to arouse general public awareness should not be underestimated.

The Czech V4 presidency managed to strengthen communication among the V4 actors in Brussels. During 2007 and 2008 there were planned meetings for virtually all important European issues. Some of these meetings did not take place after all (as was the case with the planned consultations about budgetary revision, energy policy and reforms of the Lisbon treaty), and some were of a consultative nature (for example, the meetings devoted to the EU's Far East policy and Central Asia). Other meetings were considerably substantial and were even attended by the European Commission representatives (as was the case of the V4 meeting devoted to future EU enlargement).

Among the most vital agendas discussed by the permanent representatives in Brussels were the Schengen accession completion, free movement of workers, and the coordination of the assertion of the visa-free regime with Canada and the U.S.

Debates about strengthening communication among the V4 countries' officials in Brussels, however, were by far not concluded under the Czech presidency. Instead, it is a continuous topic. Mutual communication in Brussels is becoming so dense that it is also gradually becoming difficult for the national headquarters to permanently follow the development. The agenda debated by the Brussels officials is aimed at a broad variety of issues, extending from the agenda of the COEST, COTRA, and COASI working groups to the Common Agriculture Policy, cohesion policy, internal market reform, coordination of positions towards the European Defence Agency or customs related issues. Thus, the option to establish some more formal procedures of communication in Brussels was discussed. Yet, until the end of 2009 informal nature of communication was preferred. More stable communication can be expected on the level of the so-called 'Antici Group'. Also, it slowly became a habit that the high MFA's officials held their meeting just before GAERC or the top EU summits. This routine enables the V4 countries to stay informed about the positions and intentions of their counterparts, and in turn, it enhances their potential during the various EU meetings.

Another strong Czech V4 presidency priority was energy security. With the exception of the successful launch of the European Energy Forum (a Czech-Slovak initiative) in 2007 and 2008, there was no real progress in this area. An older plan to establish a specialized V4 working group on energy was being postponed. Also, a planned meeting of ministers responsible for energy did not take place. In general, until 2009 the divergences in positions towards energy related issues outweighed potential joint interests.

Failure to fulfil the above described priorities of the Czech presidency cannot really be characterized as a 'failure' since it is impossible to make substantial progress in such extensive matters during the course of one year. Instead, a great success lies in the fact that these priorities were adopted by the following presidencies. These continuous efforts then began to yield fruit in 2009.

One of the positive developments in 2009 was embodied in the effort to focus the top meetings on a single particular issue (which stood in contrast to the rather generally conceived meetings in the past). Thus, in October 2009, there was a meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs almost exclusively aimed at the Western Balkans. This approach was also chosen for the upcoming meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in March (devoted to the Eastern Partnership) and, more importantly, for the February 2010 Prime Ministerial meeting (devoted to energy and energy security). It is advisable to continue with this approach as it seems that single-issue-oriented meetings of top representatives prove to be more effective than the kinds of meetings which were held previously, in which the leaders met to debate on a broad range of issues.

The greater specialization of the V4 meetings might also have a positive effect on the so-called 'V4+' meetings. 'V4+' meetings are meetings of the V4 representatives to which politicians or officials of other countries interested in cooperation with the Visegrad group are invited. This mechanism was born out of the realization that it is

unthinkable for the V4 to enlarge and accept other members and also the realization that the V4 regional cooperation might profit from communication with other countries or similar regional groupings. During 2007–2009 there were certain dynamics in the nature of the V4+ mechanism. While in previous years (especially 2003–2005) there were efforts to establish closer links between the V4 and Benelux and the Nordic Council respectively, since 2007 the V4 shifted its attention to the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), which was an idea supported mostly by Poland.<sup>6</sup> During 2007–2009 there were numerous meetings and consultations in this setting (e.g. V4 + the Baltic countries) and the agenda ranged from the Eastern EU policy, security policy, energy security, climate changes. Till 2009 the quality of communication and cooperation between these two regional groupings reached the best state of all the V4+ forums.

In 2007 there were several contacts established between the V4 and the GUAM group (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova). The consultation of the V4 with GUAM had the potential to be promising as it reflected the then priorities for energy security of the Czech presidency (Azerbaijan and Georgia are important transit countries for the Caspian oil and gas). The orientation on GUAM also stemmed from the V4's general interest in the Eastern European neighbourhood. Besides, the Baltic countries intended to be part of a platform which would create a rather broad and potentially significant regional consultation forum. The problem with this platform lay in the significant sensitivity of the issues crucial for the Caspian region's geo-politics (Russia and frozen conflicts) as well as the fact that the inner cooperation of the GUAM group has not been precisely comprehensible to the Central European partners. Therefore, from 2007 till recently there has been no significant progress, and in 2009 it became clear that without a clear agenda to cooperate on, the V4 would be careful to engaging in this form of communication.

Since the EU accession in 2004 the V4 have been gradually strengthening their efforts to convince the EU to devote more attention to its Eastern and South-Eastern neighbourhood. Whether the V4 gave a greater emphasis to the Balkan or the Eastern European dimension depended on the particular V4 presidency country (although the differences were slight). Thus, during the Czech presidency in 2007/2008 the emphasis was laid more on the Eastern dimension and, in continuity with the precedent Slovakian presidency, particularly on Moldova (in October 2007 the historically first meeting of V4 foreign ministers and their Moldovan counterparts took place). The goal of the V4 was to further grant support to Moldova's EU aspirations and its transformation. Traditionally, the V4 maintain close contacts with Ukraine. The V4 is in the difficult position of balancing the EU's interest in stressing conditionality and the need for domestic transformations in the Eastern European countries on the one hand and the clear EU membership perspective demanded by the Eastern European countries on the other. In 2007–2009, in order to navigate between these two incompatible approaches, the V4 tried to communicate with both representatives of the European Commission and with the member countries that were at the helm of the EU Council at that time. In relation to this dimension of the EU's neighbourhood policy, the V4 tried to proceed in coordination with Germany (especially during the German

EU presidency in 2007) and later on with Sweden (the EU presidency country in the second half of 2009). A similar approach was planned towards Spain, which assumed its presidency role in January 2010. This moderate approach is of an absolute necessity if the V4 is to remain close to the European mainstream and yet steadily shift the EU's attention in a desirable direction.

The Eastern dimension of the V4 external cooperation was boosted by the successful launch of the *Eastern Partnership* (EaP). The basis of this project was laid out already in 2007 under the Czech V4 presidency with the support of all four V4 countries. The initiative was then taken over by the Polish and the Swedish diplomacy. The EaP was then officially launched in May 2009 during the Czech EU presidency as a project of the European Commission. It cannot be said that all four Visegrad countries agree on everything regarding the Eastern policy. There are different priorities and accents, and therefore the V4 does not proceed as effectively as it could. However, the V4's role as a platform for promoting a more active EU approach towards the EU's eastern neighbours remains crucial (for a detailed account of the Czech Eastern policy see Chapter 10).

Another long-term territorial priority of the V4 is its support for the Western Balkans' transformation and EU integration. During 2007 and 2008 (under the Czech and Polish V4 presidencies) this priority was stressed with much less intensity than the Eastern dimension. The V4 concentrated on expressing its general political support and technical consultation on the working level. Some important impulses were carried out due to the Slovenian EU presidency in the first half of 2008, with which the V4 countries maintained close communication. Yet, it was the Hungarian V4 presidency that, in line with its long-time territorial priorities, refocused the V4 on the Balkans. These initiatives peaked in October 2009, when the V4 foreign ministers met with the foreign ministers of the other two countries of the then EU presidency trio (which consisted of Hungary, Spain and Belgium) and the foreign ministers of the Western Balkan countries. The Visegrad Group agree on the need to maintain the current mandate of EUFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the support of a NATO Membership Action Plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. Also, the V4 tries to offer clearer EU membership perspectives to the Balkan countries and help with visa liberalization (the Czech position towards visa liberalization, though, is more reserved). Compared to the years 2007–2008 the V4 'Balkan policy' was more active in 2009, which was supported, among others, by the fact that the International Visegrad Fund (IVF) began to offer its resources to Serbian applicants and Kosovo's students. The Hungarian presidency also included energy issues in the Balkan agenda (for a detailed account of the Czech Balkan policy see Chapter 11).

Except for V4+ forums with other regional groupings, the Visegrad group often communicates with single countries. In 2007–2009 there was an apparent attempt to strengthen the communication with those of the so-called 'old member' countries that could have both a special understanding for the priorities and emphases stressed by the V4 and the necessary willingness to somehow support these V4 priorities. The V4 was thus oriented towards Germany and Sweden and sought their support in trying to persuade the EU to pay greater attention to its Eastern neighbours. In order to draw at-



attention to the issues accentuated by the V4, it became a tradition to invite top representatives from the EU presidency country to the V4 summits of the Prime Minister or the Ministers of Foreign Affairs. It is important that during 2009 the following practices, which differed from the previous ones, became almost regular: focusing top summits on a single agenda, inviting representatives from other EU member countries, and inviting the EU presidency country's representative in order to communicate about what the V4 accents (this was the case, e.g., with the October 2009 meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs devoted to the Western Balkan). It is also possible that if clear points of cooperation are identified, the V4 might consider developing closer ties with the *Balkan Council of Regional Cooperation*. However, it is necessary for the Council itself to become established as a meaningful platform for regional cooperation.

The V4 external activities are not confined only to the European region. There is a tradition of communication with Japan (mostly on environmental and economic issues) and there have been several contacts with Israel. In October 2009 the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs even suggested that Egypt could play the role of an observer at the V4 and also the role of Central Europe's gate to the African continent. However prestigious these contacts are, the V4 came to realize that it is necessary to fulfil the V4+ cooperation with concrete merits and agenda. Therefore the V4 representatives might be more careful about constituting ties with more distant and exotic countries or groupings if there are no clearly defined goals and agenda to cooperate on.

While the external cooperation of the V4 is more visible from the foreign policy point of view, the internal dimension of the V4 cooperation generally brings more concrete results. For several years the V4 discussed the possibilities to closely cooperate in the area of consular services, for example, by sharing consulates or by mutually representing each other in third countries. The need to share costs for carrying out the consular agenda was intensified by the spreading financial crisis, and in 2009 it was agreed that the so-called 'Visegrad House' would be opened in Cape Town. The Visegrad House was opened in March 2010 in a building of a Czech consulate that had been abolished in 2008. Its consular staff from each country will rotate in mutual representation on a weekly basis. Thus this project enables the V4 countries to lower the costs and to provide consular services in an area where they would otherwise not be able to maintain them for economical reasons. The V4 further discuss possibilities of launching similar projects in Crimean Sevastopol, Bombay or China. Yet, these plans will depend on the results of the Cape Town project.<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, for many years the V4 countries agreed that there was an interesting potential in mutual support for candidacies in international organizations. For example, in 2008 the V4 countries discussed mutual support for the Czech efforts to host the headquarters for the European navigation system Galileo, Hungary asked for support in its bid to host the headquarters of the European Institute for Innovation and Technology, and Slovakia sought similar support for its candidacy for a seat in the European Institute for Gender Equality. Again, it took till 2009 for the first common candidate to be introduced. The Czech Pavel Stehlík was (successfully) suggested as a common V4 candidate to the EXPO 2010 *Steering Committee*, and it is all the more important that Slovakia decided to withdraw its own candidate in order to save the

common candidacy. This historical breakthrough might signify closer cooperation in these matters in the future (even though important technical obstructions remain). The V4 should especially concentrate its efforts on promoting its candidates to the nascent *European External Action Service* (EEAS). It can hardly be expected that the V4 countries will extensively penetrate the EEAS, yet it is strongly advisable for them to aspire for as many representatives as possible in their priority territories (i.e. Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans).

Energy is a long time issue for the V4 countries. However, there was not much of an agreement on it because of persisting differences in the stances of particular V4 countries. This situation changed in 2009. New interest in moving on with the energy agenda was (among others) stirred up by the January 2009 gas crisis between Russia and Ukraine. The gas crisis was the main topic of the Prime Ministers' meetings in January 2009<sup>8</sup> and June 2009 as well as of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting in May 2009. It was at the June Prime Ministerial meeting where the setting up of a special working group on energy security was agreed (its first meeting took place in November 2009). Also, the already existing working group for energy (acting under the Ministries of Industry and Trade) resumed its work and discussed, among others, the EU's energy liberalization packet and gas supplies to the Central European region.

In the previous years it was especially the tandem of Poland and the Czech Republic that attempted to bring energy to the attention of the V4. Yet, the Hungarian presidency also included energy as one of its top priorities. Besides that, Hungary decided to play an active role in the project of the European gas pipeline Nabucco. In January 2009 Hungary organized the so-called Nabucco Summit, to which all interested countries and European Commission representatives were invited. The top event in this regard, though, was planned for February 2010, when the V4 Prime Ministers met in Budapest at a special Energy Security Summit, to which representatives of Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia and Romania were also invited. Obviously, this does not mean that all differences of interests and all obstacles have been cleared out. Yet, it is of a pivotal importance that after many years the urge to cooperate on energy issues was agreed upon by all four V4 countries.

There is a persistent discussion about the role the V4 should (and could) play within the EU. On the one hand, there are strong voices that claim that the V4 countries will really benefit from the cooperation only if the V4 will develop into a strong regional grouping capable of promoting their joint interest on the EU level. It is true that the weight of four Visegrad countries means a considerable negotiation force and that it is much easier to promote one's interests within a larger group of similar interests. However, there are two major problems with this approach. The first stems simply from the fact that the V4 countries are in most cases direct competitors instead of being partners with harmonious interests. Differing positions towards European issues stem not only from differing interests (most notably in regard to the Common Agriculture Policy, allocation of funds, the EU budget and so on) but also from politically determined factors. This was clearly demonstrated during the negotiation of the EU institutional reform during the German presidency (the first half of 2007). This issue

clearly caused the V4 states to drift apart. As a result, a deep and open political clash between the top political representatives of the V4 countries occurred in June 2007 with Poland (with moderate support from the Czech Republic) standing against Slovakia and Hungary (siding with Germany in its more favourable stance towards the proposed institutional reform).<sup>9</sup> This does not mean that the V4 countries completely lack a common interest. Their potential common interests mostly stem from the shared fate of 'post-communist' countries as well as from their shared post-EU-accession period experiences. This is also true of the joint drive to influence the EU's eastern and south-eastern neighbourhood policy. The effectiveness of joint action, especially when other similarly oriented countries (Baltic and Balkan) took part in it, was clearly felt by the EU during negotiations about the measures against climate changes. However, this brings up the second problem. Should the Visegrad group present itself too bluntly as a power group aimed at merely securing its narrow regional interests, a negative response on the part of other EU countries could be expected, which, in turn, could yield much more negative results for the ability of the V4 to communicate its priorities to the EU level. How sensitive this issue might be was already demonstrated by the French president Nicolas Sarkozy, who, in November 2009, warned the V4 countries against developing a habit of meeting 'regularly before each [EU] summit'.<sup>10</sup> Needless to say that such a statement was quite exaggerated, and for many V4 countries' officials, precisely this statement demonstrates the viability and utility of the Visegrad cooperation. Yet, it also eloquently illustrates the caution on the part of the EU members which could easily develop into a negative approach to the region should they feel that the prevailing consensual nature of European politics is in peril. Therefore it is advisable for the V4 countries to act in more moderate ways. Potential deals should be worked out rather quietly. When a common interest appears, the V4 countries should seek the support of a broader spectrum of member states, preferably including some of the 'old member' countries.

On the other hand, the argument asserted by some EU officials or EU experts that the coalitions within the EU should have merely an *ad hoc*, pragmatic and issue oriented basis is equally disputable. However rational and logical this approach sounds, it underestimates the strength of the feeling of 'we-ness' and the socialization forces that are at work among those involved in the Visegrad cooperation.<sup>11</sup> These forces – and other mechanisms – gradually developed to the extent that it really became a habit for the V4 representatives at all levels to meet regularly prior to important EU meetings. These meetings are rarely devoted to an actual *coordination* of policies. Mostly they are organized in order to inform the partners of one's intentions and seek a potential agreement. The fact that the V4 partners are frequently informed about each others' steps means that they rarely surprise each other during actual EU meetings. This alone gives them a considerable advantage.

Looking at the practices of the V4 countries one can see that this 'smart approach' which reflects all the risks described above, is usually put to work. The Czech EU presidency was a good example. As early as in May 2007 the Czech Prime Minister M. Topolánek declared the intention to define the Czech Republic's EU presidency priorities in cooperation with its V4 partners and to seek their support. Also, in June 2008

the Deputy Prime Minister A. Vondra spoke of the need to coordinate the Czech EU presidency within the V4.<sup>12</sup> Yet, reality proved that while the Czech Republic could rely on a general solidarity in most of the priorities, its role was much more moderate and there was not much room for headless assertion of regionally defined priorities. On the other hand, the communication and mutual informing among the V4 partners contributed to better management of the Czech EU presidency.

The only formal institution under the Visegrad heading is the *International Visegrad Fund* (IVF), founded by the V4 governments in June 2000. The goal of the fund is to promote closer cooperation among the V4 countries through financing a broad variety of projects. After the V4 countries joined the EU the IVF began also to concentrate on promoting closer ties between the V4 countries and other countries, especially non-EU members from Eastern Europe, the Western Balkan and the Southern Caucasus. In 2007, 15% of the overall budget flew into projects outside of the V4, which makes the V4 an important donor in the regions. In 2009, the V4 agreed upon rules for granting finances for so-called ‘flexible projects’. Flexible projects are exclusively intended to support transition and democratization processes in Eastern and South Eastern Europe. Thus the IVF plays an important role in assisting the V4 priorities. This role is also recognized in the dynamics of increasing the IVF’s budget. In 2006 the IVF budget (consisting of equal contributions from all the member countries) was 3,2 million Euro, in 2007 it was already 5 million Euro and in 2009 – in spite of the financial crisis – it was agreed that the IVF budget would be increased by 20% to 6 million Euro.<sup>13</sup>

Historically, one of the most vital levels of the V4 is cooperation among particular ministries. Traditionally, collaboration and communication work very well among the *Ministries of Defence* and among the V4 armies. The roots of these contacts reach back to the times of the Warsaw Pact but more recently the contacts were also strengthened by the attempts to fill up the security vacuum in Central Europe after 1989. In April 2007 the Ministers of Defence agreed to create a Visegrad Battlegroup consisting of 1500 troops, which was planned to be a part of the European forces of rapid reaction. The battlegroup was originally set to start operating in the horizon beyond 2015 under the Polish command.<sup>14</sup> After months of evaluation of this plan in 2007, it was decided to stop the preparations in 2008 and to renew them in 2013. Since the beginning of the 1990s there have been endless debates and numerous attempts to launch projects of common activities in the fields of armament acquisition and equipment modernization. In most cases, however, these projects failed to be realized due to a broad variety of reasons – particular national defence industry interests, a lack of finances which pushed the V4 countries to seek a partner outside of the Central European region, etc. Despite the lack of concrete results, in 2007–2009 there were many consultations on both the political and the working level. In March 2009 a rather strong sounding memorandum regarding the common armament modernization project was adopted. Defence and security related debates were held on all levels – working and political – concentrating on the multilateral (NATO and EU) as well as regional defence issues. The V4 is in many cases able to advocate ideas that

are not in the EU or NATO mainstream, especially regarding the NATO ‘open doors’ policy. The Ministers of Defence as well as the chiefs of staffs expressed continuing support for Ukrainian and Georgian aspirations to join NATO (this support was less visible during 2009). Successful cooperation runs among the V4 armies, mostly in joint military exercising and information sharing.

Similarly strong yet publicly almost unknown is cooperation among the *Ministries of the Interior*. An absolute priority in 2007 was to implement successfully (and on time) the Schengen *acquis*. To secure this goal a special ‘V4 schengen working group’ was established. Besides that, there is a continuous communication on issues like asylum seekers, legal and illegal immigration, extremism, border controls and public service. In 2008, due to the recently active EU approach to the climatic changes, the cooperation among the *Ministries of Environment* obtained an important impulse. Many V4 projects were also realized in the field of *culture*. There is a V4 working group that analyses impacts of economic and social changes on the cultural heritage of V4 countries. Since 2009 there were consultations analysing the impacts of the global financial and economic recession on the cultural heritage. The most visible results from the cooperation of the *Ministries of Industry and Trade* are in the field of energy, which has experienced interesting dynamics from 2009 onward. An important part of the internal cooperation between various governmental departments consists of communication between the respective parliamentary committees.

As we could see, the V4 is a viable part of the Central European region as well as of the Czech foreign policy. There are important advantages and potential stemming from participation in this regional forum. The V4 provides the Czech Republic with the comfort of an almost natural communication platform which is unparalleled anywhere in the region. This platform greatly reduces the costs for gaining information about the intentions of the regional partners and for gaining information in general. The Visegrad cooperation proved to be a stabilizing factor during the bilateral political crisis in the region – the V4 cooperation is deep enough to sustain even quite substantial clashes among the member countries. Thus, the V4 considerably contributes to the overall regional stability, which is one of the key interests of the Czech Republic. The V4 also lends an extra weight to the Czech position in those areas where all four countries agree on a common policy. Besides, the V4 managed to establish itself as a recognized regional trademark, as a messenger of broader regional points of view. These regional voices are thus harder to ignore. If the V4 adopts the above described smart approach to its cooperation namely in the EU affairs, it can further strengthen the ability of its members to assert their own goals and priorities. This will be especially important during the upcoming Hungarian and Polish EU presidency (2011).

This would, however, require the V4 to substantially increase the level of mutual solidarity and do more thorough work on identifying particular issues of common interest. During 2008–2009 signs of Visegrad fatigue were apparent as the cooperation required a new political impulse. Also, the often celebrated cooperation among particular ministries has been on a slight decline. All these issues, however, demand a strong political concept, which, so far, has been rather missing.

## POLAND IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY

In the period shortly before the two countries entered the NATO and the EU, the level of the Czech-Polish relations was exceptionally good. The communication between ministries was natural, regular and intensive at all levels, and there were regular meetings between the EU accession negotiators. The Czech-Polish cooperation reached its peak in 1997–1999. After the two countries joined the EU, this extraordinary level of collaboration was partly replaced by communication within the Visegrad group, and the Polish position did not much exceed the positions of the other Visegrad partners. Since 2007, though, several factors contributed to the fact that Poland again acquired a prominent place in the Czech foreign policy. The ideological and political make-up of the governing coalitions was very similar (conservative-liberal and centre-rightist), which contributed to the closeness of the two countries. Besides that, especially during the era of the conservative Polish Prime Minister J. Kaczyński (Law and Justice /PiS/), the two countries were also close to each other in their views of the EU and transatlantic relations. Last but not least, the U.S.'s proposal to build components of its anti-missile defence in the Czech Republic and Poland also brought these two countries together. The recent exceptional level of the bilateral relationship is also made possible by the fact that there are no real controversial issues that would hinder the mutual ties. The high standard of the Czech – Polish relationship is also demonstrated by frequent contacts among the top representatives and by the close relationship between the Czech President V. Klaus and the former Polish President L. Kaczyński.

The similarity of the two countries' views of the EU institutional reform was a particularly determining factor in 2007. The Czech Republic supported Poland's unfavourable position towards the proposed shape of the reform treaty (Poland especially challenged the proposed EU Council voting system). At the EU summit in June 2007 the Czech support was not unconditional, yet Polish representatives (including the Polish president) positively acknowledged the Czech stance.

It has to be stressed that the common position towards the EU's institutional layout in 2007 was determined mostly politically, and as such it is subject to change according to the political preferences of a given government. This became clear already in late 2007, when the new liberal and more pro-European government of Donald Tusk (Civic Platform /PO/) took over and clearly stated that Poland will not present any obstacle to the reform treaty. Thus it is important to ask whether the Czech Republic and Poland share some more stable and 'natural' interests in the EU. For example, it is true that the Polish representatives and scholars argued on several occasions that the expected Polish 2011 EU presidency program is compatible with 80% of the Czech Republic's stated priorities for the Czech presidency in 2009. However, it is also becoming clear that the previously common preferences given by the shared 'post-EU-accession' fate (Schengen, transitional provisions, etc.) wither away as time goes by. The Czech Prime Minister M. Topolánek made it clear already in 2007 that he sees two types of EU members – those who 'suck out' the EU's resources and those who stand for greater liberalization.<sup>15</sup> While M. Topolánek did not suggest which particular countries belong to which category, it is obvious that he saw the EU's fundamental

division between the net contributors to and the net recipients of the EU's budget. It is broadly expected (despite the latest economic development) that this division would set the Czech Republic and Poland apart during the financial perspective negotiations as the Czech Republic is expected to become a net contributor. Similarly, in the short term perspective, clashes about the common agriculture and cohesion policies will likely occur. On the other hand, there are still areas where the Czech Republic and Poland can find common ground. Both countries support further liberalization of the service market, and there might also be an agreement on the allocation of the EU budget resources in areas of research or energy and transportation projects. General harmony also exists in accentuating further EU enlargement and energy security. Yet, even in these two areas, dissonances can occur. For example, the two countries are not exactly in perfect harmony even in their support for visa liberalization (e.g. with Ukraine).<sup>16</sup> In the area of energy the Czech side did not make Poland happy in 2007 when it agreed with Germany that the Czech Republic would connect to the Nord Stream gas pipeline, as the Nord Stream project caused a great many discussions in the German-Polish and Russian-Polish relations. The Czech Republic, on the other hand, does not support the Polish-Ukrainian proposal to revert the Odessa–Brody crude oil pipeline. The dissimilarities of the two countries' stances towards the EU policies do not present a fundamental handicap in the Czech-Polish relationship as the coalitions in the EU are traditionally built on an issue-oriented basis. The weakness stems more from the fact that the cooperation in European affairs has not been built strategically, continually and consciously. The two countries' mutual proximity is rather accidental and does not stand on a firm ground.<sup>17</sup> In this area there is plenty of room for future improvements. However, these improvements will first of all require that the Czech Republic clearly define its own vision of Europe and of its priorities (see Chapter 1).

During the period of 2007–2009 both countries faced a similar challenge when they were approached by the U.S. with the proposal to host elements of the then planned anti-missile defence (AMD) base in Central Europe. Poland was supposed to host the missile launch site while the Czech Republic was to host the radar detection site. After almost three years of negotiations the then new U.S. administration of B. Obama decided to cancel the U.S. plans for this particular project in September 2009. During the period of negotiations with the U.S. the AMD issue was on the agenda of each and every top political meeting between the Czech Republic and Poland. There were also countless consultations on it on the expert and working levels. Yet the depth of the actual coordination cannot be exaggerated. Both sides tried their best to consult and to inform each other (even though information about the negotiation progress often arrived *after* the negotiation took place). But actual coordination of negotiations did not take place. Rather, both countries opted for quite different approaches towards the American administration. While Poland approached the negotiation from the position of a long time and strong ally who expected to be appropriately rewarded for its willingness to cooperate, the Czech Republic understood its inclusion in the project as an opportunity to improve its relationship with the United States.<sup>18</sup> These differences were manifested, for example, in the hardness of the negotiation tactics, especially after the liberal government of D. Tusk took over in No-

vember 2007. Poland adopted a much more assertive approach towards the U.S., as embodied in statements by the new Minister of Foreign Affairs R. Sikorski or the Minister of Defence D. Klich. Prior to the government change it looked like Poland would close the negotiations well ahead of the Czech Republic. After D. Tusk assumed his Prime Ministerial office the pace of the Polish negotiations slowed down dramatically. The Czech Republic, on the other hand, adopted a softer approach and focused on ‘soft’ projects like cooperation in research. However, no matter what the particular nature of the mutual communication was, it remains clear that almost three years of sharing the fate of being in one of the hotspots of an American policy brought the two countries even closer to each other on both political and working levels. Their shared identity in defence and security matters was further strengthened by the repeated Russian threats towards both countries in relation to their intentions to be included in the U.S. AMD project.

This brings us to the question of a more broadly conceived cooperation in the area of defence and security. Both countries traditionally share a strong sense for preserving the complementarity of the European and transatlantic (NATO) security dimensions. During the period 2007–2009 there was no doubt that both countries were leaning more towards the transatlantic pillar of the regional security. However, in summer 2009 Poland made important steps towards strengthening its involvement in the European Security and Defence Policy. Among others, Poland declared its intention to include the Common Security and Defence Policy in its 2011 EU presidency program. These intentions were also communicated to the Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs J. Kohout during his meeting with his Polish counterpart R. Śikorski in July 2009. After the American president B. Obama decided to cancel the U.S. plans for AMD sites in Poland and the Czech Republic, even some of the Czech pro-Atlantic political community partly reassessed their stance towards the European security dimension, which opens up a space for further cooperation in this area. Since late 2007 the Polish government has continuously worked on building a positive image of Poland as a dependable and constructive partner. Poland intensified its activities towards the so-called G6 (a group that includes Germany, France, Great Britain, Poland, the current EU presidency country and the European Commission) and fought to strengthen its position in European politics. The Czech Republic should be able to follow this fresh Polish assertiveness when and where it could serve the Czech (as well as broader regional) interests, and the security issues might present a good opportunity for this approach to be put to work.

### ***Transborder Cooperation and Other Issues***

Transborder cooperation is a very vital dimension of the Czech-Polish bilateral relations. In 1994 the *Czech-Polish Intergovernmental Commission for Transborder Cooperation* was established. The aim of the commission was to support and boost the nascent transborder cooperation, which in the mid-1990s required impulses from the government. After fifteen years of the commission’s existence, its original role of cooperation initiator diminished because the regional and local authorities and the grass root organizations are themselves very active, and it is these actors who play the key



role in the transborder activities. However, there is still plenty of room for contributions of the governmental authorities to the transborder cooperation. First, the transborder regions suffer from an inadequate transport infrastructure (see below). Second, the commission can act as a platform for communication and coordination in the sphere of European finances, which are increasingly crucial for the realization of the sheer majority of transborder projects. Unfortunately, so far, this kind of communication did not work very well. The longest tradition of the transborder cooperation is related to the six Euroregions, of which the oldest is the Euroregion Nisa. The greatest contributor to the transborder cooperation during 2007–2009, though, was the European operational program *Transborder Cooperation Czech Republic-Poland*. There is a sum of 219 million Euros that was allocated for this program, and slightly less than half of it is available for the projects submitted by the Czech side. The program began to provide finances in early 2008 toward the general aim of enhancing the accessibility of the transborder areas, supporting favourable entrepreneurial conditions and tourism, and supporting the local communities.<sup>19</sup>

The common border not only provides for opportunities, but it is also one of the very few burdensome issues in the Czech-Polish relationship. The Czech Republic owes Poland some 368 hectares of territory as a consequence of the straightening of the borderline in 1958. Until 2007 the Czech side refused to compensate Poland by actual land. Instead, a decree of the centre-leftist government of J. Paroubek (Prime Minister in 2005–2006) stated that the compensation could be done exclusively via financial reimbursement, which was unacceptable for Poland. In 2007 an important breakthrough occurred when the Czech side agreed to compensate Poland by land which the Czech Republic would try to find. However, the Czech local authorities that would be affected by the compensation fiercely protested against this solution. The regional leaders turned the issue into a political agenda. Subsequently, the central government, realizing the political risk involved, postponed the process of identifying the particular properties intended for the compensation till after the Czech regional and Senate elections (November 2008). On the other hand, the political leadership agreed that the Czech-Polish neighbourhood relations had priority before regional and local criticism, which presented an important signal<sup>20</sup> as a parliamentary approval by a constitutional majority would be required for the compensation to pass through. Another persisting contested cause is related to the so-called ‘Warsaw immovables’. History of this issue reaches back to the end of World War II, when the Polish government decided to nationalize four Czech buildings in Warsaw, of which the most important were the Czech embassy and the ambassador’s residence. Since the 1990s the Czech Republic has strived to reacquire these building but there is a number of legal, technical and political hurdles. Yet, efforts to solve this problem enjoy political support and there is a continuous and promising expert communication underway to help solve it.

As mentioned, there has been a persisting problem stemming from the lack of an adequate transport infrastructure. Poland has no freeway that would connect with the freeways of the Czech Republic. In 2008 it was expected that the first cars could pass the borders via a new freeway in 2011 (which was already three years later than originally planned). While the Polish side might be able to finish its part in 2011, the

Czech side will not be able to finalize its part before 2012 and it is possible that with the necessary cuts in the transport budget from 2009 on, the delay will be even more substantial. The Czech delay might cause heavy problems to northern Moravia as thousands of cars might use the newly built Polish A1 freeway each day with no corresponding freeway connection on the Czech side to absorb this traffic. In general, during 2007–2009 the fundamental transport interconnection problems remained unresolved. On the other hand, with the help of the above mentioned transborder operational program finances, several important local projects were carried out, as, for example, the re-opening of the train connection between the Czech city Harrachov and the Polish city Szklarska Poręba after 65 years in 2009.

The transborder and, even more importantly, the economic cooperation benefited from the activities of the Czech general consulates in Wrocław and in Katowice in the past. However, the general consulate in Wrocław was closed down already in 2005, and in 2007 it was decided to close down the general consulate in Katowice as well. Both decisions stirred up a very negative response on the part of the regional authorities as well as the regional trade chambers and it took several years to figure out how to at least partly replace the missing representation. As a partial compensation it was decided to open honorary consulates in Bydgoszcz, Częstochowa and Wrocław.

An important contribution to (as well as a proof of the excellent level of) the mutual relationship is the project of the Czech-Polish forum. The first ideas for it came to life in late 2007 and it was established by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs in late 2008. Both countries agreed to contribute 200 000 Euro each for the first two years of the forum's activities and to evaluate its contribution after this period. The forum is aimed to support existing as well as new activities in the spheres of politics, research, sports, culture, education, youth exchange, transborder cooperation, the media, economy, etc. The intention is to provide the Czech-Polish relationship with a stronger (grass roots) basis which would be more independent from the actual political bilateral setting.

### ***Economic Relations***<sup>21</sup>

Economic relations function as an inevitable interconnecting vehicle for any bilateral relationship. The mutual trade has been radically growing ever since 2002, when Poland ranked seventh among the most important Czech trade partners. During the years 2002–2006 the volume of mutual trade increased three times, and Poland even reached the position of the second most important trade partner two times (in 2007 and 2009). Most of the time, though, Poland was in the third position, after Germany and Slovakia. With its 38 million people Poland belongs among the largest markets in Europe and thus presents an important opportunity for the Czech business community (needless to say that due to its large domestic product consumption Poland was one of the few European countries that did not undergo an economic recession during 2008–2009). Until 2009 the Czech Republic had a slightly positive trade balance, and 2009 was also the first year that saw a decline in the mutual trade in a long time (the decline was 23.6% in the first 10 months of 2009). The most successful Czech exporter is the car manufacturer Škoda Auto, whose automobiles traditionally rank among the top three most popular cars in Poland.

It is crucial that the mutual trade is not the only component of the overall economic relations as more sophisticated forms of business cooperation – such as consortiums, capital participation, investments, joint ventures, and third-market cooperation – have also been developing during 2007–2009. The single most important Czech investor in Poland is the semi-state-owned energy company ČEZ. ČEZ owns around 2% of the Polish energy sector. In 2007 ČEZ planned to bid for some important Polish energy companies (e.g. Enea) but the conservative government of J. Kaczyński decided to cancel its privatization plans (in 2009 ČEZ decided to bid again in cooperation with the German company RWE). In addition to these larger energy investments, ČEZ also invests into acquiring shares in actual power plants and heating plants. With its rising presence in the energy sphere, ČEZ has also been looking for ways to get a better grip on coal prices and supplies in Poland. The ČEZ activities in Poland met with continuous political and diplomatic support from the top Czech representatives in their talks with their Polish counterparts. However, it is possible (among others due to the low energy prices in 2009 and the still not fully recovered energy market) that in the nearest future ČEZ might reconsider its investment activities abroad as it will concentrate more on consolidation of existing assets, which will also affect its investment strategy in Poland. Another interesting mutual project in the energy sector was the plan for a 30 km long gas interconnector financed jointly by the Polish company Gaz-System and the Czech company RWE Transgas Net. The interconnector is aimed to contribute to the diversification of the European gas transport routes. Another active Czech investor in Poland is the Czech-Slovak financial group Penta, which expands into many market spheres in Poland. One of its major investments was supposed to take place in an area of the defence industry – in 2008 the Penta owned company Aero Vodochody decided to place a bid for the Polish helicopter manufacturer PZL-Swidnik. It competed with the Italian-British company Agusta-Westland. At first, it was (true, rather surprisingly) expected that the Czech company would win the contest, and the Czech diplomacy provided Penta with its support. However, in August 2009 the Polish government enabled the rival company to overbid the Czech offer.<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, the final weeks of the contest were accompanied by a harsh media campaign against Penta that accused it of secretly working with Russian capital. Despite this controversy, Penta remains interested in doing business with Poland. For example, in 2009 it offered Poland around 16 Czech L-159 fighter aircraft, which would replace the overdue Polish Iskra planes.

The most important Polish investment in the Czech Republic still remains the holding of the 63% share of the key Czech petrochemical company Unipetrol by the Polish company PKN Orlen. This topic also became an issue of the top diplomatic relations as the Czech side has been asking for a more detailed account of the ownership structure and overall background of PKN Orlen for a long time. According to available sources, so far these efforts have not been very successful. Both cases (Penta's failure as well as the PKN Orlen affair) reflect the fact that when it comes to strategic and sensitive issues, each country resorts to a careful protection of its interests despite the high sounding political rhetoric. On the other hand, these two cases cannot hide the fact that the mutual economic relationship has been developing excellently during 2007–2009 and the fact that it provides a robust basis for relations in other spheres.

## AUSTRIA IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY

The Czech relationship with Austria is the most troublesome of all the relations covered in this chapter. Yet, this is not to say the relationship deviates from the overall positive framework of the Czech Republic's good neighbourhood relations. There are two major issues that have the potential to negatively affect the relationship. First, there is the use of nuclear energy, which Austria refuses while the Czech Republic considers it as a growingly important element of its energy mix. Second, the Czech-Austrian relationship is still heavily burdened by the historical reminiscences of the transfer of Austrians from Czechoslovakia (Sudetenland) after World War II and of the related confiscations of their property based on the so-called 'Beneš decrees' (the decrees were a series of laws enacted by the Czechoslovak government during and shortly after WWII, when the Czechoslovak parliament was not organized). The gravity of both issues is amplified by the fact that they are rooted deep in the domestic politics of both countries and as such it is difficult to solve them on a foreign policy basis. For example, in January 2009, 80% of Austrians said they wish the Czech nuclear power plant to close down, while 72% of the Czech population claimed to have no trust in the nuclear energy.<sup>23</sup> Thus, as we can see, the political potential of this issue is enormous. Due to the troublesome nature of the bilateral relationship, it is also true that the level of mutual confidence and frankness has been considerably lower than in the cases of other countries in the region. This factor contributes to the fact that other areas of potential cooperation (like regional cooperation or cooperation within the EU) are rather limited as well. Yet, it has to be pointed out that during 2007–2009 the mutual relationship underwent a positive progress towards greater normalization.

In both countries a new coalition government was formed in January 2007. This fact could have resulted in both negative and positive consequences. The negative factor lay in the fact that the new Austrian government was formed by a 'grand coalition' with the Social Democrats (SPÖ) of A. Gusenbauer (chancellor) as the leading party and the previously ruling Christian Democrats (ÖVP) as a junior coalition partner. When in opposition (2000–2007) the SPÖ presented itself as a strong defender of Austrian interests *vis-a-vis* the Czech Republic, and it exerted a permanent pressure on the centre-rightist governments of W. Schüssel (ÖVP) to adopt a tougher approach towards the Czech Republic namely in the area of nuclear energy. Besides that, the new Austrian government instantly came under a strong pressure from domestic activist groups (namely Atomstopp Temelin), the regional government of Upper Austria, and the Austrian parliamentary Green Party.<sup>24</sup> These actors demanded (among other things) that the Austrian government urge the Czech Republic to completely suspend energy production in the nuclear power plant Temelín (the so-called 'zero option'). This was – obviously – completely unacceptable for the Czech Republic. Besides that, the Austrian side continuously called attention to the supposed security risks of the Temelín power plant and to the lack of will on the Czech side to keep Austria fully informed about the actual situation in the power plant. Austrian activist threatened to blockade the Czech-Austrian borders, and these threats were subsequently carried out (to the great frustration of the Czech population and regional

authorities). The potential positive effects of forming new governments in both countries at the same time stemmed from the fact that the Czech-Austrian relationship offered plenty of room for improvement, and the new governments could consider this challenge as an opportunity for a ‘fresh start’.

Indeed, both positive and negative forces were at play during 2007–2009. The new Austrian government chose to include the so-called null option into its program declaration, which was very critically accepted by the Czech side. On the other hand, both sides agreed in a strikingly short amount of time on a visit of the new Austrian chancellor to Prague (February 2007). Both sides tried to divert the attention to other topics such as cooperation in the Western Balkans, the transport infrastructure between the two countries, the Czech entry into the Schengen area (which Austria accepted only half-heartedly), the Czech EU presidency in 2009 or the transborder cooperation. Still, Temelín remained the main issue of the February meeting in Prague. And the outcome of the meeting was surprising and promising. The Czech Prime Minister M. Topolánek came up with a plan of establishing a joint parliamentary commission which would thoroughly go through all open questions related to Temelín. The proposal can be, in a way, characterized as a Czech concession because the Czech side for many years insisted that the issues of Temelín require no special bilateral treatment and should be discussed under the so-called Melk agreement (see below) and standard international treaties.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, Austrian Chancellor A. Gusenbauer agreed to speed up the long clogged process of the negotiation of the so-called ‘information agreement’ which was intended to establish the standard means of communication about the nuclear energy production in the Czech Republic. The new ‘information agreement’ replacing an outdated agreement from 1989 was signed in December 2007 and finally ratified by the Austrian parliament (but not without controversies) in March 2008.

The creation of the commission resulted in a considerable reduction of the tensions between the two governments and indeed presented a unique opportunity for a ‘fresh start’. The border blockades continued very intensely but when the first meeting of the commission approached in the first half of 2007, the blockades ended and almost never occurred since then (what also helped was the fact that the Czech Republic entered the Schengen area and it would be more difficult to realize blockades under the Schengen regime). The joint parliamentary commission met three times in 2007. There have been some controversies, though. For example, the deputies from the extreme rightist Freedom Party of Austria left the commission followed by the Austrian Greens in the fall of 2007. Yet, before the end of 2007 the commission successfully closed the majority of the issues, and the most controversial ones (the integrity of the pressure containment, the high pressure pipelines and some legal issues) were postponed till 2008. The last meeting of the commission was held in Melk (June 2008), which bore a special symbolic meaning, and the two above mentioned issues remained unresolved. Still, the Chairmen of the Commission (J. Kasal on the Czech side and A. Konecny on the Austrian side) agreed that the commission successfully fulfilled its mission.

It cannot be said that the Temelín issue diminished completely with the start of the work of the commission. There were moments in 2007 when this topic surfaced with

an unimpaired force, and the controversies touched mostly upon the differing interpretations of so the so-called Melk agreement, which was signed by the Czech Prime Minister M. Zeman and Austrian Chancellor W. Schüssel in December 2000. During the rest of 2007 there were fierce discussions about whether the Czech Republic fulfilled the commitments of the Melk agreement and whether it was possible to enforce these commitments under international law. While the Czech Republic insisted (more and more openly) that the Melk agreement was already concluded and outlived, the Austrian side argued that the Czech Republic might be put under international investigation because it does not fulfil its obligations (Austria mostly complained that the Czech Republic does not live up to its promises to inform Austria about emergency situations in Temelín in time).

While differing interpretations have persisted, the overall situation in 2008 and 2009 did not resemble the quarrels of the previous years and it has to be stressed that it was a result of a conscious political will and the diplomacy of both sides. In November 2008 a new Austrian government was formed, and eloquently the almost obligatory provision demanding the ‘zero option’ for Temelín was left out while only the need to continue in an intensive dialogue was stressed instead.<sup>26</sup> Yet, it is important to note that the disputes over nuclear energy were not only a matter of a political tradition or a cliché. The different stances of the two countries stem from their deeply rooted approaches towards energy in general. While Austria argues in favour of economically more demanding ways of investing in the search for new ways of producing energy, the Czech Republic opted for economically more accessible nuclear energy. It is in this context where the nuclear energy disputes should be placed, especially during 2008 and 2009, when it became clear that the Czech Republic would sooner or later decide to expand its nuclear energy sources (possibly by enlarging both of its nuclear power plants – Dukovany and Temelín). During 2008 and 2009 Austria sought to stop the process of enlarging these nuclear power plants through many different ways. But it is crucial that so far the Austrian activists and politicians have used only standard means for doing this – for example, turning to Austrian or European courts – and this issue was largely left out of the top political meetings.

While the nuclear energy controversy became more sober during 2007–2009, since late 2008 and especially during 2009 we could witness symptoms of the intensifying assertiveness of the Austrian side regarding the so-called Beneš decrees. Historical questions belonged among the most contested issues of the Czech-Austrian relationship prior to the Czech EU accession. Since the Czech Republic joined the EU this agenda largely remained outside of the highest political level. It is a longstanding position of the Czech Republic that it should focus on the future in its politics while leaving the past to the historians and experts. The truth, however, is that the Czech Republic has not settled the historical questions with Austria, in a way it has solved them with Germany (via the *Czech-German Declaration* from 1997). Thus, the conflict potential remains. The intensification of the political attention devoted to the historical agenda was clearly visible already in 2008, namely due to the activities of the Christian Democrats’ speaker for expatriated Germans Norbert Kapeller (ÖVP’s deputy) and traditionally also due to the activities of the *Sudeten German Homeland Associ-*

ation (SLÖ). These actors strove to make the historical agenda a political issue – for example, at the highest bilateral meetings.<sup>27</sup> During 2008 these efforts failed. However, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Michael Spindelegger (ÖVP), who assumed his office in the new government of Chancellor W. Faymann (SPÖ) in December 2008, made it clear that he would not shy away from bringing the historical issues to the top level meetings. Thus, the so-called Beneš decrees were (among others) a topic of Mr. Spindelegger's visit to Prague in January 2009, and in a response to a parliamentary interpellation (November 2009) the Minister of Foreign Affairs defended himself against accusations of inactivity by arguing that he regularly brought up this agenda at his bilateral meetings. In his response, Mr. Spindelegger even opened up the question of compensation or the legal pretensions of the transferred Germans, which could certainly evoke harsh responses on the part of the Czech Republic. Till the end of 2009, however, this issue did not escalate. It should be added that the Czech side also contributed to opening up historical questions when the Czech President V. Klaus argued in favour of the Czech exclusion from the European Charter of Fundamental Rights precisely because of his alleged fears that the charter would enable the transferred Germans to reclaim their confiscated property.

The common history of the two countries did not bring only negative moments as we could see in 2008 when several memorials and cultural events devoted to the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 1968 were held. During the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968 by the Warsaw pact armies, countless Austrians as well as the Austrian government acted in a heroic and empathic ways when they accepted a number of Czechoslovak exiles. A positive example of a pragmatic cooperation that can contribute to enhancing the mutual confidence is the project in which the two countries share consulate capacities in third countries – the first such project was carried out in Podgorica (Montenegro). A more positive atmosphere was also felt during 2009 when the top representatives from both countries did their best to preserve a high intensity of relations. For example, Minister of Foreign Affairs M. Spindelegger chose the Czech Republic to be his first foreign trip instead of Switzerland, which is the usual first destination for Austria's new Foreign Ministers. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs agreed to meet regularly at least twice a year. Intensive contacts are also maintained between the presidents of the two countries – V. Klaus and H. Fischer. The two countries closely cooperated during the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Iron Curtain. What might also bring potentially positive consequences is the agreement to establish a Commission of Historians (based on a memorandum of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs from September 2009), which will provide a platform for an academic exchange on various historical issues (including the controversial events shortly after WWII).

It was mentioned that the overall atmosphere of the Czech-Austrian relationship is unfortunately imbued with scepticism and suspicion. This is also the case with several other bilateral issues. Austria and Germany remain the only EU member countries – despite the Czech diplomatic efforts – that did not open their job markets to Czech workers and chose to make full use of their exception from the EU rules. Mainly during 2007 Austrian representatives (namely Minister of Interior G. Platter and Minister of Defence N. Darabos) raised the question of whether the Czech Schengen zone

accession would bring with it the threat (among others) that the border controls would remain till July 2008 (because of the European Football Championship), which was completely unacceptable for the Czech side. Austria compensated for the lack of border controls by intensifying police controls at the border regions, which provoked critical responses on the Czech side. During 2009 the situation calmed down as it became clear that the experiences of the Czech Schengen accession have been positive. Yet, these tensions reflect the anxieties ingrained in the society, which are easily exploited by politicians. This makes for a situation that does not provide many favourable conditions for a mutually enriching relationship. To complete the list of controversies during 2007–2009, we should not forget the fact that Austria belonged to the most vocal European critics of the U.S. plans to place the AMD radar on the Czech territory<sup>28</sup>, and this issue was – surprisingly – also a subject of meetings between the Ministers of Foreign Affairs K. Scharzenberg and U. Plassnik and meetings between the Austrian Chancellor A. Gusenbauer and the Czech ex-Prime Minister J. Paroubek. Austria's negative stance could be informed by its traditional neutrality, by the ideological affinity of the Chancellor to the Czech Social Democrats, who strongly opposed the project, or by Austria's generally more accommodating approach to Russia, which also fiercely rejected the AMD project. In any case, this example also proves the differences in the overall foreign policy vectors of both countries during 2007–2009.

### ***Transborder Cooperation and Transportation***

Transborder cooperation is a similarly vital element in the relationship between the Czech Republic and Austria as in the relationship between the Czech republic and Poland. The operational program *Transborder Cooperation Czech Republic-Austria* has 107.5 million Euro at its disposal. The priorities of the program are enhancing the accessibility of border regions, environmental protection, development of transborder infrastructure and tourism, development of education and social integration, support of technology transfer, and support of local authorities' transborder contacts and cooperation. One of the most ambitious projects is the *Centropa region*, which includes 7 regions from Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. Besides that, there is a growing tradition of transborder police cooperation. Transborder and regional cooperation with Austria enjoys the highest level of political support. In March 2009, for example, the Czech president V. Klaus received the governor of Lower Austria Erwin Pröll, and the two discussed the potential of the transborder and regional cooperation.

As in the case of Poland, the Czech Republic lacks a quality transport connection to Austria. This is a topic that is almost always discussed at the high political and diplomatic meetings. There are three major issues involved – the freeway connection between Brno and Vienna, and the railway and highway connections between České Budějovice and Linz. The Czech Republic is the only country that is not connected with Austria through a freeway. For a long time, Austria displayed a lack of interest in investing finances into a freeway connection between the two countries. Since 2006 this situation changed and Austria declared the Brno-Vienna connection as one of its priorities. Since then, however, delays in this process have mostly been caused by the Czech side. A memorandum and an agreement were signed (in 2007 and 2008



respectively), committing both parties to finish the project. Yet due to administrative problems, a lack of finances and protests by environmental groups, the Czech Republic has not been able to guarantee the project's completion, and thus this situation lasted well into 2010. The Brno-Vienna connection is part of a planned Trans-European transit network called TEN-T. The České Budějovice-Linz connection is part of the same network, and this project is even farther away from being launched despite the fact that both projects are declared to be priorities of the Austrian government.

### ***Economic Relations***

The dynamics of mutual trade growth between the Czech Republic and Austria are weaker than those between the Czech Republic and other Central European countries – between 2000 and 2006 the mutual trade grew only by 50%. The balance is slightly positive for the Czech Republic. The Czech surplus has been on a slow decrease during 2007 and 2008 and returned back to the original levels in 2009. The economic recession of 2008 and 2009 also negatively affected mutual trade, which dropped to 81.7% of the previous year's volume in 2009. The Czech export to Austria traditionally depends on the condition of the German economy as Austria is to a great extent a sub-supplier of Germany. The most important Czech exporters to Austria are Megalimex, Škoda Auto, and the Unipetrol refinery. The largest Austrian exporters to the Czech Republic are ÖMV and Baumax. It is important that the economies and markets of the two countries are highly interconnected. Thus, for example, companies like Bosch Diesel or Škoda rank high as both exporters and importers. Austria is traditionally the third largest investor in the Czech Republic (after Germany and Japan). The most important Austrian investors in the Czech Republic are traditionally banks (Erste Bank, Bank Austria Creditanstalt and Raiffeisen Bank). One of the most important investment events during 2007–2009 was the acquisition of the *Prague Stock Exchange* by the *Vienna Stock Exchange* in 2008. In 2009 four stock exchanges (Vienna, Prague, Budapest, and Ljubljana) created a *CEE Stock Exchange Group* with a market value of around 128 billion Euro. The Czech investors in Austria have been less active (which stems, among other things, from the weaker economic power of the potential Czech investors). But in 2008 there were, for example, talks about the possibility that the Czech company ČEZ would take part in the privatization of the Upper Austrian company Energie AG.<sup>29</sup>

One of the most important trades was the planned Czech acquisition of a number of Pandur II armoured personnel carriers from Austria. The agreement stipulating that the Czech Republic would buy 199 of the carriers for roughly 850 million Euro was signed by the then Minister of Defence Karel Kühnl shortly before the end of his governmental term in the summer of 2006. Many questions were raised already at the time when the deal was made, and in late 2007 the agreement was cancelled by the Czech side (to the great frustration of its Austrian counterpart). During the entire year 2008 many negotiations took place over a possible renewal of the agreement, which the Austrian government openly supported. In March 2009 the Czech government approved a new agreement for an acquisition of only 107 carriers for ca. 576 million Euro (that is 70% of the original price for 53% of the original number of armoured

carriers). The deal has been accompanied by obscurities and surmises of corruption, and it can be expected that in the near future there will be some follow-up and maybe even a scrutiny of the trade.

## **SLOVAKIA IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY**

The relations between the Czech Republic and Slovakia are usually described as extraordinarily good and this description suits them well. There are no unresolved issues in the relationship, the highest level meetings take place at least once every year and the cooperation and communication between particular ministries and other administrative bodies are dense, regular and standardized. The bilateral agenda is thus determined mostly by multilateral issues (namely EU, NATO and the V4) and the current international and regional development. This means that the bilateral agenda has largely disappeared. What makes the bilateral relation more interesting is the fact that positions towards the multilateral issues and international development are informed by the particular foreign policy and ideological orientations of the governing parties. In the period 1998–2010 the ideological profiles of the respective governments were always adverse. Yet it has to be stressed that the exceptional nature of the relationship has endured during these years in spite of the adversities.

During 2007–2009, these adversities largely came out of the Czech government being centre-rightist and the Slovak government being dominated by the leftist party Smer. Differing ideologies, which in the Central European region also often entail differing foreign policy orientations<sup>30</sup>, meant that the two governments adopted diverging views on some of the hottest issues during 2007–2009, especially the issue of the U.S. anti-missile radar. Relatedly, Slovakia also promoted a more cheerful approach to Russia (this approach was embodied foremost in the person of the Prime Minister R. Fico /Smer/ but it was shared by the entire government). During 2007 and 2008 Slovak representatives repeatedly and on various occasions expressed their disagreements with the U.S. plans for the missile defence radar in the Czech Republic to the annoyance of the Czech policy makers. In January 2008 the Slovak Prime Minister refused the AMD project at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and similar words were used also during his bilateral visit to Russia. Similarly, the Slovak President I. Gašparovič loudly voiced Slovak concerns about the radar base during the April 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest.<sup>31</sup> It is crucial that Slovakia never opted for a more assertive approach and did not directly attack the U.S. plans in the Czech Republic. During the second half of 2008 this topic gradually disappeared as the Czech Republic (and its relationship with Slovakia) was more concerned with the upcoming EU presidency and with the ever growing possibility that a new U.S. administration would reconsider its AMD plans in Europe. Also, the Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs played an important moderating and balancing role as it carefully differentiated between the official Slovak positions on the one hand and the more or less personal opinions of the Slovak representatives on the other. For quite some time, dissimilar approaches towards Russia also meant dissimilar approaches towards the promotion

of energy sources and the diversification of energy transport routes as Slovakia did not have the same level of concerns about Russia's dependability as the Czech Republic at least until late 2008. This situation, however, changed somewhat after the January 2009 gas crisis (see below) at the latest, as Slovakia was one of its unluckiest victims. In any case, the years 2007–2009 proved that despite the two countries' eventually deep differences, the overall framework of their relations is firm enough to sustain these controversies and secure the continuation of their otherwise excellent relationship.

In European affairs, the Czech Republic and Slovakia communicate very closely in their bilateral relations and also on the Visegrad platform. In 2007 the Czech Republic provided assistance to Slovakia in her efforts to catch up with the preparations for the Schengen zone entry. Initially, some Czech statements were rather critical of the Slovak delays in the Schengen preparations, and some politicians even threatened to tighten the Czech-Slovak border controls. Instead of threats, though, assistance was later carried out. The two countries also initially (in 2007) competed for the realization of the idea of the *European Nuclear Forum*, which both countries insisted on. However, after talks (including talks with the European Commission) a compromise was negotiated and both countries agreed to cooperate in the forum's organization. The first meeting took place in November 2007 in Bratislava, the second one in May 2008 in Prague, and it is expected that the meetings will be held with roughly one year intervals between them in the future. The two countries successfully realized the project of the European Battle Group. The communiqué was signed in late 2005, and during 2006–2008 there was a series of negotiations about the particular composition of the battlegroup. The battlegroup was in full preparedness from July to December 2009, when up to 2200 Czech and 600 Slovak soldiers were ready to operate anywhere in the perimeter of 6000 km from Brussels.<sup>32</sup> Technically, the project was a success, yet there are persisting questions of the relevance of such an expensive project without a clear operative aim. The Czech Republic shares Slovakia's interest in promoting further Eastern and South-Eastern European enlargement, and since 2009 Slovakia more actively approaches the need to promote greater diversification of energy sources and transit routes.

More generally, the Czech Republic and Slovakia adopt differing approaches to the future of the EU. This was already apparent during the negotiation over the future reform treaty in the first half of 2007 when the Czech Republic assumed a lukewarm position to the German-led reform initiative while Slovakia was on the supportive side. This was an eloquent instance of the longstanding fact that Slovakia is more consensual, moderate and perhaps 'pro-European' than the Czech Republic. While Slovakia – under the government of R. Fico, who was initially hesitant at best – adopted the Euro already in January 2008, the Czech Republic as of early 2010 did not even set the date for its eurozone accession. Similar divergences appeared during the final phases of the Lisbon treaty ratification, when the Czech Republic was the last country to ratify the treaty. Some Slovak representatives were also critical of the Czech performance during the EU presidency (especially because of the government's fall and the change of government during the presidency).<sup>33</sup> This clearly suggests that Slo-

vakia finds itself on a different plane than the Czech Republic, and in the future this can prove to be a more divisive factor than the diverging ideologies of the governing parties, provided that European affairs infiltrate more and more deeply into the traditional spheres of both foreign and domestic policy.

During 2007–2009 we could witness an escalation of tensions between Slovakia and Hungary. The Czech Republic is highly sensitive towards the Slovak – Hungarian relations because their further deterioration could negatively affect the whole Central European region and also because of the shared past with Slovakia and the closeness of the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Traditionally, the Czech Republic adopted a neutral stance towards the tensions, and especially the Czech MFA holds this position. Yet, during 2009 there were several cases that illustrated that in the case of further intensification of the tensions, the Czech Republic might lean more towards an affinity with Slovakia. For example, in June the Social Democratic Prime Minister hopeful J. Paroubek appealed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs to officially react to statements by the radical Hungarian movement Jobbik<sup>34</sup> (which the MFA ignored). Also the Czech President V. Klaus made several statements regarding the supposed menaces stemming from the rising assertiveness of Hungarian policy in policies of protection of the Hungarian minorities abroad.<sup>35</sup> The Czech diplomacy finds itself in a delicate position – for the sake of the general framework of the Central European politics as well as for its role of a potential moderator, it is advisable for it to stay as neutral as possible. On the other hand, the shared past and the close affinity with Slovakia push the Czech Republic towards a greater empathy with Slovakian concerns. In any case, ‘moderation’ seems to be the key word that the Czech Republic should emphasize to all the parties concerned, including itself.

On the practical and technical levels the Czech Republic and Slovakia find themselves increasingly entangled in a pragmatic and mutually beneficial cooperation. The most visible projects in this cooperation are to be found in the energy area. Already in February 2007 the two countries signed an agreement about storage of Slovakian oil in the Czech Republic, which enabled Slovakia to reach the EU required level of emergency reserves. Early in 2009 the Czech Republic assisted Slovakia in overcoming the January 2009 gas crisis. Slovakia is 100% dependent on gas supplies from Russia, and thus it was greatly endangered by their interruption. The Czech Republic enabled a change in the gas stream in the Czech pipe-lines that would supply Slovakia with gas from the west. Thus the Czech Republic contributed to stabilizing the situation in Slovakia. A major energy project was agreed on the highest political level in 2008, stipulating that the Czech companies would be considerably involved in modernizing and enlarging the Slovakian nuclear power plants. In October 2009 a joint company called *Nuclear Energy Company*, consisting of ČEZ and the Slovak company JAVYS, was created (with JAVYS keeping a 51% majority in it). This company will be responsible for building a new block in the nuclear power plant in Jaslovské Bohunice.<sup>36</sup> Other companies obtained lucrative contracts for modernizing the Slovak nuclear power plant Mochovce. This cooperation stems from a politically motivated close cooperation in nuclear energy matters which has been taking place roughly since 2007 (to the great frustration of the anti-nuclear Austria). Another significant project

was the plan to interconnect the national electricity markets. This project was first talked about in 2007, agreed in 2008 and realized in August 2009. The interconnection should improve the competition on the market, increase the electricity transport capacity and stabilize the prices of electricity for the end users. As opposed to these successfully realized projects, a plan for merging the Czech and Slovak cargo railway companies failed in 2009 after several years of negotiations, allegedly because Slovakia did not agree with the Czech proposal to divide the shares of the joint company in such a way that the Czech Republic would receive 57% of them.<sup>37</sup>

Some important common projects were also introduced in other areas, especially in 2009. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs agreed in April 2009 to launch a project of cooperation in foreign development cooperation. The first joint projects were planned for Serbia. However, further projects in Afghanistan and Mongolia were also considered.<sup>38</sup> In the spring of 2009 both governments approved a plan for sharing representations at the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. As in the case of other Central European countries, there have been talks about other possibilities of mutual representations in third countries (yet without any concrete results so far).

### ***Economic Relations, Transborder Cooperation and Transport Infrastructure***

Despite the fact that Slovakia's share in the overall Czech foreign trade has been decreasing ever since 2000, Slovakia remains the second most important trade partner after Germany. The main Czech export commodities are traditionally cars and buses, but in 2008 there was a dynamic growth in the electronics trade. In 2009 the trade dropped by one fifth. As is usually the case, the Slovak exports are in a slight surplus. The Czech and Slovak businesses are considerably interconnected through various forms of cooperation and joint ventures (the largest are Penta, Agrofert, and J&T). The exceptional successfulness of the Czech companies in Slovak tenders is another characteristic feature of the Czech-Slovak economic relations. For example, in 2006 the Czech companies won tenders for the overall sum of roughly 160 million Euro, while the second most successful country – Great Britain – won contracts for only around 40 million Euro. Despite the fact that the share of the Czech companies in successfully won tenders is declining, the Czech position remains exceptionally good. As in the case of Poland, during 2007–2009 the most energy market was the most dynamically growing sector in the Czech-Slovak economic relations. Beside the projects mentioned above, ČEZ was, for example, granted the rights to build a new power plant in the US Steel Košice factory. Private companies were active in the energy sector as well. In October 2009 the PPF group and the Czech-Slovak J&T group agreed on establishing the joint company *Energy and Industrial Holding*.

The transport interconnection does not present such a poignant issue as in the cases of Poland and Austria. There exists a freeway connection between Brno and Bratislava. During 2007–2009 there were continuous debates about possible further freeway connections in the Central Moravian region (Zlín–Púchov, R49) and Silesia (R48). This latter connection is demanded by the regional authorities, especially because of the increase of heavy traffic due to the car-making factories in the Czech municipality Nošovice and the Slovak city Žilina. Both projects were already launched (the R49

project was launched just before the regional election in the fall of 2008) but neither of them progressed too well as both skirmish with the resistance of environmental groups and, more importantly, with a lack of finances.

The transport connections are also on the regular agenda for the annual meetings of the *Czech-Slovak Intergovernmental Commission for Transborder Cooperation*. In 2008 and 2009 the commission focused especially on the impact of the economic recession on the border regions. In April 2008 the commission decided to establish a specialized working group for tourism which would meet twice a year. The commission also monitors the processes related to using the finances from the EU structural funds. There is 92.74 million Euro allocated in the operational programme Transborder Cooperation Czech Republic–Slovak Republic, of which 56.55 million is planned for the Czech Republic. The priorities of the operational programme are improving the transit accessibility of the border regions, environmental protection, support of border infrastructure development and tourism, improving social services and education, technology transfer and support of cooperation of local and regional authorities.<sup>39</sup>

## IDENTIFICATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE KEY ACTORS

The key actors of the Czech foreign policy are the Government and the Prime Minister. As mentioned in chapter 1, the Prime Minister and the Government create the general conditions for the overall nature of the foreign relations. The Government decision making was mostly concentrated on developing the legal basis of the Central European relations by approving and negotiating particular treaties (mostly economic treaties or treaties on security cooperation). The Government only very sparsely stepped into the actual foreign policy decision making. The Government mostly did not discuss the Central European relations: the exceptions were that on several occasions in 2008 and 2009, it discussed Austria (in relation to the Pandur II deal and in relation to the Temelin nuclear power plant), and that in 2009, it discussed Poland (in relation to solving the territorial debt /see above/). Other than that, the responsibility for the Central European relations was largely left to the MFA. As for the Prime Ministers' diplomacy, M. Topolánek placed an especially great emphasis on the Czech relations with Austria (in 2007), Poland and the Visegrad group. In all these cases the Prime Minister, due to his active approach, lent significant political support to foreign policy and the diplomatic efforts at the lower levels, especially those by the MFA and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. In the relationship with Slovakia, M. Topolánek followed up the approach of the previous governments and confirmed the existing state of affairs. Yet, several important economic projects were agreed by M. Topolánek and the Slovak Prime Minister R. Fico. The Prime Minister of the interim government J. Fischer did not put so much emphasis on Poland, yet he developed closer contacts with his Slovak counterpart R. Fico. In other areas, J. Fischer more or less followed the state of affairs set by the previous government without launching new significant initiatives.

The MFA, due to its immediate contacts with the individual countries (via embassies), provides the Government with expert knowledge. It also handles the more rou-

tine work that is involved in foreign policy. The role of the Minister of Foreign Affairs is in many ways crucial as he has closer and more frequent contacts with the representatives of the Central European countries than the Prime Minister. The Minister of Foreign Affairs K. Schwarzenberg played an especially important role in the Czech Republic's relationship with Austria, as he has lived there for many years and maintained a great many personal contacts there. It cannot be said that Central Europe belonged among Mr. Schwarzenberg's particular priorities, yet his diplomacy in relation to it was adequately active. J. Kohout, who assumed the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs in the interim government, did not make a priority of the Central European region either, but his diplomatic activities were sufficient for taking care of the usual business. Mr. Kohout made several significant steps towards Austria, such as, for example, agreeing on regular meetings between the Ministers of Foreign Affairs at least twice a year (a similar deal was also closed with Poland) or signing a memorandum establishing the joint Czech-Austrian Commission of Historians.

The closest contact with the region is maintained by the Department of Central European States (OSE), which operates and coordinates the activities of the particular embassies abroad. Where necessary, other departments step in when the agenda extends to other areas or issues (mostly the Department of Northern and Eastern European States, the Department for Southern and South-Eastern European States and various departments from the European section). The key role is executed by the Central European department in the Visegrad agenda. The head of the department is the so-called (Czech) National Coordinator of the V4. The coordinators usually meet every one or two months, and at these meetings the basic agenda for the V4 is negotiated and set up. More important and substantial issues are further submitted to the political director or the section directors, who are responsible for setting the agenda for the meetings of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs or Prime Ministers. This poses a certain challenge for the overall coordination of the Visegrad group because in 1999 it was agreed that the highest level agenda should be coordinated and decided at the level of the Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs, who have the authority to make such substantial decisions<sup>40</sup> (while the coordinators, political directors and section directors do not have this authority). However, due to the lack of time of these high officials, most of the agenda is pre-agreed at lower levels, and this means that sometimes the weight and relevance of the decisions might be questioned. This is an issue that should be considered in the future debates about the V4 functioning. Important contacts are also maintained among the ambassadors of the V4 countries – both those in the Visegrad countries and those in countries outside of the V4 (e.g. those in Moscow, Washington, London, etc.). An ever growing role in the V4 cooperation is played by the Czech Permanent Mission in Brussels, and it might be worth it for the V4 to start considering some more standardized forms of communication between the headquarters in the national capitals and the Brussels officials.

The President as yet another executive actor also plays an important role in the Czech Central European policy. Even a mere overview of the travel calendar of V. Klaus suggests that Central Europe belongs among his highest diplomatic priorities. Excellent relations were maintained with his Polish counterpart L. Kaczyński, and in-

tensive presidential diplomacy is maintained with the Slovak President I. Gašparovič as well as with the Austrian President H. Fischer. Despite the initial worries about his reservations towards the Visegrad cooperation before his stepping into office in 2003, V. Klaus adopted a positive approach and also contributes to the above standard level of the political communication in Central Europe.

The Czech Parliamentary diplomacy in Central Europe is more visible in the Upper House (Senate), especially due to initiatives of its Chairman P. Sobotka (ODS). Mr. Sobotka proposed establishing a regular mechanism of meetings of the parliamentary chairmen in the framework of both the Visegrad Group and the Regional Partnership already in 2006, and this proposal was realized in 2006 and has been at work since then.

Important links are (or better to say should be) kept also at the level of political parties. While the Czech Social Democrats maintain excellent relations with the Slovak party Smer and also have good relations with the Austrian Social Democrats, the Czech rightists lack good interconnections with their Central European counterparts. Most surprising – and most hurting – is the fact that there is an astonishingly low level of partisan contacts between Czech political parties and their Polish counterparts.

## CENTRAL EUROPE IN THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC SPACE

Central Europe finds itself in a somewhat paradoxical situation – despite its significance and intensity for the highest level diplomacy, its overlap into the media and public space is negligible. With the exception of the issues that immediately touched upon the hottest foreign policy issues of the day – the U.S. radar and the EU – the Central European relationships passed by without any notable attention from the media or the general public. A certain amount of attention was awoken by the struggles with Austria, yet this attention disappeared together with the border blockades. In 2009 the media substantially covered the gas crisis which greatly affected Central Europe and the intensifying controversy between Slovakia and Hungary. An adequate amount of space was also devoted to the ‘historical agenda’ related to V. Klaus’ refusal to sign the Lisbon treaty. Therefore we can confirm what is argued in the other chapters of this book – the media coverage remains rather shallow and extremely selective. This selectivity means that the media do not cover the Czech Central European relations continuously. Instead, they focus on ‘media events’ like the highest diplomatic meetings or controversies. The printed media did not differ much in their coverage of the Czech Central European foreign policy but it can be said that the economic daily *Hospodářské noviny* were probably the most thorough in their reporting, and they also enriched their accounts by providing the economic point of view, which is growingly important. Slovakia was most carefully covered by the daily *Právo*, which also devoted some attention to the issues of transborder cooperation.

In general, the media did not aspire to act as an agenda setter or as an important agenda framer (that is, as an agent that decides what agenda to enthrone or from what



point of view to consider a given agenda). Despite that, it was possible to detect in the media an overall rather negative image of Austria (especially in 2007) and a rather skeptical view of the V4 (if the V4 was covered at all, which it mostly was not). This also can be grasped as a failure of the Czech public diplomacy, as both a balanced view of Austria and a positive view of the V4 should be priorities for the public diplomacy so that it would be better able to deliver its goal of good and mutually profitable neighborhood relations.

## CONCLUSION

The Czech foreign policy towards Central European countries confirms a broader trend noticeable in all EU member countries in which a genuinely bilateral agenda yields to multilateral affairs (namely affairs related to EU and NATO). In the case of Central Europe another important agent of multilateral cooperation is the Visegrad group, which also greatly influences the bilateral diplomacy. The Czech Republic's bilateral relations (with certain reservations in the case of Austria) are exceptionally well and standardized and offer less and less room for specific bilateral issues. This process was evident throughout the span of 2007–2009 and it even became intensified by the preparations and execution of the Czech EU presidency. On the other hand, compared to the rest of the world, the Czech foreign policy towards Central European countries offers more challenges and opportunities for a more bilaterally conceived diplomacy. The challenges lie especially in the relationship with Austria and partly also in the relationship to the Slovak-Hungarian tensions. The opportunities lie in promoting more and more pragmatic projects of cooperation, as we could see in the cases of Slovakia and the Visegrad group, especially in 2009. But this positive trend was apparent throughout the entire 2007–2009 period and assumed many shapes – mutual interconnection of economies, cooperation in security areas, more frequent and intensive communication among the particular ministries, etc.

The other – and more general – opportunity in Central Europe that is offered by the overall excellent conditions lies in the fact that it is now possible for the first time to deeply contemplate the role and potential of the Czech Republic in the region as well as the role and potential of the Central European region in Europe and the world in general. Unfortunately, our analysis showed that the Czech Republic did not even aspire to develop some broad strategic framework for its Central European policy. This is not to say that the foreign policy has been, strictly speaking, reactive or ad hoc. Yet, a broader framework and context has been missing, which also relates to the disinterest of the majority of the Czech politicians in foreign policy. All in all, however, the Czech Central European policy can be characterized as successful because it is able to maintain the most fundamental goal – to promote good relations with the neighbor countries. The critical shades of this chapter were intended to contribute to a discussion of how to further enhance the potential of the fact that the Czech Republic's relations to its neighborhood are unprecedentedly good.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> *Koncepce české zahraniční politiky na léta 2003–2006*. On-line: ([www.mzv.cz/servis/soubor.asp?id=4191](http://www.mzv.cz/servis/soubor.asp?id=4191))
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- <sup>3</sup> See e.g. Růžička, Jan–Kořan, Michal (2006): *Totgesagte leben Langer: Die Visegrád-Gruppe nach dem EU-Beitritt*. Osteuropa, No. 10, 2006.
- <sup>4</sup> See Kořan, Michal (2010): *Visegrádská socializace a její dopad na české zájmy*. In: Handl, Vladimír–Drulák, Petr: *Hledání českých zájmů. Vnitřní rozmanitost a vnější akceschopnost*. Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů.
- <sup>5</sup> Czech Presidency of the Visegrad Group (June 2007–June 2008). On-line: ([visegradgroup.eu/main.php?folderID=942&articleID=9497&ctag=articlelist&iid=1](http://visegradgroup.eu/main.php?folderID=942&articleID=9497&ctag=articlelist&iid=1)).
- <sup>6</sup> Gniazdowski, Mateusz (2009): *Poland's Policy in the Visegrad Group*. In: Debski, S. (ed): *Yearbook of Polish Foreign Policy*. Warsaw: Polish Institute of International Affairs, p. 172.
- <sup>7</sup> *V jihoafrickém Kapském městě byl otevřen Visegrádský dům*. Czech Radio Broadcast, 26. 3. 2010. On-line: ([www.rozhlas.cz/zpravy/afrika/\\_zprava/712650](http://www.rozhlas.cz/zpravy/afrika/_zprava/712650)).
- <sup>8</sup> *Premiéři budou jednat o pozastavení dodávek ruského plynu*. Czech News Agency, 7. 1. 2009.
- <sup>9</sup> Gniazdowski, op. cit., p. 170.
- <sup>10</sup> *Sarkozy warns Visegrad countries not to make a habit of pre-summit meetings*. EUobserver, 4. 11. 2009. On-line: ([euobserver.com/9/28928](http://euobserver.com/9/28928)).
- <sup>11</sup> See Kořan, op. cit.
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## Chapter 6

# Germany in the Czech Foreign Policy

*Vladimír Handl*

### GERMANY IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

The Czech policy *vis-a-vis* Germany experienced mostly positive dynamics but also a lack of coherence. Existential interests were not at stake – on the contrary, they constituted a positive background for the relations: Czechs and Germans as allies guarantee each other's security, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

- The political and social context of the relations was shaped by several factors:
- European policy as a subject and framework of mutual relations
- Mainly internal but also international security
- The prominence of economic relations
- The increasingly intensive and dense neighbourhood ties.
- The attitude to the past

From the point of view of political importance, relations with Germany were lumped into two largely independent sets of agenda.

The *first set of agenda* was that of *depoliticised pragmatic co-operation* in the wide spectrum of areas which developed on all levels of social life – from the municipal up to the national level. The domestic political context of this co-operation was characterised mostly by consensus and support. The challenge rested in the limits of institutional and financial capacity, and the ability to define Czech interests, co-ordinate the multitude of actors, add to their activities a mid – and a long-term perspective, and deal with the pressure of private interest groups.

The *second set of agenda* was *primarily political and reflected the ideological preferences* of the principal political actors. It was often difficult if not impossible for Czech politics to achieve consensus in the coalition governments, between the governments and the President, between the governments and the opposition, and between the political and the public sphere. The absence of a national consensus on important political issues created yet another dimension of the Czech-German asymmetry. The main reason was the internal differentiation of the Czech political scene. With the historical normalisation and the NATO/EU accession accomplished, the ideological and political preferences started to play a more prominent role. The division of Czech for-

eign policy thought into four schools – Atlantist (primarily Anglo-Saxon oriented), Europeanist/Continentalist, internationalist/universalist and sovereigntist/autonomist – captures well the internal structure of the foreign policy orientation of the Czech *classe politique*.<sup>1</sup> Inevitably, the level of compatibility of the Czech and German political scenes impacted on the Czech-German relationship.

It has to be seen as a reflection of the new normality of Czech policy that Germany was addressed only once in the government programmes of the period. Moreover, unlike in the earlier programmes, the context was not historical but entirely matter-of-fact: Germany was mentioned only in the context of the (highly controversial) project of Elbe navigation.<sup>2</sup> Apart from this occasion, Germany was subsumed under ‘good neighbourly relations’ and under co-operation within multilateral institutions, primarily the EU.<sup>3</sup> What has been problematic, however, was the absence of a mid-term foreign policy programme of the government and, indeed, of genuine interest in foreign policy among the political elite. As a result, the Czech Republic’s policy lacked a coherent political strategy for its relations with Germany. Without strategic guidance and co-ordination, the Czech policy towards Germany was often driven by the actions of individual Czech policy actors.

## GERMANY IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: AGENDA AND EVENTS

### *European Policy*

After the EU-accession, the Czech *classe politique* had been polarised in its approach to the EU and German European policy. However, when it was charged with government responsibility, the ODS learned to work not only within the EU but also in close co-operation with Germany.

Czech Republic had originally assumed the role of a troublemaker during the German EU Presidency in 2007. President Klaus even warned the Czech public against the German EU Presidency in his traditional New Year’s Day address.<sup>4</sup> Chancellor Merkel, however, made a pragmatic agreement with Prime Minister Topolánek regarding adjustment of the ECT, which turned into the watershed in the attitude of the ODS towards German European policy. German diplomacy allowed the Czech government to achieve a small but symbolic success during the negotiations of the Berlin Declaration of the EU. On this basis, the ODS could agree with the focal point arrangement, and Berlin later accepted amendments to the treaty. Prime Minister Topolánek and his Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs Alexandr Vondra turned into cautious supporters of the later Lisbon Treaty. They identified with the reservations of the German Federal Constitutional Court; nonetheless their pragmatic consent gave a green light to an intensive Czech-German cooperation in the EU.

President Klaus distanced himself from the rapprochement of the ODS with German European policy. Angela Merkel’s personal ‘charm offensive’ secured the President’s neutrality during the German presidency but he maintained his position outside of the Lisbon compromise and obstructed the ratification process. In the last phase of the latter, he chose a cunning face-saving strategy by picking up the issue of an al-

leged threat to the validity of the Decrees of President Beneš. The German side understood the motivation of the President and worked co-operatively with the Czech government towards an acceptable solution. The President's blockade made the ČR opt-out from the Charter of Basic Rights of the EU: for the first time, Czech policy generated inequality between Czech and German citizens in the EU.

The German political elite, however, learned to differentiate between the specific voice of the President and the position of the government. In fact, the Czech and the German discourse on the Lisbon Treaty became compatible: The German Federal Constitutional Court referred to a Czech Constitution Court decision in its ruling for the first time. German judges also visited the Czech Constitutional Court in Brno to discuss European integration and national statehood.<sup>5</sup>

Most significantly, Germany proved to be the most important and constructive supporter of the Czech EU Presidency under the government of Topolánek as well as under the interim government of Fischer. The fall of the government re-confirmed the sceptical voices in Germany, who perceived the Czechs as 'Schweiks' – i.e. as irresponsible and unpredictable individuals.<sup>6</sup> German politicians and civil servants, however, viewed the presidency as well managed.<sup>7</sup> Unlike France, Germany supported the Czech presidency in the political as well as the practical sense: Chancellor Merkel invited Prime Minister Topolánek and Minister Schwarzenberg to join her on her flight to the summit in Sharm el-Sheikh (January 18), which the EU Presidency had originally not been invited to. Later, Angela Merkel arranged for the participation of the EU Presidency at the G-20 in London (April 2). Czech and German approaches to the global crisis coincided when it came to defending the principles of open liberal market economies. Chancellor Merkel supported the Czech EU Presidency's opposition to subsidizing national car industries, as proposed by Nicolas Sarkozy.<sup>8</sup> Her attempts to find a way how to support the OPEL car manufacturer was, however, perceived as a breach of the liberal economic rules.

And perhaps most importantly, Chancellor Merkel was the only representative of a big EU country who attended the Eastern Partnership Summit in Prague (May 7). The concept itself was a compromise: the German side insisted on making the Eastern Partnership open to ad hoc Russian participation while the Czech EU-Presidency had to give up its politically motivated intention to offer visa-free relations to the six Eastern Partnership countries. In fact, the notion had been always opposed by the Czech Ministry of Interior for security reasons. The Czech Republic and Germany became allies in defence of a cautious approach to the visa-regime liberalisation, when it came to Russia. The Eastern Partnership remained one of the key areas of prospective Czech-German foreign policy co-operation. The increased closeness in pragmatic political agenda, however, revealed the ongoing structural differences between Czech and German European policy: Unlike Poland, Czech governments of both Topolánek and Fischer kept distance from the euro zone, did not envisaged early adoption of the Euro or support stabilisation measures considered by the EU and its member states. In the mid-term perspective, Czech-German rapprochement in European policy thus showed clear limits.

### ***Military and Security Policy***

An Atlantic orientation and a closeness to the neo-conservative political course of President G. W. Bush defined the attitude to security and defence policy of the governments led by Mirek Topolánek. There were certain apparent differences in the Czech and the German strategic priorities, mostly in the issue of the US missile defence project and the relations with Moscow. Mainly the SPD and its Minister of Foreign Affairs Frank Walter Steinmeier expressed disapproval of the project during 2007. This inevitably fuelled suspicions among Czech hard-core Atlantists and opponents of further deepening of the EU as regards the orientation of Germany. There was some controversy over whether Frank Walter Steinmeier should be regarded just as an instrument of Gerhard Schröder, who himself was often described as nothing more than a ‘Sherpa of Vladimir Putin’.<sup>9</sup> Despite the CR’s NATO membership, the Atlantists viewed the ČR as caught between Germany and Russia again. Germany thus became a part of the geopolitical argument in favour of the American bases on Czech soil.<sup>10</sup>

The Czechs’ striving for the NATO-ization of the project came close to German position, Berlin, however, insisted on decrease of the Czech support for the Georgian accession to the NATO during the Bucharest NATO summit. The reconfiguration of the missile defence programme by the Obama administration liberated Czech-German relations from the controversial issue and increased the importance of the CESDP context instead.

A less pronounced difference prevailed in the strategic culture of both countries. The Czech side does not have the same kinds of historical restrictions regarding the use of force as the German side. The impact of this dissimilarity should not be overestimated, as has been underlined by German experts.<sup>11</sup> In praxis, however, when the Czech military and political leadership looked for a partner country for missions abroad, Germany with its Bundeswehr was not the one it chose in the first place.<sup>12</sup> The decision to conduct the first Czech military mission under German command (the PRT in Fajzabád, 2006–2007) was linked with the attractiveness of the German-lead mission in the sense that it was highly organised, well supplied and planned with a rather low probability of the use of military force. The PRT was regarded by both sides as highly successful and prepared the Czech side for its individual PRT in the much more challenging environment in the Logar province (from 2007 on). The Czech-Slovak European battle group in 2009 represented a further positive experience: the German side gave its fully staffed European headquarters by Potsdam to the Czech and Slovak command. Working together with German officers was appreciated as an important step towards preparations for the Czech participation in a German lead European battle group in 2012.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Internal Security***

Opening and control of the Czech-German border as a co-operative effort is the one feature that best characterised the practice of Czech-German relations in this area. The Czech Republic found full support of the German federal government in her striving for full membership in the Schengen area. The opposition came, however, from the

German Länder. The neighbouring Saxony and mainly Bavaria feared an increase of criminality in the border area. The Czech Ministry of Interior actively addressed the apprehension and conducted meetings and conferences with a number of German actors, including the deputies from Saxony.<sup>14</sup> At the end, the Czech accession turned out to be much less problematic than its public image as the crime rate along the Czech-German borders has decreased steadily. Czech travellers, however, complained about being stopped and searched scrupulously behind the German border by Saxon and especially Bavarian police.<sup>15</sup> Czech side complained about what it found a discriminatory treatment and the Czech Ministry of Interior introduced reciprocal measures on the Czech side of the Schengen border area. Also, both sides agreed the procedure of the border controls should become more transparent, and bi-national Czech-German patrols should become a more common practice.<sup>16</sup> Czech and German police paid increasing attention to the cross border activities of neo-Nazi groups and right wing extremists, mainly the German NPD and the Czech Workers' Party and National Resistance.<sup>17</sup>

### ***Coming to Terms with the Past***

The historical agenda of the Czech policy *vis-a-vis* Germany was defined by several factors. Firstly, it developed on the basis of the mutual political understanding that issues arising from the past should not burden the current relations. German side has never put the demands of the Sudeten German Heritage Organisation to abolish the Decrees of President Beneš and to achieve a compensation for the confiscation of the property of Sudeten Germans on the agenda of the negotiations.<sup>18</sup>

Secondly, and more generally, the attitude to the past represents yet another dimension of the Czech-German asymmetry. A majority of the German society (with notable exceptions in the expellees' community and among their closest supporters) traditionally perceives the war and the post-war Sudeten German transfer as primarily a moral issue. For Czechs, on the other hand, historical relations with Germany (and Sudeten Germans) have always been of existential importance; the propensity to watch Germany and its attitude to the past very closely has thus been a part of the 'genetic code' of the Czech society. The importance of the past, however, declined since the normalisation of the mutual relations (the milestone being the Czech-German declaration of 1997)<sup>19</sup> and the Czech EU accession. President Klaus' turn to the Decrees of President Beneš during the final phase of the Lisbon Treaty ratification caused the past to be a contemporary political issue again for awhile. It proved that the 'genetic code' could still be activated in some segments of the society. However, the Czech *classe politique* reacted calmly and pragmatically, even if only the Green party dared to dismiss the President's demand as irrelevant and instrumental.

Thirdly, the institutionalisation of relations proved both essential and successful. The Fund for the Future and the Czech-German Discussion Forum created a platform for official and, even more importantly, spontaneous public activities.<sup>20</sup> The Czech side therefore initiated a prolongation of the functioning (and funding) of the Fund for the Future and the Discussion Forum for the next 10 years.<sup>21</sup> With funding from private sources decreasing due to the economic crisis in 2009, the support by the Fund



for the Future became an even more important precondition for the implementation of a great variety of bilateral non-profit projects. Only in 2009, the Fund secured co-financing for 600 such projects with 76 million Czech crowns.<sup>22</sup>

Fourthly, the whole historical agenda changed. The programme of compensation for the victims of the Nazi terror and forced labour was completed in 2007 – a considerable political and administrative achievement for both sides. The way to compensation for the last (and fairly small) group of victims – the forced labourers in Nazi ghettos – was set free in 2009. The issue of dealing with the tragic past moved into the realm of the local, national and international discourse of politicians, experts, the media and, most crucially, also the public. An example of this shift was the programme of remembrance of the German opponents to Nazism pronounced by the then Prime Minister Jiří Paroubek in 2005 and implemented by the subsequent governments.<sup>23</sup> Not less importantly, the Czech public and nongovernmental organisations developed an increasingly wide range of activities which concentrated on German victims of the post war atrocities, the wild expulsion and the transfer.<sup>24</sup> The Czech side, however, declined to participate in projects such as the ‘Centre Against Expulsion’, the European network ‘Remembrance and Solidarity’, or the ‘Escape, Expulsion, Reconciliation’ Foundation. The historical narrative of certain circles of the Sudeten German community has remained unacceptable and returned the question of a critical reassessment of the nature of historical memory to the expellee organisations.

Official relations and contacts with the Sudeten German Heritage Foundation were absent. In Prague, however, there existed an unofficial representation of the Foundation.<sup>25</sup> The spokesman of the Heritage Foundation (Bernd Posselt) was a member of the steering board of the Czech-German Discussion Forum. He called on the Czech EU Presidency to abolish the Decrees of President Beneš.<sup>26</sup> However, similar demands acquired the character of a political ritual typical for the annual rallies of the Heritage Foundation.<sup>27</sup> The Foundation remained politically relevant mostly as a factor which pressured the Bavarian government. So, despite their principal interest, Bavarian Prime Ministers Günther Beckstein (2007–2008) and Horst Seehofer (from 2008 on) did not visit Prague. Contacts between Czech and Bavarian representatives on the top level thus remained unofficial.

### *The Economic Relations*

Economy represented one of the most dynamic areas of the Czech-German relations. While the original apprehension about German capital taking control over the Czech ‘family silver’ subsided,<sup>28</sup> two more practical issues gained primary significance: first, the high level of dependence on the German economic cycle and thus the need to diversify Czech foreign economic relations and, secondly, the fact that the Czech economy and policy had to look for ways to sustain the level of exports to Germany. The position of the Czech economy has been weakened by the Czech abstention from the Euro-zone, the shortage of qualified labour force and its growing price.

Germany has been the most important economic partner: Germany’s share in Czech trade was steadily growing in absolute terms. At the same time, the EU accession resulted in greater diversification of Czech trade: the 2000 German shares in

Czech exports and imports amounted to 40% and 32% respectively,<sup>29</sup> whereas in 2009 the figures decreased to the level of 32.3% and 26.6% respectively with a constant positive balance of trade.<sup>30</sup> Among the German *Länder*, Bavaria was the leading regional economic partner (28% of Czech exports into and 19% of Czech imports from Germany) followed by Baden Württemberg, North-Rhine Westphalia and Saxony.<sup>31</sup>

Germany was also one of the leading investors in the CR. However, its share in Czech inward FDI decreased in relative as well as absolute terms: in 2000, the German share in the inflow of new FDI was 26.5%, and in 2009 it was 12.7%.<sup>32</sup> The decrease is explained partly by the drop in the attractiveness of the Czech Republic, which was often replaced by Slovakia in investment strategies of private firms.<sup>33</sup>

In ideological terms, both the Czech and the German policy tended to support liberal principles in the national and the international economy, which often put them on the same side during deliberations in the EU (often opposing France). During the Czech EU Presidency, Germany supported the Czech insistence on liberal norms. Some anti-crisis measures of the German government (such as the bail out of German banks) were, however, criticised in Czech liberal circles, and Prague even turned to the EC with an appeal to establish the compliance of German plans with the support of the Opel car production.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, Czech economy profited from such German anti-crisis measures as subsidies for scrapping older cars and buying new ones.

### ***Energy***

Mainly for Atlantists, the German-Russian project of the North Stream pipeline became an example of the alleged German rapprochement with Russia above the heads of Central Europe. The Czech left, on the other hand, tended to accept Gerhard Schroder's interpretation of the project.

Structural differences made the Czech and German energy security policies asymmetrical. Germany never shared the Czech apprehension as regards dependence on Russian supplies. Moreover, German firms owned most of the Czech gas industry, which caused fears of an asset swap between them and Russian firms (as one such swap happened in Hungary). The Czech government pushed for a common energy policy within the EU,<sup>35</sup> while Germany had remained rather cautious before 2009. The gas crisis in January 2009 changed the constellation: Germany supported the Czech EU-presidency in its effort to bring about a solution to the crisis. Also, Berlin moved towards a more pro-active policy in the EU and agreed with the project of the Nabucco pipeline, which the Czech presidency strongly supported. Both Czechs and Germans underlined responsibility (and thus one's own individual effort and investment) before solidarity and focused on market liberalisation.

### ***Transport***

Improving transport infrastructure (including paths for pedestrians and cyclists) and opening dozens of border crossings were among the priorities of the Czech policy. Politically well within the all-party consensus, the controversial aspects of the issue were mainly domestic: high-way construction was viewed as overpaid, new bor-

der crossings often channelled dense traffic to an inadequate road network, and an idea of upstream navigation of the Elbe caused protests on the part of environmentalists. There were delays in the completion of some of the projects: the Prague-Munich highway opened only in 2008, and the preparation of the Prague-Dresden rail-way corridor was postponed while the Prague-Munich high-speed rail was under discussion instead. Private German railway firms started to compete with the state-owned Czech Rail for contracts on the regional level.<sup>36</sup> Czech national and regional governments supported the expansion of cross-border Euro-regional transport systems such as 'Ergonet', which connects regions in Southern and Western Bohemia with Bavaria, Thuringia and Saxony.<sup>37</sup>

### ***Social Issues and Health Care***

Yet another issue of the all-party consensus was the opening of the German labour market. The Czech side viewed German policy as guided by domestic and electoral considerations rather than by socio-economic rationality.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, the Czech labour migration potential was traditionally low. Trying to persuade the German side, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs Petr Nečas even suggested using the Czech EU presidency in this regard.<sup>39</sup>

The Czech liberal attitude remained coherent: Prague did not introduce corresponding measures either against Germany or the new EU accession countries – Romania and Bulgaria. The German side sought to ease the situation by several forthcoming steps, such as limited opening its labour market to Czech citizens who graduated from universities and colleges.

The Czech-German co-operation was also successful in a number of other areas: the German partners shared with the Czech counterparts their experience in the development of the national labour market and the reform of the pension scheme or national health care.

The health care system and its modernisation was a topic of regular bilateral consultations.<sup>40</sup> The Czech policy had to deal with a side effect of the income differences – the migration of Czech medical personnel (mainly nurses) to Germany. On the regional level, there were considerations regarding networking healthcare facilities across the border. The issue of payment for the services delayed a Czech-German agreement about a cross-border operation of emergency medical units.

### ***Education and Culture***

The Czech Republic has attracted little interest in Germany, with one exception – the Sudeten German community. The Czech policy thus sought to improve the presence and image of the country in Germany. Presentation of achievements of Czech culture and science has therefore been an important political strategy. The concerted programme of 'The Power of the 8' (remembering and explaining the meaning and Czech-German connotations of the years 1918, 1938, 1948, and 1968), the Czech EU Presidency and the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 'velvet revolution' of 1989 represent successful examples of this effort. They involved participation of top representatives of

both countries and secured positive press. A number of activities originated on the regional level, such as the regular ‘Days of Czech and German culture’, which were conducted in Dresden and, in 2009, also in Ústí nad Labem.

In the sphere of education, an agreement on mutual acknowledgment of the two countries’ university diplomas was signed in 2007. There were also border regions projects such as the ‘Schkola’, which focused on temporary exchange of pupils and teachers between the two countries with the aim of increasing their language capability.<sup>41</sup>

### ***Environmental Protection***

Like in European policy, the dichotomy in Czech politics manifested itself in the incompatible approaches of the government, in which a representative of the Green party took the office of the Minister of Environment Protection, and the President. V. Klaus’ outspoken opposition was at times even personally directed against Angela Merkel.<sup>42</sup> At the same time, the Czech and German Ministries of Environment achieved a high level of programmatic compatibility and institutionalisation.<sup>43</sup> Conceptual differences prevailed in issues such as nuclear power or the chemical regulation REACH. Also, Czech liberals perceived the climate change agenda as too ambitious. The Czech government nonetheless supported the German EU Presidency climate change package in 2007 in the end. And vice versa: German support was crucial for the environment targets of the Czech EU Presidency in 2009. The day to day agenda was set by practical issues, such as illegal transfer of waste from Germany to the Czech Republic and cross-border water and air pollution. The Czech side moved from the position of a junior twinning partner of the German Ministry of Environment to the role of project leader (the twinning project in 2010 in Serbia).

### ***Regional Cooperation***

Unlike in the early 1990s, the Czech governments were not concerned by the fact that they represented a partner not only for the federal government but also for the German *Länder*. On the other hand the Czech *kraje* are not equal with the German *Länder* and had to sign agreements on bilateral co-operation with the German *Regierungsbezirke*. Nonetheless, Czech policy has been gradually learning to cultivate relations with the German counterparts on all levels – mainly with Saxony and Bavaria, but also with North-Rhine Westphalia and others. The Czech EU and Schengen area accession further stimulated co-operation first of all in the near-border area: for each side, collaboration with the neighbour increased the chances of receiving EU-funding. The Czech-Bavarian EU Operational Programme for Cross-Border Co-operation Target 3 included 3 *kraje* on the Czech side and 16 *Regierungsbezirke* and 7 cities on the German side. A similar Programme was implemented in the Czech-Saxony border region. The Czech-Saxony relations became an example of a constructive and intensive relationship in practical issues as well as on the top political level (unlike in the case of Bavaria).

## GERMANY IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: IDENTIFICATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF KEY ACTORS

An anomaly developed in the relations between Czech and German political parties: one of the two pillars of the Czech political system – the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) of Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek – chose not to develop any close relationship with its counterpart in Germany, the CDU (and indeed also with the CSU). The (neo)liberal and nation-state oriented ODS was ideologically hardly compatible with the social market oriented and pro-European German Christian Democrats. The ODS experienced a Europeanising effect of the Czech EU-Presidency and effective co-operation with the CDU as the governing party in Germany with the Lisbon EU-Treaty representing the common ground. Nonetheless, it left the EPP and joined the European Conservatives and Reformists Group in the EP in July 2009. The other Czech parliamentary parties established links with their German partners a long time ago: working with them became an important element of the process of the socialisation of the Czech parties into the EU and, indeed, their Europeanisation. The Czech Green party was especially closely linked to the German Green party through Milan Horáček, a former dissident and a Czech émigré to Germany. The KDU-ČSL maintained regular contacts mainly with the CDU. The KSČM worked with Die Linke both in the cross-border region and in the European Parliament.

The depth of the Europeanisation effect, however, remained uncertain. The ČSSD's well established relations with the SPD (and the personal link between Chairman Paroubek and ex-Chancellor Schröder) indicated mutual closeness. Nonetheless, representatives of the SPD failed to persuade the ČSSD leadership to postpone the vote of non-confidence until the end of the Czech EU Presidency in 2009: the struggle for power prevailed over the European vocation of the party.

The Czech Parliament (both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate) was only marginally active in the relations *vis-a-vis* Germany since the normalisation of the historical relations. Among the exceptions were the activities of senator Luděk Sefzig (ODS), Chairman of the Committee on EU Affairs and Czech Co-Chairman of the Czech-German Discussion Forum.

The creation of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs weakened the position of the MFA as regards the relations with Germany. The division of labour between the Central European Department and the European Union as well as the Security and Multilateral Issues Sections had become a challenge long before this. The German desk of the Central European Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs maintained its responsibility for bilateral non-NATO/EU issues as spelled out by the bilateral political treaty of 1992. However, some 80% of the Czech-German agenda was linked with the EU-related issues.

The existence of the Fund for the Future and the Discussion Forum remained unprecedented in Czech foreign policy. This level of institutionalisation of the Czech-German relations reflected their historical background, and it has not been replicated in any other bilateral relationship of the Czech Republic. A dense network of links and co-operative ties contributed more generally to the stability of the Czech-Ger-

man relationship. The growing institutional pluralism of Czech foreign policy, however, turned into a dichotomy when it was reinforced by ideological polarity. The result was incoherence and a lack of co-ordination – most notably in European policy, the sovereignty of Kosovo, relations with Russia, and climate change policy.

The Europeanisation of Czech foreign policy was closely connected with decentralisation, de-formalisation and development of horizontal links between individual governmental and non-governmental institutions on the national, the regional and (in the near-border area) the local level. Mainly during the German and the Czech EU Presidency, all relevant governmental institutions established direct contacts with their counterparts; the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and a number of other government institutions exchanged their officials. After the fall of the Topolánek government and with the end of the Czech EU presidency, the contacts on the top political level were rather reduced to the level of mere maintenance.

The personalisation of the mutual relations proved very important. Both Prime Minister Topolánek and Prime Minister Fischer developed very good contacts with Chancellor Merkel. A special relationship was established between Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg and his counterpart Frank Walter Steinmeier. Later on, Ministers of Foreign Affairs Jan Kohout and Guido Westerwelle decided to intensify the consultation mechanism between them and promote the co-ordination of both countries in European policy.<sup>44</sup>

The Czech EU accession did not decrease but rather enhanced the role of the Embassy as an intermediary between the Czech and the German institutions on the national as well as the sub-national level. Problematic institutional pluralism, however, played a role here too. The double-hatting of the Economic Counsellor of the Embassy (Aleš Macík) could be over-bridged only due to the good working relationship between him and Ambassador Rudolf Jindrák. Similarly, the detachment of the Czech Centre (responsible for cultural activities) from the Embassy was viewed critically, and Czech diplomats discussed a closer integration. Austerity measures led to the closing of some Czech institutions in Germany, such as the Czech Centre in Dresden.

A model solution for Czech representations around the world was under preparation. In this solution, a ‘Czech House’ in Düsseldorf would place all the only loosely co-ordinated national agencies under ‘one roof’: the Consulate and the Czech Centre as well as the increasingly professional Czech Trade, Czech Invest and Czech Tourism. Prague thus planned to re-establish its institutional presence in the northern Rhine area (after the closure of the consulate in Bonn), a region with a sizable Czech diaspora and substantial Czech economic activities.

## **CZECH FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS GERMANY IN THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC SPACE**

The attitude of the Czech public to the German neighbour was predominantly positive but included the historically engraved apprehension toward it too.

The perception of the Sudeten German issue changed only marginally. 52% of those asked in 11/2007 and even 65% in 11/2009 meant that the Decrees of President Beneš should remain valid<sup>45</sup> – the increase presumably being caused by the rhetorical action of President Klaus in the context of the Lisbon Treaty ratification. In general, the expulsion/transfer of the Sudeten Germans was perceived as a just settlement by nearly one half of the population. However, the view that the transfer had been an act of injustice but can not be undone has been slowly gaining in strength (20% in 11/2007 and 25% in 11/2009). Relations with Germany in general, however, were not defined by the past any more: Only 2% of Czechs regarded Germany as a security threat.<sup>46</sup> 80% of Czechs believed the relations with Germany were good, whereas 15% viewed them as bad.<sup>47</sup>

The years 2007–2009 witnessed a changing pattern in the press coverage of Germany. Between 2004 and 2008, there was a considerable decrease in articles that mention Germany in their headlines in all the major Czech newspapers: *Mladá fronta Dnes* – 2004: 474 articles, 2007: 280, 2008: 323; *Právo* – 2004: 310, 2007: 272, 2008: 183; the Communist Party daily *Haló noviny* – 2004: 125, 2007: 131, 2008: 98. The perception of Germany as a ‘weak man of Europe’ had gone away with the active German EU Presidency of 2007. The new focus was on Germany as an important and co-operative European actor. As a result, most of the press proved to be immune to attempts to use the issues arising from the past for domestic political gains: except for *Haló noviny*, most Czech newspapers viewed the opposition of President Klaus to the Lisbon Treaty on the basis of the Decrees of President Beneš as instrumental. *Haló noviny* remained the only newspaper that combined a traditional mobilising message with growing attention to the European context. Germany featured mainly as an economic actor in the Czech press, which was a tendency that intensified during the economic crisis. The past was featured only occasionally, and not enough attention was paid to the Czech-German co-operation during the Czech EU Presidency. Except for the left-oriented press, most of the Czech media followed German foreign policy with a certain suspicion when it came to German-Russian relations.

## CONCLUSION

The Czech policy towards Germany was defined by the day-to-day routine as well as by major events such as the German and the Czech EU Presidency during 2007–2009.

The Czech policy co-shaped three important political processes, which on their turn influenced the Czech attitude:

*Historisation of the past.* Ten years after the signature of the Czech-German Declaration of 1997, legal and political issues arising from the past were largely exempted from mutual relations. Issues such as the Decrees of President Beneš remained un-touchable. At the same time, even Václav Klaus’ play with this card did not really mobilise the political parties (the Communist Party being an exemption), the media or the public. The role of the past decreased, as did the importance of the asymmetry of the national potentials. The Czech policy and society turned increasingly to moral issues linked with the period of 1938–1947.

*Decentralisation and de-politicisation of the relations.* In a top-down process, the Czech governments gradually learned to approach Germany as their principal partner. Instead of a vertical structure of foreign policy making, direct horizontal links between the respective governmental agencies developed.

In a bottom-up development, the vast agenda of co-operation resulted in a decentralisation involving a wide range of actors – public as well as private. Geographic proximity, cultural/technological compatibility and economic as well as regional interests were the main driving force of the co-operation. The relation thus became less political and ideological, but it stood under the pressure of business and private interests.

*Europeanization.* The obvious effect of the EU accession was that the bilateral relationship was dominated by ‘European’ issues. Most importantly, the close co-operation with the German partner during the Czech EU Presidency represented a crucial ‘Europeanising’ experience which deeply influenced not only the Czech state government agencies. The position of the traditionally Euro-sceptical Civic Democratic Party (ODS) shifted to a compromising attitude. As a result the Czech political scene, like its German counterpart, restructured itself around the EU Lisbon Treaty for the first time: a broad majority of the political parties accepted the Lisbon Treaty as a basis for further development of the EU while a small (but decided) minority sought to block it. The division of the Czech politics over the attitude to the euro, however, marked a limitation of further Czech-German rapprochement in the EU.

A Europeanising effect also resulted from the departure from the neo-conservative foreign policy agenda of the Bush administration. The change in the US foreign policy after Barack Obama came into power eased the Czech-German relations in the international security area.

The deficits of the Czech policy during 2007–2009 were linked mainly with the lack of coherence and co-ordination. The foreign policy experienced little political guidance by the political elites and was dominated by the pragmatic management of the (increasingly competent) bureaucratic class. There was no mid – to long-term strategic vision of the Czech policy *vis-a-vis* Germany, and individual actors (most notably the President) often seemed to pursue their own agendas. As a result, the Czech attitude to Germany tended to move toward a fragmented bilateralism.

Also, the Europeanising effect of the Czech-German co-operation may prove shallow: the well established ties between the ČSSD and the SPD did not prevent the Czech party from bringing down the government during the EU-Presidency.

All in all, the Czech policy towards Germany entered a new era in 2007–2009. Its future dynamic, however, remains difficult to predict.

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## Chapter 7

# The United States of America in the Czech Foreign Policy

*Ondřej Ditrych*

### THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

#### *Background*

According to the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs' annual assessment, the relations between Czech Republic and the U.S. have an outstanding and friendly character and 'policies of both nations have a number of common elements in the area of security and in promotion of democracy and human rights'.<sup>1</sup> While a useful point of departure, this diplomatic assessment relays little of the unprecedented dynamics relations between Prague and Washington have gained in the last few years. Increased activity in negotiating the inclusion of the Czech Republic into the U.S. Visa Waiver Program coupled with continuing international cooperation in the area of transition politics and promotion of human rights, the Czech Presidency in the EU Council (2009), and above all the issue of prospective deployment of a U.S. missile defense component (ground-based radar station) on the territory of Czech Republic meant that the relations have intensified and become ever more complex.

The relations can be generally characterized as friendly, cooperative and asymmetric. As argued below, on the Czech side, and particularly among politicians, it has been primarily neglect of this asymmetric character together with a lack of a proper understanding of American global interests and a certain measure of provincialism that have led to unreasonable expectations from the other party, misinterpretation of its positions and disenchantment on the part of proponents of the radar deployment in the Brdy military complex after President Obama announced in September 2009 that the project of missile defense would be reviewed.

Despite the new pragmatism of the Obama administration, manifest in its focus on realistic great power politics and a lack of appreciation of the special relationship Central European countries, including Czech Republic, claimed to have with the U.S., Prague's relation with Washington remained for the entire period the most important relation of Czech foreign policy. However, at the same time no strategy existed as to

how to conduct these relations both at the diplomatic and the political level. Negotiations over the possible deployment of the radar station have been both a blessing and a curse of the general foreign policy discourse. They spurred a welcome public debate on the Czech ‘grand strategy’, i.e. the means of promoting Czech Republic’s long-term interests, and more broadly on its position in world politics. However, at the same time the radar became one of the central *pathologies* of Czech foreign policy discourse.

### ***Political Context***

The political debate concerning relations between Czech Republic and the U.S. mainly turned around the latter’s intent to deploy an element of its missile defense on Czech territory, and to a limited extent it also touched upon the visa policy. Mirek Topolánek’s government argued that deployment of the radar in Czech Republic would be a substantial contribution to national security. This view was challenged particularly by the opposition parties (while one member of the government coalition, the Greens, was divided on the issue) – the Social Democrats (ČSSD) and the Communists (KSČM). The project was also meeting with an unfavourable response from the general public, who, in opinion polls, consistently spoke against the project. Particularly ČSSD’s firm opposition, despite the fact that negotiations were commenced under the Špidla government (2002), and the negative public response seemed to be somewhat mutually constitutive.

The as yet imaginary radar represented a magnet of geopolitical visions of the Czech future. Beside the United States, they featured other international actors such as Russia, NATO or the EU. Domestic political actors’ positions in this highly polarized debate reflected their traditional orientations. The Topolánek government, and within it particularly the ODS (the Civic Democratic Party) and KDU-ČSL (Christian Democrats), held an internationalist position with a strong Atlantist emphasis (a position later also assumed by TOP09, a new party headed by Topolánek’s former Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg). Internationalism with stressed Continentalist momentum was characteristic of the ČSSD and the Greens. Czech Communists advocated their traditionally Autonomist views in this debate.<sup>2</sup> With the fall of the Topolánek government in March 2009, the Atlantists seemingly lost what previously seemed a dominant position in the articulation of Czech foreign policy – a development that was somewhat moderated by a continuing strong Atlantist orientation among many in MFA’s bureaucratic apparatus.

The discourse could be said, with a measure of simplification, to have been organized around two key poles – *sovereignty* and *threat*. The opposition argued that a radar facility would imperil Czech national sovereignty, while the government attempted to deny any such consequence, since there would always remain a national control over the radar’s operation, as well as a possibility to terminate the treaty. Nonetheless, for example, ČSSD Party Leader Jiří Paroubek repeatedly claimed with reference to the radar that ‘a base is a significant interference in a country’s psyche, and in its internal integrity’.<sup>3</sup> The spectre of Munich was revived in the discourse when news appeared in 2008 that based on an agreement between the U.S. and Russia, Russian observers

could be present at the facility – it was interpreted as yet another possible instance of a decision made by great powers that had an immediate impact on the country, yet Prague was not consulted.<sup>4</sup>

In the discourse of threats the government attempted to portray missile defense as a response to ‘new threats’ (reflecting NATO’s discourse). The opposition, on the contrary, challenged the existence or imminence of the threat posed by Iran, or framed missile defense as a project disrupting global balance of power (reflecting Russia’s official discourse), throwing the world back into the Cold War<sup>5</sup> and *ipso facto* decreasing Czech national security by turning it into ‘a battlefield of great powers’.<sup>6</sup> While the government was rather consistent in furthering the argument of the Iranian threat, occasionally its representatives redirected in debate the rationale for the radar station in Czech Republic to the threat posed by Russia,<sup>7</sup> or at least claimed that a refusal to host the facility would encourage Russia’s assertive policy in Central and Eastern Europe, ‘opening the door to a new Russian imperialism’.<sup>8</sup>

The decision of Obama’s administration to modify the missile defense’s architecture (Sept. 17, 2009) represented an important turn in the debate. While the decision could come as no surprise to Czech diplomacy and those politicians who ran it in the past few years (Alexandr Vondra, Karel Schwarzenberg), in political discourse it caused a tempest. Mr. Paroubek spoke of the ‘victory of Czech people’ and added that the decision confirmed the opinion advocated by the party that ‘the defense shield would not have been part of NATO collective defense’.<sup>9</sup> Mr. Topolánek, on the other hand, concluded from the decision that ‘Americans are not so much interested in this space of ours’ and even made the point that as a consequence ‘we are firmly anchored in terms of security, alliances and partnerships’ and ‘there is certain danger in this’.<sup>10</sup> KSČM and the Greens both welcomed the decision. The latter’s Leader Ondřej Liška moreover praised the (alleged) U.S. effort to involve Russia as much as possible in Transatlantic defense architecture and in the peaceful resolution of the problem of Iran’s nuclear armament (the existence of which he interestingly took for granted). Czech alliances were not impaired as Czech Republic remained firmly a part of the EU and NATO.<sup>11</sup>

The common feature of most of those views was a certain provincialism characterized by narcissism, a false perception of one’s own importance, and a lack of proper understanding of key factors of U.S. foreign policy. This lack of understanding was arguably produced by an insufficient measure of realism on the part of relevant actors (which, ironically, some of them allegedly tried to infuse Obama’s administration with).<sup>12</sup> Obama’s pragmatism seems to have translated into a decrease of interest in the Transatlantic partnership and maintaining the identity of a ‘European power’ as it does not conform to the United States’ realistically limited interests, particularly *vis-a-vis* Russia. His administration saw relations with Czech Republic (or Poland) as ‘normalized’ and from the perspective of higher political games, in which historical friendship and U.S. responsibility for Central Europe were of little consequence. In his Bucharest speech (Oct. 22, 2009), Joe Biden stressed, for example, that the U.S. was now thinking not of what it can do for Central European countries, but rather of what they and the U.S. can do together, and he particularly mentioned transition to

democracy in countries such as Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan or Belarus.<sup>13</sup> There was no indication that the newly pragmatic U.S. would yield Central and Eastern Europe to Russia in some sort of ‘New Malta’ agreement.

Concerned about the reversal of policy followed by the former President Bush, which in this respect could best be seen as a *deviation*, the Czech Atlantists attempted to ‘securitize’ Russia in communication with the U.S. (particularly in a letter sent by a group of Central European politicians, including the former Czech President Vaclav Havel, in which they complained that Russia behaves here as if it had the final word and lamented the lack of Washington’s interest in this development).<sup>14</sup> In the aftermath of the announcement of Obama’s plan to modify the missile defense architecture – a move which they had warned against – these concerns were succeeded by a feeling of bitterness, a lack of security provided by means of alliance architecture (Topolánek), or even a continental move, i.e. declared adherence to the idea of European security (Vondra): ‘The simple truth is that our *special relations with America* [emphasis added] reached their limits, and it would be a mistake now to spoil relations with our European allies. Who’s gonna be left then? Russians in Karlovy Vary.’<sup>15</sup> The future will show whether this rhetoric signalled a more fundamental change among the Atlantists, but recent statements seem to disconfirm such a conclusion.<sup>16</sup>

Misunderstanding rather than anxiety, on the other hand, was exhibited by those who consider themselves Obama’s closest ideological friends (the ČSSD). They, in their turn, seemed to miss the fact that the reasons for change in the missile defense architecture did not rest in it being considered Bush’s brainchild or their consistent opposition to the project (hence Paroubek could speak of a *victory*). In fact, the rationale behind the decision did not even relate to the multilateralization of the project under NATO, and it was not conditioned exclusively by great power politics between the United States and Russia.

Interestingly, the tempest mentioned above was followed by a discursive silence. No political debate on the future of Czech foreign policy towards the U.S. was commenced in the fall, while negotiations were resumed about a prospective future role for Czech Republic in the revised missile defense architecture. This could have been caused by a number of factors – key political actors, e.g., enjoying the spoils of victory; a view that the absence of an autochthonous national foreign policy (in contrast to *European* policy) is actually not a bad thing; or uncertainty about what Washington is going to propose next. That the debate on foreign policy towards the world’s single superpower all but vanished after one (admittedly politically explosive) issue was temporarily frozen, however, was in any case a symptom of the *pathology* characteristic of Czech foreign policy discourse in general.

## THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: AGENDA AND EVENTS

The following overview is necessarily cursory. It focuses on several key issues: missile defense, visas and human rights. It also briefly discusses the consequences for

Czech-U.S. relations of the Czech Presidency in the EU Council and lists important diplomatic events in the period covered. Finally, economic and cultural relations are treated.

### ***Missile Defense***

The first consultations about the deployment of the radar station facility took place in 2002. The initial confidential negotiations were conducted under the auspices of the Ministry of Defense. While the Cabinet passed one resolution on the issue at this time (119/2004), it was only three years later that Washington made the official request and full negotiations were started. (While the formal note was received at Černín Palace on January 25, 2007, the *non-paper* arrived already in the evening of January 19, within hours after the Topolánek government had finally passed an investiture vote in the Parliament).

Two negotiating teams were established upon a decision by the State Security Council, one under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the other under the auspices of the Ministry of Defense (MoD). Each was tasked with concluding one of the two treaties pertaining to the project. MFA was put in charge of the missile defense treaty (termed the ‘main treaty’), whereas the SOFA (*status of forces*) agreement was negotiated by MoD. Initially, it was assumed that negotiations would be over before the end of the year,<sup>17</sup> but due to a number of controversial points the conclusion of the treaties had to be postponed several times. A total of eighteen meetings were held over the missile defense treaty in 2007, and it was finally signed on July 8, 2008 in Prague by Foreign Minister Schwarzenberg and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. There were substantially more controversial issues in the SOFA. As a result, negotiations lasted even longer, and the agreement was eventually signed in London by Vlasta Parkanová and Robert Gates on September 19, 2008.

Topolánek’s government (with the partial exception of the Greens) showed a strong interest in concluding the treaties as soon as possible, preferably before the U.S. Presidential election. In Schwarzenberg’s words, it expected better terms from the incumbent administration and at the same time expected – wrongly, as it turned out – continuity in the U.S. missile defense policy.<sup>18</sup> Once the treaties were concluded, however, their ratification by the Parliament was postponed until after the Czech regional and Senate elections scheduled for fall 2008, since the government did not apparently want to unnecessarily arm the opposition with a politically explosive issue which could be used in the campaign. Before the end of the year, the treaties were ratified only in the Senate (November 27), where the coalition had a comfortable majority.

The next year witnessed a turning point in the process when the Topolánek government decided to withdraw the treaties from the Chamber of Deputies agenda (March 17, 2009) lest they be rejected. Fischer’s interim government later showed little inclination to deal with such a politically sensitive issue in the absence of a strong consensus. Meanwhile, an assessment of the strategic and political expediency of the project was under way in the United States. There were indications that the project could be re-evaluated since the very beginning of the year. Thus it could not have been much of a surprise for Czech diplomacy when on September 17, President Obama informed

Prime Minister Fischer in a phone call that his administration reassessed the original project and that it withdrew its request to deploy a radar station on Czech territory. (It is true, nonetheless, that the announcement was apparently not preceded by formal consultations with Czech diplomats, since it was made hastily after leaked information which appeared in *Wall Street Journal*.<sup>19</sup>) In a public speech, Obama felt it expedient to explicitly assure Poland and Czech Republic that the common defense clause of the NATO Treaty remained valid, while his Defense Secretary Robert Gates denied that the U.S. would abandon the missile defense project.<sup>20</sup> It was clear, however, that the administration chose to give preference to one (more forward) tier of the missile defense and curtail the third tier, which was a sore in Washington's relations with Moscow. Washington sought Russia's cooperation both on Iran and in negotiating a new nuclear arms deal pending the expiration of the START treaty (Obama chose to make nuclear arms one of his foreign policy landmarks). A frequently neglected factor of the U.S. decision in Czech Republic was Washington's concern for security and good relations with *other* allies beyond Central Europe (and also its *own troops* elsewhere) – in particular Turkey, Israel (whom it would wish to dissuade from preventive strikes against Iran), Egypt, Saudi Arabia or the Persian Gulf countries.

It was rather symptomatic of the provincialism mentioned above that when the decision was announced, MFA started to publicly outline possible concessions from the U.S. for the radar *that was not to be*. At the same time, Deputy Secretary of State Ellen Tauscher, who visited Prague on September 18, 2009, was quoted by *Washington Post* as saying that negotiations had been commenced about a possible hosting of a command and control center of the modified missile defense system by Czech Republic.<sup>21</sup> And following Tauscher's visit, *non-papers* were prepared by MFA and MoD which outlined Czech priorities and the negotiating teams headed by deputy heads of defense and foreign ministries / departments met in November. (Several rounds of these negotiations would result next year in an low-key agreement on a modest early warning missile defense center.) The previous month Vice-President Biden visited Prague (October 23) and met with the President, the Prime Minister and the leaders of two major political parties. For *New York Times*, Biden said that the main reason for his visit was that the September announcement could have been done better.<sup>22</sup>

Despite the eventual failure of radar negotiations a cooperation between Czech Republic and the U.S. was concurrently expanded in a number of other areas. A framework agreement on scientific and industrial cooperation was concluded in 2008. The agreement, which entered force by handing over diplomatic notes, was, however, later (2009) subject to renegotiation since the circumstances changed, particularly regarding the expected involvement of Czech institutions in the missile defense project. In addition, a security dialogue, expressing – albeit more formally than in practice – the close nature of mutual relations, was initiated in 2008. It involved negotiations about acquisition of military equipment (e.g. the transport aircraft Hercules C-130) or the creation of the High Level Defence Group to discuss means of U.S. support for Czech army operations abroad, intelligence sharing or consultations of NATO initiatives.



**Visa Waiver**

The (visitor) visa waiver emerged as a policy issue in Czech-U.S. relations in the 1990s (Czechoslovakia unilaterally waived the obligation for U.S. citizens to obtain a tourist visa in 1990, but the move was not reciprocated), yet after 9/11 the negotiations were temporarily frozen until the Bush administration expressed its interest in the inclusion of the Central and Eastern European (CEE) nations that had been assisting the United States in the 'war on terrorism' into the Visa Waiver Program (2006). The process in this issue area was significantly different from the radar negotiations, since once the administration supported the desirable outcome, the final decision rested on the U.S. legislative branch. Moreover, the issue spurred little controversy as the visa waiver was seen as an outcome clearly in the public interest (minor criticism from the opposition relating to the terms aside). The Czech government also continually stressed that there could be no issue linkage and consequent bargaining between the radar and visa issues.<sup>23</sup> It is likely that through these statements, it sent signals that it would not be contented with *only* the visa waiver and that it could not possibly be blackmailed *both* by its interlocutor in negotiations and by the Czech general public.

Since in the first stage (2006–2007), it was imperative that the Congress pass the appropriate legislation, Czech Republic had to lobby in favour of this. It joined forces with other new EU Member States from CEE in a Coalition for Visa Equality (2006). Together, they hired the consulting company Dutko Worldwide (whose Prague branch was once headed by Alexandr Vondra). The legislation was debated in both houses as an amendment to a security bill listed under the abbreviation S.4 (*Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007*). Interestingly, in the House of Representatives one of the amendment's authors was the present White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel. The bill, together with the amendment that made it possible to include countries with an entry refusal rate of under 10% in the Visa Waiver Program, was passed on July 27, 2007. However, after President Bush signed the bill, the Czech government issued a statement in which it declared that the law did not meet its expectations, since instead of visa equality a mere exception from a rule was granted (and it could be easily unilaterally withdrawn by an executive decision of the Homeland Security Department). Since it was not clear that all Coalition countries would meet the necessary criteria, Czech Republic and six other coalition partners sent a joint letter to Washington, in which they asked for a revision of the current arrangements.

However, next year Czech Republic signed the memorandum about the visa waiver as the first of the coalition partners under the unchanged conditions during Topolánek's visit in the U.S. (February 26, 2008). The conclusion of this memorandum, in which the Interior Ministry, the Foreign Ministry and the Office of the Government were involved, ushered in a second stage of the foreign policy process in this issue area – intergovernmental negotiations on the precise way in which the new legislation would be implemented. In principle, the visa waiver remained an exception from the regular regime as long as the refusal rate did not exceed 10% and the U.S. government, in regular assessments, evaluated it as conforming to national interests in

the area of security, law enforcement and immigration.<sup>24</sup> Technical requirements of the exception included participation in ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorization), sharing of information on lost personal documents, and guarantee of airport security. The intergovernmental negotiations over details of those requirements lasted for several months and, after several rounds of talks, led to the suspension of visitor visa requirement for Czech citizens. Symbolically, it was launched on November 17. At that moment, the visa waiver chapter in mutual relations was effectively closed.

### ***Human Rights***

Promotion of human rights and spread of democracy are traditional subjects of Czech-U.S. relations *vis-a-vis* third countries. At the diplomatic level, both nations have cooperated on promoting international action, e.g. condemning authoritarian regimes and human rights abuses, particularly in the United Nations; in the field, the U.S. has been taking advantage of a good placement in many countries of the Czech NGO *People in Need* (with informal but strong link to the Czech MFA) to promote desirable policies. Moreover, human rights in Cuba, Belarus or Burma were frequent subjects of discussion, as was Prague's hosting of an RFE/RL broadcast. There was a minor disagreement on the issue of continuing sanctions against Cuba – the Czech government first supported the U.S.'s firm position, but since it led to Czech Republic's isolation in the debate on the sanctions's loosening within the EU (after the personal change in the leadership and seemingly growing pragmatism of the Havana regime), it eventually voted in favour of the loosening. The Guantánamo issue was, according to government sources, mentioned only sporadically in mutual communications.

Next to the issue of missile defense, human rights and transition politics was another area of mutual relations where there occurred a notable change after President Obama took office – because of the more emphasized pragmatism and consideration of other great powers' interests, the hitherto assertive U.S. policy has been somewhat moderated, to the vexation of some government circles in the Czech Republic whose preferences in this matter were unchanged. In contrast to the security dimension, however, this issue received practically no public attention and was not reflected in political debates.

### ***The Czech Presidency in the EU Council***

The Czech presidency (January–June 2009) set as one of its objectives enhanced cooperation within the Transatlantic dialogue and the removal of the then current barriers in the Transatlantic (economic) space.<sup>25</sup> However, little actual progress could be observed in those areas. During the Czech Presidency the relation naturally intensified as Czech Republic now represented the entire EU at various fora, including G20 and NATO. Issues discussed included measures against the global financial crisis; the escalation of the conflict in Palestine in January 2009 (Prime Minister Topolánek was receiving calls from the then still incumbent President Bush while negotiating in Moscow a continuation of gas supplies to Ukraine); and the handing over of detainees from Guantánamo to EU Member States. But with intensification comes also a potential for discord. The U.S. was allegedly disappointed with the results of the negotiations (ac-

ording to which Member States were free to decide whether they would accept any detainees, provided they shared information with others), as it apparently expected more from Czech diplomacy. The disappointment deepened as the Topolánek government in its demise announced that it would refuse any potential request made by the U.S. since the State Security Council issued a negative recommendation to that end and, in the Prime Minister's words, Prague 'will not yield to any pressure'.<sup>26</sup> At around that time, the Czech embassy in Washington also had to iron out a diplomatic incident which had arisen from Topolánek's words before the European Parliament, in which he called the U.S. recovery plan 'a road to hell'.<sup>27</sup>

### *Diplomatic Events*

President Klaus visited the U.S. in each of the three years covered in this volume. However, his visits involved a progressively less representative agenda as Klaus travelled to the U.S. to speak at various venues about climate change. Particularly Klaus' appearance at a Heartland Institute conference (2009) raised interest as the President was at that time the head of state of a state that held the rotating EU Presidency.<sup>28</sup> Prague hosted two U.S. Presidents in this period – George W. Bush, who negotiated primarily about the missile defense and cooperation in the war on terrorism (June 4–5, 2007), and Barack Obama two years later (April 4–5, 2009). The bilateral dimension of the latter visit, however, seemed shadowed by the multilateral talks at the EU-USA summit which also took place at around the same time – one of the reasons was surely the 'anarchy' that followed the no confidence vote issued to the Topolánek government only a week before. In the end, Obama reportedly called the visit 'a waste of time'<sup>29</sup> in private – however, it is unclear whether he referred specifically to one of the dimensions mentioned above or to both – and Prague seemed to serve him more as a set for his visionary speech about a world without nuclear weapons – President Klaus, however, called the speech 'unexpectedly Czech'.<sup>30</sup> Vice-President Biden visited Prague later that year (October 23, 2009) mainly to reassure the Czech government in the wake of the U.S. decision to withdraw its request to deploy a radar station in the Czech Republic. There was a number of meetings at the ministerial level both in Czech Republic and the United States, which related particularly to negotiations or conclusion of missile defense treaties, involving mainly Foreign and Defense Ministers, but also the Czech Deputy Prime Minister Vondra (who *de facto* overtook a significant part of the U.S. portfolio in the Topolánek government), and senior administrative talks on the same subject.

A notable fact regarding diplomatic relations between the two countries was the resignation of the U.S. Ambassador in Prague Richard Graber before the new presidency took office. Tellingly, the post remained vacant for the rest of the year – it is rather common that nominations in smaller countries usually take some time, yet if anything it does testify to the *normal*, rather than outstanding or special, character of relations between the two countries as seen from Washington. In contrast, the Czech ambassador in Washington Petr Kolář remained in office even *after* his mandate formally expired since no political consensus could be reached on his successor prior to the general election scheduled for June 2010.

### ***Economic and Cultural Relations***

The most significant trend in the last several years in terms of economic relations was an absolute decrease of trade exchange caused by the global stagnation (a factor not specific to relations between Czech Republic and the U.S.), which was, however, also coupled with the relative decrease of its importance when compared to other EU Member States. The trade balance deficit as viewed from Czech Republic's perspective decreased as a consequence of the advantage U.S. businesses took of a low dollar exchange rate (the U.S. achieved positive trade balance with all EU Member State countries in this period). Economic issues negotiated at the political level included, e.g., participation of Czech research and industrial entities on the missile defense project tenders; the planned expansion of the Temelin power plant mentioned above (with a bid made by the U.S. power company Westinghouse); and the prospects of the Nabucco gas pipeline (the U.S. sees Czech Republic as one of its main champions within the EU). On the other hand, sensitive issues in mutual economic relations were the continuing listing of Czech Republic among countries with a poor record of protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights in the *Special 301 Report* issued by the U.S. Trade Department,<sup>31</sup> or the protectionist nature of the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* (2009).

The main actor in the field of cultural diplomacy *vis-a-vis* the United States was the Czech Centre in New York, which was seconded by the embassy in Washington. An event of considerable importance was the new opening of the National Building in Manhattan (2008), where it relocated together with the Consulate General (the National Building was originally acquired in 2001). Its reconstruction was the single largest investment of the Czech government abroad at the time, with a total cost of CZK 730 million. The thrust of the Centre's activity was (co-)organization of cultural events, particularly in the area of film and visual arts. In terms of cultural relations it is important to mention also cooperation in the field of education, e.g. the continuing activity of the Czech Fulbright Commission with U.S. and Czech governments as key stakeholders (with the balance of costs shifting slightly towards the latter in the period covered by this chapter).

### **THE U.S.A. IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: IDENTIFICATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF KEY ACTORS**

Czech foreign policy *vis-a-vis* the United States is traditionally articulated by a range of state and substate actors. Among state actors it was predominantly the MFA and the MoD. Both actively participated in negotiations on missile defense and the related issues, with the MoD progressively gaining on importance after the main treaties were concluded and other, rather more technical issues of cooperation became more prominent (the MoD was also dominant in the initial consultations, 2003–2007). The role of the Interior Ministry was particularly salient in the visa chapter during the second stage of the process, but it significantly diminished after the visa chapter was closed. (The Ministry also participated on negotiations concerning the radar, as did, occa-

sionally, other ministries such as the Ministries of Justice, Transport, Finances and Environment.) Similarly, the role of Office of the Government was reduced when the Atlantist Prime Minister and his Deputy Vondra left the Office of the Government following the demise of the Topolánek government (2009).

The President's role was restrained in the period in accordance to his limited constitutional responsibilities in the area of foreign policy. The Parliament was not significantly involved either. Interestingly, the opposition did strive to increase the Parliament's role in the matter of missile defense treaties once it was clear that the lower Chamber might not vote in their favour (2008).

The domestic political crisis that followed shortly after struck a new balance among key actors shaping foreign policy toward the U.S. Since Washington seemed to understand that the Fischer government did not have a strong mandate to decide on key issues, particularly in the area of security, it increasingly turned to substate actors representing societal interests – political parties. Yet a certain paralysis in mutual relations was unavoidable, and the process of making the foreign policy lost some of its transparency. (It should be noted, however, that ČSSD as the strongest opposition party had played a rather important role even during the Topolánek government, which held an uncertain majority in the Parliament.)

## **CZECH FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE U.S.A. IN THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC SPACE**

The missile defense was the most salient issue of the mutual relations not only in the political, but also in the general public debate. (The other issues received little or no public attention, and therefore are omitted in the following overview.) As in the political debate, the discursive poles of sovereignty and threats were clearly observable. Those opposed to the radar stationing frequently emphasized the negative security consequences for Czech Republic and thus organized their arguments around the pole of threat. Greenpeace, one of the most vocal entities to run a public campaign against the radar, chose the following phrase as a *leitmotif* of their protest, during which it occupied the quota of 718.8 in Brdy (the site chosen for the radar) in 2008: ‘Nechci být terčem! [I don't want to be a target!]’ The proponents of the radar, on the contrary, tended to emphasize the threat posed by Iran (for which participation in missile defense was the *appropriate* response), and similarly to the government occasionally resorted to normative arguments stressing the importance of cultivating the Transatlantic partnership or showing gratitude to the United States for the role it played in the nation's history.<sup>32</sup> Normative arguments of the opponents centered on (the need to preserve) national sovereignty or were grounded in anti-Americanism and/or pacifism – as was the case of another important public initiative protesting against the radar, *Ne základnám*.

In public debate opponents of the radar were more visible than the project's supporters. This could be explained by better mobilization strategies (it should be noted that the Czech Counter-Intelligence suggested in its 2007 Annual Report that the Rus-

sian government was actively attempting to shape public opinion on the issue),<sup>33</sup> but also by the mere fact that the majority of the society was from the beginning opposed to deploying the radar station on Czech territory – according to repeated opinion polls ca. 2/3 of the population disapproved of the project.

Similarly to the political debate, withdrawal of the request to deploy a radar station in Czech Republic meant a practical disappearance of Czech-U.S. relations from the public focus, with the only possible exception being Biden's October visit in Prague. The way in which quality media reported this visit showed that the provincialism mentioned above was by no means limited to the political circles. For instance, on the day of Biden's visit a front-page photograph subtitle in *Lidové noviny* read 'The Czechs look forward to Biden's apology for the radar. But most likely in vain.'<sup>34</sup> Next day, the same daily glossed the visit's results thus: '[Biden] paralysed [Prague's] traffic... but came with nothing.'<sup>35</sup> The feeling of *injury* done to Czech Republic and the expected *satisfaction* were clearly observable, coupling the limited understanding due to absent sound analyses and Czech Republic's false conviction of its own importance with a childish pique.

## CONCLUSION

The United States play a prominent role in Czech foreign policy. The relations are friendly and cooperative, and they intensified in recent years. The process in the key policy issue, the deployment of the radar station, was affected by several factors, including absence of political consensus, domestic political instability and the change of the U.S. administration, with the incumbent President showing more restraint and pragmatic limitation of the U.S. national interest than his predecessor did. In conclusion, the process of negotiations on some form of Czech participation in the modified missile defense project remains open at the time of writing. In contrast, the (visitor) visa waiver chapter, the second major policy issue in the mutual relations, was finally closed in 2008. Promotion of human rights and transition policy in third countries remained a constant in the mutual cooperative relations. However, some tension arose with Czech Republic's support for easing EU sanctions against Cuba, and later, on the other hand, with the Obama administration's new pragmatism in this policy issue area.

Both public and political discourse in this period showed a general tendency to provincialism, characterized by Czech Republic's narcissism and myopic vision of its own importance. Typical of the Czech public debate was a lack of realism, which, particularly after the Obama administration took office, resulted in various misreadings of Washington's interests. In the future, this lack of understanding of the asymmetrical and pragmatic nature of mutual relations as they are seen by the U.S. and of the constants of great power politics polluting the Czech political and public debate may result in other bitter disappointments from Obama and any subsequent administration (particularly in Atlantist circles), but even more importantly, it may lead to miscalculations in the design and implementation of the Czech strategy. Equally mistaken, however, would be an inadequate appreciation of those relations while there ex-

ists no sensible or normatively adequate alternative, which was frequently observable among Continentalists. In some cases it was coupled with a provincialism of a particular kind – playing the low tune of the need to preserve ‘national sovereignty’ as an argument against granting the U.S. request, which surprisingly was done not only by the autonomist Communists, but also by the continentalist Social Democrats.

The debate on the means of providing national security should be welcome (however, admittedly it should not overlay the debate on foreign policy *vis-a-vis* the world’s superpower). To do away with the present provincialism, it may be necessary (if not sufficient) to productively *forget* the (now dormant) ‘radar’, which, for some, can be the sole means of defending the country against the Kremlin’s tentacles since Russia would have to ‘be overcoming American resistance’,<sup>36</sup> and for others an ‘encroachment of the country’s internal integrity’.<sup>37</sup> Only then it may be possible, at least in theory, to have a sensible and realistic debate on security, which would be founded on a reasonable assessment of the character of the U.S., but also on Russia’s foreign policy, as much as the present limits to the European common defence.

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> *Zpráva o zahraniční politice ČR* (2008) [*Czech Foreign Policy Report 2008*], p. 306. On-line: ([www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/zahranicni\\_vztahy/zprava\\_o\\_zahranicni\\_politice\\_ceske\\_1.html](http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/zahranicni_vztahy/zprava_o_zahranicni_politice_ceske_1.html)).
- <sup>2</sup> These categories are defined in detail in Drulák, Petr (2008): *Česká zahraniční politika mezi internacionalismem a Atlantikem*. In: Kořan, M. (et al.): *Česká zahraniční politika v roce 2007. Analýza ÚMV*. Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů.
- <sup>3</sup> Czech News Agency 27. 6. 2008.
- <sup>4</sup> Czech News Agency, 6. 4. 2008.
- <sup>5</sup> Czech News Agency, 27. 11. 2008.
- <sup>6</sup> Czech News Agency, 29. 10. 2008.
- <sup>7</sup> Cf. statement by Prime Minister Topolánek in the aftermath of the Georgia War (Czech News Agency, 4. 9. 2008).
- <sup>8</sup> Prime Minister Topolánek as quoted during a Senate Debate (Czech News Agency, 27. 11. 2008).
- <sup>9</sup> *iDNES*, 17. 9. 2009.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, originally a comment made for Radio Česko.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>12</sup> Cf. interview with Alexandr Vondra, *Reflex*, 8. 4. 2010.
- <sup>13</sup> On-line: ([www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-vice-President-biden-america-central-europe-and-a-partnership-21st-century](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-vice-President-biden-america-central-europe-and-a-partnership-21st-century)).
- <sup>14</sup> On-line: ([wyborcza.pl/1,75477,6825987,An\\_Open\\_Letter\\_to\\_the\\_Obama\\_Administration\\_from\\_Central.html](http://wyborcza.pl/1,75477,6825987,An_Open_Letter_to_the_Obama_Administration_from_Central.html)).
- <sup>15</sup> *Lidové noviny*, 20. 9. 2009.
- <sup>16</sup> See note above, note 13.
- <sup>17</sup> Czech News Agency, 15. 3. 2007.
- <sup>18</sup> Czech News Agency, 14. 1. 2008.
- <sup>19</sup> *Wall Street Journal*, 17. 9. 2009.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>21</sup> *Washington Post*, 1. 10. 2009.
- <sup>22</sup> *New York Times*, 23. 10. 2009.

- <sup>23</sup> Cf. a statement by Ambassador Kolář quoted by Czech News Agency, 9. 3. 2007; or Topolánek, M.: *Radar a víza spolu nesouvisejí*. *Lidové noviny*, 4. 6. 2007.
- <sup>24</sup> The memorandum is available on-line: ([www.vlada.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=31895](http://www.vlada.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=31895)).
- <sup>25</sup> Cf. on-line: ([www.eu2009.cz/scripts/file.php?id=6225&down=yes](http://www.eu2009.cz/scripts/file.php?id=6225&down=yes)).
- <sup>26</sup> Czech News Agency, 30. 3. 2009.
- <sup>27</sup> Reuters, 27. 3. 2009.
- <sup>28</sup> *Guardian*, 9. 3. 2009.
- <sup>29</sup> Interview with Alexandr Vondra, *Lidové noviny*, 20. 9. 2009.
- <sup>30</sup> Czech News Agency, 6. 4. 2009.
- <sup>31</sup> On-line: ([www.ustr.gov/about-us/press-office/reports-and-publications/2009/2009-special-301-report](http://www.ustr.gov/about-us/press-office/reports-and-publications/2009/2009-special-301-report)).
- <sup>32</sup> The latter view was clearly enunciated in a statement by the former President Václav Havel during his visit of the United Kingdom, quoted Czech News Agency, 27. 9. 2008.
- <sup>33</sup> On-line: ([www.bis.cz/n/2008-09-25-vyrocní-zpráva-2007.html](http://www.bis.cz/n/2008-09-25-vyrocní-zpráva-2007.html)).
- <sup>34</sup> *Lidové noviny*, 23. 10. 2009.
- <sup>35</sup> *Lidové noviny*, 24. 10. 2009.
- <sup>36</sup> Jiří Šedivý, former Army Chief of Staff, quoted by *iDNES*, 17. 9. 2009.
- <sup>37</sup> Jiří Paroubek, quoted by Czech News Agency, 27. 6. 2008.



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## Chapter 8

# West European Countries in the Czech Foreign Policy

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The Czech relations with countries covered in this chapter – both EU Member States and others (including microstates) – shared certain general characteristics. Without exception, they involved no issues that would be a subject of major controversy. Secondly, with but a few exceptions, these relations were conducted within a network, or at least through a network, of the EU multilateral frame. The reason for the dominance of the EU framework in the conduct of bilateral relations is primarily the importance of the political process at the EU level both for Member States and their West European neighbours due to a high degree of mutual interdependence and the increasing scope of EU's allocative and distributive policies. Several government officials throughout the period covered in this volume estimated that up to 80% of the relations of Czech Republic with those countries take place at the EU level. However, this does not result in a decline of the bilateral dimension of mutual relations, as could be expected, but rather in their conduct in a new environment of a burgeoning political system, where the need to negotiate issue coalitions increases. Bilateral negotiations remain an important diplomatic means of this 'permanent congress'. The last shared feature of Czech foreign policy towards the countries covered in this chapter is that it generally took place in conditions of a political pluralism, which was made possible by the countries' location within the EU framework. The process of Czech foreign policy involved a considerable number of government actors – all of which should theoretically act in the public interest – without the mediation by traditional diplomacy and conduct through its standard channels. This new pluralism represents one of the central challenges for Czech foreign policy, since without proper coordination it leads to a suboptimal use of (necessarily limited) resources in realizing public interest abroad.

In the next section a brief survey of the relations is presented. It is followed by three 'microstudies' of Czech foreign policy towards three countries with which Czech Republic had, for various reasons, significant relations in the period covered in this chapter – the United Kingdom, France, and Sweden.

## OVERVIEW

Traditionally, West European countries do not count among the closest natural allies of Czech Republic in coalition-building within the EU – in contrast particularly to Prague’s Central European neighbours. Yet among them there can indeed be found some whose interests converge with those of Czech Republic for one reason or another – e.g. Portugal, which is a state of similar size and moreover a state with a similar foreign policy orientation due to its strong Atlantist internationalism; or Italy, the most important Czech ally among the countries of South West Europe. Relations with Italy did not reach the intensity of those with France, yet Italian and Czech interests are similar in a number of issue areas, including expansion of the EU to the West Balkans and Turkey, the EU’s position towards Israel or the project of Eastern Partnership, which Czech Republic strongly favoured and which was seen in Italy as a means of balancing the growing French influence in the Mediterranean that was exercised through the Mediterranean Union. Even here, however, the intensity and the character of the relations are limited by factors such as geographical distance, different socioeconomic characteristics or cultural orientations.

More differences from the Czech position existed in the positions of countries such as Spain and Belgium, who, for instance, reacted to the Czech Presidency priorities in a much more lukewarm way or held different views on relations towards third countries such as Cuba (sanctions), Kosovo (recognition) or the Western Balkans (enlargement). The case of Spain shows rather well how different economic and cultural orientation (in relation to Cuba), or domestic political concerns *vis-a-vis* separatist movements (Kosovo) can effect difference in foreign policy priorities. Czech Republic has had close historical ties with Luxembourg, but today these relations translate exclusively into the exceptional cultural relations rather than the political relations. It generally applies to West European countries that quality and intensity of relations are not necessarily directly proportional. (France, in contrast to Luxembourg, is a good example of this pattern.)

The Czech Presidency in the EU Council (and its preparatory period in the second half of 2008) influenced particularly the absolute rather than the relative intensity of relations at both the highest political level and the working level. On the other hand, in the wake of the Presidency, there was a notable decrease in the absolute intensity of the relations, which could be partly attributed to the domestic political situation, as this situation might be characterized as an extraordinarily long pre-election period. During such periods, mutual relations usually stagnate, particularly at the highest level, which contrasts with the periods immediately after the election, when continuity of personal relations among government representatives is (re)established. This could be observed in 2007 after the second Topolánek government was firmly established following a period of instability in the preceding fall. The investiture of the Fischer interim government (2009) was not followed by a similar outcome, however, particularly because it was understood that it was a government *pro tempore* and with a limited mandate, and also because it took place during the Presidency, when relations were intensified due to other specific causes.

If the Czech Presidency caused a (temporary) intensification of relations with West European countries, the fall of the Topolánek government indisputably caused damage to its reputation. France in particular used this event in support of its argument in favour of a permanent presidency of the EU, which it advocated against new and smaller Member States, whose ability to lead the Union it doubted. (The compliment paid to Prime Minister Fischer at the end of the Czech Presidency was widely understood as somewhat hypocritical.)

The significance of relations with European microstates was generally proportional to their size – with the notable exception of the Vatican. (However, it should be noted that in 2009, diplomatic relations were established with Liechtenstein following a long period during which they were hindered due to restitution disputes between Czech Republic and the Princely House of Liechtenstein, which had once owned extensive property in the Lands of the Bohemian Crown. The diplomatic act was not conditioned on any immediate property settlement, so it seems likely that Vaduz decided that it was in its interest establish normal diplomatic relations in order to pursue its interest in the future.) The relations with the Vatican are specific due to the fact that it is the seat of the Holy See, and also because of the Catholic history of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia. They have long suffered by the absence of a *concordate*, which was negotiated yet whose ratification continues to be impeded by a continuing process of settlement between the Czech State and the Church involving the return of property confiscated by the Communist regime to the latter. The settlement is a sensitive political issue in Czech Republic and even figured in the election campaign of one of the two main political parties (the Social Democrats) before the scheduled, but finally cancelled, general election in the fall of 2009.

### **THE UNITED KINGDOM IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT**

The relations with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) did not witness any convulsions or controversies, but not even opening (or closing) policy issue agenda chapters. In that sense, they represented typical relations with a European partner state (and not an immediate neighbour), with whom cooperative relations were somewhat closer in several areas due to a historical record (military cooperation) or long-term policy convergencies (some EU policies). In both cases, however, it is near impossible to speak of *strictly* bilateral relations. There was also a more general ideological convergence observable in a similar balance of Atlantist and Continentalist affinities.<sup>1</sup> Needless to say, the relations were asymmetric, since the UK foreign policy continued to have global aspirations, and even within the EU it represented a large state seeking allies against the hegemonic core of France and Germany from among the new Member States. The UK sought such an alliance with Czech Republic from time to time, but it did so largely on its own terms.

Due to the absence of salient political issues, Czech foreign policy *vis-a-vis* the United Kingdom had a technical (apolitical) character. This resulted in an absence of political and public debate on the definition of strategic objectives and the means of

their achievement, but also in the practical absence of strategic reflection at the bureaucratic and diplomatic level.<sup>2</sup> The institutional capacity dedicated to the foreign policy was moreover also rather limited – in the period covered, there, e.g., existed no separate (full-time) British desk within the MFA's Department of Northern and Eastern European Countries (OSVE), and in fact, the personnel capacities at the London embassy were actually reduced in 2008 as the Czech diplomacy decided to channel more resources to facilitate representation in South and Southeast Asia.

## THE UNITED KINGDOM IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: AGENDA AND EVENTS

### *Military Relations*

Close military relations were established between Czech Republic and the UK in the 1990s, when the national armies of both countries collaborated in the Balkan peace operations. Since then, they have been cultivated partly due to the British army's extensive experience and resources, which could be used in modernizing and professionalizing Czech military forces. The two most important elements in the relations have been cooperation in foreign deployments and training activities. In both cases, they have been taking place largely within a multilateral framework (NATO). At the same time, they exceeded what could be termed a standard level of cooperation.

Until 2008, Czech forces were deployed in Iraq under the British command of the MND-SE in Basra. When the contingent met its original objective (the training of the Iraqi military police), negotiations were started to determine its future tasks. This was subject to some controversy as Czech Republic was not content with the British proposal that the troops should protect military facilities, and Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg even publicly threatened that the contingent would be withdrawn (2007). Subsequently, a compromise was reached, according to which Czech Republic would participate in the newly created Leadership Academy. Yet with both UK and Czech Republic all but pulling their troops from Iraq, the cooperation in this area ended. The cooperation continued unabated, however, under NATO ISAF Afghanistan – in Helmand Province, the Czech Special Operations Group (SOG) of the army police operated under British command since 2007. In April 2009, SOG's activity became a subject of some public interest after it emerged that the Ministry of Defense Inspectorate found personal failures in the Czech unit which, *inter alia*, should have led to a loss of confidence on the part of the British when Czech soldiers repeatedly left their British comrades-in-arms at the mercy of the enemy. The Ministry immediately denied the information, but personnel changes indeed followed.<sup>3</sup>

Regarding training, the most significant instrument of cooperation was the BMATT (British Military Advisory and Training Team) established at the Czech Army Staff Headquarters in Vyškov (2001). It originally included Central and Eastern European countries, but at British request other countries – selected members of the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue, Iraq and Afghanistan – started to participate in the program as well (2007). The annual spring exercises called 'Flying Rhino' took place each year.

In 2009, they involved 3,500 troops mainly from Czech Republic and the UK, but also from Slovakia, Denmark, Canada, Netherlands and Lithuania.<sup>4</sup>

### ***EU Relations***

‘In bilateral relations with European Union member countries, Czech Republic will focus on, *inter alia*, identification of shared priorities, positions and interests and on the potential for cooperation in their furthering within the Union’, states a dated Czech foreign policy strategic document.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, with relation to the UK such areas of shared interest existed – they included particularly liberalization of the single market; Common Foreign and Security Policy (e.g. regarding Russian Federation, where the two countries share rather cautious and restrained positions); enlargement (while the UK was interested mainly in accession of Turkey while Czech Republic focused more on the West Balkans countries); reforming the Common Agricultural Policy; and energy security (where the positions of Czech Republic and the UK are likely to converge in the future, with the former focusing more than at present on building a low-carbon economy, the latter emphasizing more the geopolitical dimension of energy security, and both being equally interested in supply/delivery services unbundling). (On the other hand, Czech Republic originally protested against the UK *opt-outs* from the Lisbon Treaty. However, at the very end of the ratification process, it pressed, through President Klaus’ effort, an *opt-out* of its own). But as argued below, despite the limited potential that relations between the two countries within the EU have had, particularly given their asymmetric character, the potential has not yet been exhausted. This is mainly because relations were conducted in an extremely complex, decentralized and informal environment in Brussels, London and Prague, which, in the absence of a clear strategic vision and effective coordination, led to satisfactory yet suboptimal outcomes.

An *ad hoc* intensification of relations in the period covered preceded the Czech Presidency in the European Council (2009). The UK was among the more active countries that lent a hand with the preparations, mainly through the established practice of secondments and consultations with a view of shaping the presidency’s agenda and Czech positions. During the Presidency itself, however, the relations were not extraordinarily active, in part because Czech Republic had to ‘stand above’ the standard political processes and coalition forming.

### ***Diplomatic Events***

In 2007, the purpose of a series of state and working visits was, according to government representatives’ statements, mainly to renew continuity in mutual relations after the temporary freeze caused by the domestic political instability after the general election held in the previous year. The most significant visits were the *guest of government* visit of President Klaus (November 7–9, 2007), during which met with Queen Elizabeth II, Prime Minister Gordon Brown, and Foreign Minister David Miliband, but also representatives of the North Ireland government; the visit of Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek; and the visit of Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg and Defense Minister Vlasta Parkanová. In 2008, the most important visits to the UK by Prime Minister Topolánek (December) and Deputy Prime Minister Alexandr Vondra (May,

and November) related to the forthcoming Czech Presidency. After the meeting with Prime Minister Brown, Topolánek stated that ‘the UK supported Czech priorities and both countries will continue in their close cooperation’,<sup>6</sup> including their activities in preparation of the EU-Pakistan summit, which took place on June 17, 2009.<sup>7</sup> During the Presidency, the new Prime Minister Jan Fischer visited London and met with Gordon Brown on June 17, 2009. The agenda of the meeting included the global financial crisis and the future of the Lisbon Treaty before the second Irish referendum. Fischer also later held a speech at the British Royal Institute of International Affairs at Chatham House.<sup>8</sup> President Klaus visited London on November 12 – he lectured there on the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia (1989) to commemorate its twentieth anniversary and met with the Conservative Party leader James Cameron.

A series of other ministerial and senior official level meetings took place in the period covered, mainly on the issue areas mentioned above. A notable and sad event was the premature death of the Czech Ambassador to London Jan Winkler (2009). He was succeeded in office by Michael Žantovský, who previously served as Ambassador to Israel. At the institutional level, the Czech Honorary Consulate re-opened in Belfast in 2007, supplementing the previously established consulates in Cardiff and Edinburgh. The MFA explained the move by the increasing number of Czech expatriates living in the UK following the lifting of the restrictions to their access to the local labour market after Czech Republic joined the EU.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Political Parties’ Relations***

Participating in the political life of the EU not only led to a decentralization of the conduct of traditional diplomacy (see below), but it also opened new increased possibilities and interests in transnational cooperation between political parties. A case in point was the institutionalization of the cooperation between ODS (the Civic Democratic Party) and the British Conservatives. Following the June 2009 European Parliament election a new faction was formed there (Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists, AECR), which included these two parties, but which also comprised other Conservative or Nationalist parties such as the Polish *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (PiS), Belgium’s *Lijst Dedecker*, the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) and Latvia’s Freedom and Nation (TB/LNNK).<sup>10</sup> The Conservatives and ODS had established a partnership already several years earlier when the MER (Movement for European Reform) platform was formed. When the new faction came to being as a result of MER’s Prague Declaration (March 2009), its newly appointed Deputy Chairman Jan Zahradil (ODS) explained that ‘purposeful German politics in the 1990s bought out, ideologically speaking’, almost all political parties in Central and Eastern Europe, which, as a result, joined with either European Christian Democrats (EPP) or Socialists (PES) – factions ‘practically indistinguishable from each other in the matters of European policy, and dominated by German parties’. Therefore, it was necessary for ODS to form a geopolitical alliance with the British Conservatives to advocate, against the German parties’ hegemony, ‘an alternative, more flexible model of the EU, which would be distinct from the Eurofederalism imported to Central Europe by Germany and further strengthened by the Lisbon Treaty’.<sup>11</sup>

The Czech Social Democrats (ČSSD) also entered into relations with their British ideological counterpart, the Labour Party. However, in this case the cooperation had a more traditional character. In particular it involved bilateral visits (including those that were made during party conventions) and collaborations within transnational bodies such as the Socialist International and the European Socialist Party (PES).

### *Economic and Cultural Relations*

The volume of trade between Czech Republic and the United Kingdom has been decreasing steadily in the last three years as a consequence of the global economic crisis. However, despite the temporary fall it continued to be around twice the volume reached in 2000. Czech Republic had a strongly positive trade balance with the UK in the entire period covered in this volume – and it achieved the third largest overall surplus in 2009. The United Kingdom was Czech Republic's fifth largest export market, following Germany, Slovakia, Poland and France.<sup>12</sup> Traditionally, the most significant Czech exporter to the United Kingdom has been the car manufacturer Skoda Auto Mlada Boleslav. In contrast to the rather favourable trade balance values, according to the Czech National Bank the economic relations witnessed one of the most significant overall outflows of British foreign direct investments to Czech Republic in 2009.<sup>13</sup> To facilitate mutual trade relations and cooperation in third countries' markets, the Czech-British Chamber of Commerce opened on September 30, 2008.

Mutual relations in the area of culture are traditionally at a very high level. Czech cultural diplomacy, represented predominantly by the Czech Centre in London, was very active in the last few years, and it could benefit from, among other things, the interest the British public has historically taken in Czech music composers. For example, a series of symphonies and operas commemorating the anniversary of Bohuslav Martinů was performed in London in 2009, many under the baton of Jiří Bělohlávek – a particularly extraordinary achievement when it is considered that Martinů received comparatively much less attention in his homeland that year (although his *Miracles of Mary* were indeed staged in the National Theatre as part of the international project Martinů Revisited). The Czech Centre continued in the tradition of organizing topical series of events. In 2007, the main themes were the 400th anniversary of Václav Hollar (1607–1677) and the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Charta 77*; in 2008, the key event (and one of the most ambitious projects of Czech cultural diplomacy as a whole that year) was the *Czech Season* during Edinburgh's famous theatre festival. Besides the Czech Centre, the list of institutions that cooperated on the project included the Ministry of Culture, the Czech Theatrical Institute, Prague Quadriennale, Prague City Hall, Czech-Tourism and, of course, the performing theatrical troupes themselves. A second notable project was *Václav Havel's Season*, a series of performances of the former President's plays in London's Orange Tree Theatre. The main chosen theme of 2009 was the twentieth anniversary of the Velvet Revolution (1989). Under the heading *Velvet R@volution 1989–2009* a number of events (debates, projections, etc.) took place, some of which were coorganized by other countries' cultural diplomacy actors, such as the Polish Cultural Institute or *Institut français*.

## **THE UNITED KINGDOM IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: IDENTIFICATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF KEY ACTORS**

One consequence of both countries' EU membership is the decentralization of foreign policy processes. Direct relations exist among various government actors such as ministries or other agencies. This new pluralism brings about a crisis of the 'traditional bilateralism', and the traditional actors (embassies) must look for a new *raison d'être* that would reflect the situation in which bilateral relations transform – partly into transnational relations of a number of state actors in the process of domestication, and partly into the relations at the center of the emerging new political system that is the EU.

Czech foreign policy towards the United Kingdom has been no exception to this rather recent phenomenon, as it featured a complex net of more or less coordinated actors including the MFA and its various departments, the embassy in London, the permanent mission in Brussels, the Office of the Government (including the Unit of the Deputy Minister for European Affairs), the Ministry of Defense, other ministries and government agencies, the Czech Army Staff and Police Directorate, and, at the substate level, a range of other actors, such as political parties, universities, local and regional governments, and private firms. (The roles of the Parliament and the President were rather limited by the 'technical' character of the policy and, in the latter case, also by constitutional constraints.) To coordinate the policy of those (state) actors who are expected to act in the public interest (and possibly to create a mechanism for the resolution of their conflicting institutional interests) remains one of the central challenges for Czech foreign policy both towards the UK and, in general, towards other EU Member States.

## **CZECH FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE UNITED KINGDOM IN THE MEDIA AND PUBLIC SPACE**

Due to the apolitical character of the Czech foreign policy towards the UK, none of the issue areas listed above became a subject of public controversy or even a substantial public debate. Relations with the UK appeared only rarely in the media, and if there was any controversy in the subjects covered, it rested elsewhere than directly in those relations or in the way they should be conducted on the Czech side. The consequences of this silence, both in the political and the public discourse, are difficult to assess. Generally speaking, the existence of a debate centered around certain issues would force actors to define and defend their positions, and in the ideal case, it would lead to an emergence of policy priorities.

## **FRANCE IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT**

Since the mid-1990s, the relations between France and the Czech Republic did not represent a priority among the bilateral relations of Czech foreign policy. It is to say



that France does not hold a positive image in the Czech Republic, especially in the politico-administrative field, where the spectre of Munich is still present. However, one needs to nuance the analysis when looking at the various sectors – while relations have been rather tensed at the politico-administrative level, they have been generally good and have even intensified at the economic and cultural levels. The arrival of President Sarkozy at power in 2007 was the occasion to propose a new start for bilateral relations with Central and Eastern European countries through a ‘Strategic Partnership’. Furthermore, the French and Czech EU presidencies, which used to belong to the same trio presidency, have – if not improved – at least contributed to a better exchange of knowledge about the politico-administrative cultures of the two countries.

## FRANCE IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: AGENDA AND EVENTS

### *EU Policy and EU Presidencies*

The French and the Czech understanding of European integration have not evolved in the same direction from 2007 on. To name a single example: While French President Nicolas Sarkozy, elected in May 2007 as the leader of the *Union pour un Mouvement Populaire* (UMP), engaged in the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, Czech President Václav Klaus constantly declared that he was against the treaty and would not ratify it. However, a large number of bilateral official visits (see below), meetings and *démarches* have occasioned an exchange of views on European issues. The definition of the programme of the trio presidency between France, the Czech Republic and Sweden in June 2008<sup>14</sup> has also contributed to intensifying communication on EU related topics. However, in general, each country followed its own agenda in parallel to the management of diverse international crises, with France arguing for a ‘protective Europe’ while the Czech Republic was asking for a ‘Europe without barriers’. But the ambitious French reform agenda – originally focusing on Energy and Climate Change, reform of the CAP, EU immigration and asylum policy, and European defence – was shadowed by three main crises, which also affected the Czech presidency: the negative referendum in Ireland on the Lisbon Treaty, the war between Georgia and Russia in August and the international financial crisis in Autumn 2008.<sup>15</sup> The Czech EU presidency thus reformulated its five priorities around three ‘Es’: Economy, Energy and Europe in the world.<sup>16</sup> The energy crisis, which opened up between Ukraine and Russia during the very first days of the Czech presidency, occasioned a strong involvement of Czech politicians in EU affairs and legitimised the launch of the Eastern Partnership with the Eastern EU neighbours on 7 May 2009. To some extent, the project was interpreted as a reaction to another priority of the French presidency (even if this priority was not official) – the launch of the Union for the Mediterranean with the Southern EU neighbours on 13 July 2008. But as Foreign Minister Schwarzenberg diplomatically summarised the situation after a meeting with French Foreign Minister Kouchner in April 2008, ‘on European issues, French and Czech interests are overly common’ and the main issues of divergence are ‘the Common Agricultural Policy and the pace of EU enlargement’.<sup>17</sup>

As a result, the bilateral cooperation under the EU presidencies was rather mixed. The French diplomacy and administration very much engaged in training activities: About 2000 Czech diplomats and civil servants benefited from courses in the French language and on the French institutional coordination of EU issues, with the support of the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF).<sup>18</sup> Numerous joint-seminars and consultations took place at the ministerial level. On the whole, French and Czech diplomats evaluated this phase as rather successful and intensive; it was also enriching as it occasioned each country's socialisation in the politico-administrative culture of the other country. The bilingual diplomats in exchange were fully integrated and participated in enhancing communication in their fields of specialisation.<sup>19</sup>

However, the political relations were characterised as rather difficult during the EU presidencies, as reflected in the press of both countries. The Czech government accused the French presidency of keeping a hold on the EU management, especially in regard to issues related to the international financial crisis as well as the crisis in Gaza.<sup>20</sup> Criticism of the way the Czech Republic managed its first EU presidency was recurrent on the French side and did not occasion smooth cooperation. The fact that Prime Minister Topolánek was represented by Vice-Prime Minister Vondra at the French summit on 13 July 2008 while French President Sarkozy refused to come to the Czech summit on 7 May 2009 is illustrative of the pertaining political divergences.

### ***Bilateral Issues***

In the time frame of 2007–2009, bilateral visits at the highest level have intensified between Paris and Prague, especially before the respective EU presidencies. Among the highlights of Czech-French cooperation, one can mention the visits to Paris of Vice-Prime Minister Vondra, Foreign Minister Schwarzenberg and Prime Minister Topolánek in April, June and October 2007 respectively; the visits to Prague of State Secretary for European Affairs Jean-Pierre Jouyet, State Secretary for Companies and Trade Hervé Novelli and Minister for Environment Jean-Louis Borloo in October 2007; the meetings between Vice-Prime Minister Vondra and State Secretary for European Affairs Jean-Pierre Jouyet in January 2008; the meetings between Foreign Ministers Schwarzenberg and Kouchner in April 2008; and the visits of Minister Schwarzenberg and of Prime Minister Topolánek to Paris in August and October 2008 respectively. To contrast, political discussions in 2009 were affected by the fall of the government of M. Topolánek: They concentrated at the level of higher civil servants before the visit in June 2009 of Prime Minister Jan Fischer to Paris. All these meetings contributed to discussing the programme of the trio presidency in parallel to its technical preparation, and later on to ensuring coordination on European issues, which have dominated the bilateral agenda.

The French President's visit to Prague in June 2008 – more than ten years after Jacques Chirac's visit in 1997 – certainly marked an important political moment in this three year period. In a speech in 2007, President Sarkozy had proposed a 'Strategic Partnership' to be offered to most countries of Central and Eastern Europe to reinforce bilateral cooperation in various strategic fields. The proposition stemmed from the will to show a more constructive policy than his predecessors.<sup>21</sup> But despite fur-

ther constructive steps (the French President was invited to discuss energy issues at the meeting of the Visegrad Group), deep divergences dominated the agenda, for example when President Sarkozy indicated that Czech support to Croatia's EU candidacy would not be considered as long as the Lisbon Treaty was not ratified. Official declarations posterior to this meeting as well as informal discussions and remarks published in the press in October 2008 (see below) confirmed the constantly deteriorating environment at the political level. But the excellent cooperation between administrations ensured continuity at both the bilateral and the European level. At the end of the Czech EU presidency, President Sarkozy even congratulated Prime Minister Fischer and his team.

### ***Economic and Cultural Relations***

Compared to politics trade and economic relations have known a renewed positive dynamic and progressed remarkably in 2008 and 2009.<sup>22</sup> The 'Czech-French economic year' (July 2008–June 2009) certainly contributed to enhancing the lasting cooperation, as it involved all the possible actors from the public spheres of the Chambers of Commerce, embassies and regions to the private sphere of the firms themselves. No more than thirty bilateral actions, like the launch of the 'first Czech-French technological forum', the '*Journées économiques tchèques*' in France (Oct. 2008), the exchange of interns between French and Czech companies or the development of clusters (*pôles de compétitivité*) contributed to intensifying cooperation on key topics like industry and technology, transportation and infrastructure, agriculture or support to small companies. A beloved subject of the discussion was the opening of the French market in July 2008 to citizens from eight new EU member states one year ahead of schedule.<sup>23</sup> However, this mobilised only a small group of Czechs.

Bilateral cultural relations are traditionally good, thanks to, among other things, the excellent reputation of both the Czech Institute in Paris and the *Institut français* in Prague. Numerous cultural events were registered during the two countries' EU presidencies, especially under the 'French cultural season in the Czech Republic' in the second half of 2008. The *Institut français* and the French-Czech Centre for Research in Social Sciences (CEFRES) organised bilateral conferences on European topics at Charles University, in which Foreign Ministers Kouchner and Schwarzenberg also took part. Numerous panel discussions and exhibitions in Paris and Prague concentrated on the commemoration of the 'years in 8' (communism, destalinisation, Prague Spring, etc.). Music and films (e.g. the festival *Czech-in* in France) also occasioned self-promotion. Cooperation between schools and universities was particularly supported by the *Zastupitelský úřad* (ZÚ) in Paris and a scientific *attaché* at the French embassy in Prague.

## **FRANCE IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: IDENTIFICATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF KEY ACTORS**

European issues have strongly oriented the intensity and quality of bilateral institutional cooperation, which mainly took place between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs

and the Prime Minister's Offices (*Úřad vlády* and *Secrétariat Général aux Affaires Européennes*, SGAE). Czech civil servants were invited to participate in the activities of the SGAE. Both embassies, led by Charles Fries on the French side and by Pavel Fischer on the Czech side, did an intensive job of mediation and communication before and during the presidencies. But only limited interest in bilateral activities was registered at the level of the Parliaments. Since 2006, the Ministries of Environment have been working closely together. Cooperation intensified in the framework of the trio presidency on the climate-energy package and occasioned the organisation, with the Swedish Ministry of Environment, of regular seminars on the topic. In June 2008, the Czech Ministry of School and Sports and the French Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of Education and Research signed a Declaration on Scientific and Technological Cooperation. At the cultural level, CULTURESFRANCE, the scientific *attaché* of the embassy, the *Institut français* and the CEFRES on the French side, and the ZÚ and the Czech Institute on the Czech side have registered vivid bilateral activities. The ZÚ holds a particular role in providing information on the Czech Republic and its EU presidency to French central and local actors. In October 2009, a 'Memorandum on the implementation of a three year programme for teaching French in Czech public administration' was signed as a follow-up of the agreement of 2006 to train further 1400 civil servants dealing with European issues. The EU presidencies have also represented an opportunity to intensify and diversify the economic and cultural relations between the regional and communal levels, which are traditionally rather good (see yearbooks).

## **CZECH FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS FRANCE IN THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC SPACE**

The EU presidencies have attracted more attention in the Czech press than the French one, maybe because the Czech Republic was presiding the EU Council for the first time. The Czech media reported to a great extent on President Sarkozy's visit to Prague in June 2008 and on other official visits. The French EU presidency was followed closely by Czech journalists, who regularly provided articles on the French economy and culture, but also critical papers on the negative French reaction to the Czech presidency. French journalists focused on the eurosceptic declarations of key Czech politicians, and followed the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, the Czech EU presidency, discussions on climate change and the launch of an Eastern Partnership. The press of both countries reacted when the French President announced in October 2008 that he would hold the presidency of the Eurozone for one more year, considering the fact that Czech Republic and Sweden are not members of the zone.<sup>24</sup> Plus, the Czech weekly magazine *Reflex* published the record of an informal discussion between President Sarkozy and Prime Minister Topolánek, which contained undiplomatic declarations.<sup>25</sup> The Czech Foreign Minister Schwarzenberg had to officially apologise for this publication in the end.

## **SWEDEN IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT**

Since 2007, when the work with the 18 month programme of the EU Council Presidency started, the relations between Sweden and the Czech Republic became more intense than normal. A concrete example of this is the number of visits made by ministers between the two countries. During 2008 there were 9 such visits, and in 2009, there were 5, compared to 2006, when no such visits took place.<sup>26</sup> As a consequence of the presidency, we can also speak of increased contacts between the two countries at other levels of society. For instance, there were meetings between the chairmen of the two countries' parliaments and also meetings between members of the two countries' organised business, and so on.

As has already been mentioned in this article, it is difficult to distinguish the solely bilateral agenda from that of the European Union because such a big part of the bilateral contacts are devoted to European questions. Clearly this is even more so in the case of two small (or medium sized) countries without common borders. If we look at the purely bilateral agenda between the Czech Republic and Sweden, it is relatively small, and during the last couple of years this agenda has been dominated by the agreement to lease Swedish JAS-39 fighter aircraft to the Czech Republic. If we look at the cultural exchange between the states a traditional topic is the common history of the states during the thirty years of war in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and in particular the items which the Swedish army brought back to the Swedish kingdom during this period. As an example of how this distant past sometimes reaches the highest political level, it could be mentioned that Jiří Paroubek as Czech Prime Minister intervened in 2005 to make sure that the Czech Republic could borrow the so-called Devil's Bible, a rare illuminated copy of Bible dating back to the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, from Sweden.<sup>27</sup>

If we look at the collaboration within the EU these two countries have rather similar priorities (for instance, positive views on further enlargement and a particular interest in Eastern Europe, which was materialised during their presidencies in the Eastern Partnership). Regarding some issues the two countries' positions are similar due to their similar size. For instance, both states advocated the position that all states should have their own commissioners during the negotiations on the Constitutional Treaty and the Lisbon Treaty. Both countries have rather small and open economies, and during the two presidencies it became clear that they promote rather similar economic policies, with an emphasis on a clear no to protectionism and at least a strongly declared respect for the rules of the Stability and Growth Pact.

## **SWEDEN IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: AGENDA AND EVENTS**

Most official visits between the two states took place in the frame of the EU presidency agenda. For instance, prior to the European Council in June 2009, Czech Prime

Minister Jan Fischer and Foreign Minister Jan Kohout visited Stockholm for the planning of the summit. Thus, during this meeting and others the bilateral agenda was not covered at all or only partly. The most famous talk between a Swedish and a Czech high representative during the period was probably the phone conversation between Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt and Czech President Václav Klaus in October 2009. The talk was allegedly crucial for the following Czech ratification of the Lisbon Treaty.

Both the Czech presidency and the following Swedish presidency of the Council of the EU had to work with similar agendas. And even if it is possible to detect differences between the priorities of the two countries, both had relatively similar approaches towards some of the most important topics. For instance, in the economic field the two countries have in common a generally liberal approach, which is a consequence of the fact that both have small open economies. Both Sweden and the Czech Republic have a lot to lose when it comes to protectionism from the bigger countries, and therefore it did not come as a surprise that they both had similar approaches towards the global economic recession. As a result of this, during the presidencies both countries repeatedly called for respect for the rules of the single market and the Growth and Stability Pact.<sup>28</sup>

One of the Czech priorities in the EU is the Eastern Partnership. Sweden in collaboration with Poland initiated this project through a non-paper in 2008. By doing so, Sweden helped place the Eastern Partnership on the agenda for the Czech Presidency.<sup>29</sup> Later, during the Swedish presidency, the first meeting of the foreign ministers from the Eastern Partnership countries took place.<sup>30</sup> During the presidencies the representation offices of the two countries were more active than normally. One of the two main priorities of the Swedish presidency was to deal with the climate change (the second referred to the global economic recession). In relation to this topic Sweden also arranged some events in the Czech Republic. The Swedish Embassy, for instance, organised a seminar on this topic in relation to the inauguration of the Swedish presidency. In a similar way the Czech Embassy in Stockholm also took part in the opening of the Czech Presidency. As the presiding country, Sweden had to deal with at least one specific Czech issue: the newly introduced visa demand for Czech citizens travelling to Canada. The Swedish presidency initially expressed positive views regarding collective demands for visas for Canadian citizens travelling to EU countries. Later, however, it took a more pragmatic approach and argued that there is no need to escalate the conflict.<sup>31</sup>

### ***Economic and Cultural Relations***

As in the case of the UK and France the trade between Sweden and the Czech Republic registered a small decrease from the second half of 2008 till the beginning of 2009. The trade balance is positive for the Czech Republic and the main part of the Czech export consists of engineer products – in particular cars and car parts.<sup>32</sup> From the Swedish perspective the Czech Republic is the second most important trade partner among the new EU member states (after Poland). The biggest Swedish enterprise operating in the Czech Republic is Skanska.<sup>33</sup>

The leasing treaty regarding 14 JAS-39 Gripen aircraft is crucial for economic relations between the countries. The Czech Republic is renting 14 planes from Sweden for a sum of approximately 20 milliard CZK. Currently the future destiny of the aircraft after the end of the leasing agreement in 2015 is uncertain. The former minister of defence Vlasta Parkanová (KDU-ČSL) argues that for the Czech Republic the cheapest solution would be to thereafter buy the planes.<sup>34</sup> The Gripen Offset Programme is very important for the economic relations between the countries. In the offset programme Sweden promised investments in the Czech Republic that would equal 130% of the sum that the Czech Republic pays for renting the aircraft.<sup>35</sup> At the end of 2008 the enterprise Gripen International had invested almost two thirds of this sum.<sup>36</sup> During the period of the leasing agreement Swedish pilots and technicians are placed in the Czech Republic.<sup>37</sup>

In the news coverage there has also been a lot of discussion regarding alleged corruption in relation to the non-realised sale of the aircraft in 2002 and also regarding the later realised leasing agreement. Swedish public service TV made a programme about the affair in 2007, which had a big impact on the discussions on the topic in both countries.

The Czech Republic is promoting Czech culture in Sweden in a more direct way than the way in which Sweden promotes its own culture in the Czech Republic. The Czech Republic has a Czech centre in Stockholm. Sweden does not have any equivalent of this centre in the Czech Republic or in any other country, but the Swedish embassy in Prague promotes a whole range of cultural projects in the Czech Republic. If we look at the activities of the Czech centre in Sweden during the year 2009 we can see that a big part of the activities focused on the anniversary of the fall of Communism.<sup>38</sup>

## **SWEDEN IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: IDENTIFICATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF KEY ACTORS**

As has already been mentioned elsewhere in this chapter the bilateral relations have changed due to the Czech membership of the EU. Compared to the past there are now more actors involved in the formulation of the mutual relations between the two countries. On the Czech side the main actors are the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and its section for Northern and Eastern Europe (odbor severní a východní Evropy), the representation in Stockholm, the Permanent Representation in Brussels, the Office of the Government and other ministries and state agencies. The Czech Republic has an Embassy in Stockholm and honorary consulates in Gothenburg and Malmö.

## **CZECH FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS SWEDEN IN THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC SPACE**

Besides the presidencies, which were the topics of extensive news coverage in both countries, journalists also paid attention to the affairs surrounding the leasing agree-

ment of the Gripen aircraft. In relation to the Czech presidency Swedish journalists wrote extensively on the fall of the government, and there were surprised comments regarding not only the fact that the government fell during the presidency, but also the discussion on an apolitical government. Czech mass media paid attention to the role of Swedish Prime Minister Reinfeldt in Klaus' decision to ratify the Lisbon Treaty.<sup>39</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The general characteristics of relations with the states covered in this chapter – the paradigm of 'bilateral relations within a multilateral framework' of an emerging political system and a 'new political pluralism' – pose challenges to the Czech foreign policy, which has to implement innovative means of pursuing its interests and coordinate the conduct of the foreign policies of a number of government agencies. The most tangible benefit of a successful conduct of bilateral relations under these conditions is an increased capacity to influence EU policy according to Czech Republic's priorities. Therefore, Czech Republic should do its best to build as positive relations with West European States as possible. (Better relations with Benelux countries during the Presidency might have made it more likely to successfully pursue Czech priorities towards the West Balkans, for instance.) On the other hand, from the same perspective Czech Republic should avoid bilateral conflicts and controversies since their consequences under these conditions would be much more significant than it might have been otherwise.

Descending to a less abstract level, in the final assessment of the relations with the United Kingdom, there is presently unexploited potential for coalition-building between the two countries at the EU level and cooperation *vis-a-vis* third countries. To take full advantage of this potential, however, Czech Republic needs a strategic reflection that would realistically define priorities, objectives and means to achieve them through an effective and coordinated political action of multiple actors at various levels – from embassies to ministerial departments, ministries and the cabinet. Bringing about such strategic reflection – which would not, at the same time, paralyse the policy-making process by depriving it of flexibility – will require debate on the consequences of the sea changes bilateral diplomacy has been undergoing, and taking appropriate lessons from the present crisis while forcing the bureaucratic apparatus, which is strongly biased in favour of the *status quo*, to adopt at least moderately progressive reforms.

With regard to France, the relations obviously intensified between 2007 and 2009 in all sectors of activity – may these be political, administrative, economic or cultural. However, the quality of these relations largely depends on the level and topics considered for analysis. While French economic activities and culture are mostly appreciated by the Czech public (and *vice versa*, Czech economic activities and culture are appreciated in France), the French image is still negative in the political and diplomatic field (and *vice versa*), despite an intensive cooperation in the time of the respective EU presidencies. This, of course, varies from people to people, but, on the whole,



many misunderstandings and *clichés* pertain on both sides, and these do not contribute to smooth further bilateral cooperation. The investiture of a new Czech government in spring 2009 and the heavy rotation of diplomats at the French embassy in summer 2009 certainly contributed to finding the ground for a more constructive dialogue. But the mutual harm done during the presidencies – which was openly expressed in the media – will certainly not disappear so quickly from people’s minds.

Finally, the bilateral relations between Sweden and Czech Republic were good, but due to the geographic distance between the two countries and their sizes, they were not exceptional. The presidencies of the Council of the EU in 2009 and the preparations for them confirmed that both countries often have similar priorities within the EU. For instance, in the economic field both countries promote deregulation, and as presiding countries they had similar views on how to deal with the consequences of the global economic recession. Both countries also have similar opinions on the enlargement of the EU and on the future shape of European integration (if we disregard the more euro-sceptic part of the Czech political elite). On the agenda of the solely bilateral level the main topic is the leasing of the JAS-39 Gripen. The offset programme will especially have important consequences for economic relations between the two countries in the future. It is possible to expect that the presidencies will have a positive influence on the future relations between Czech Republic and Sweden, especially regarding the collaboration within the EU. The presidencies brought increased contacts between politicians and civil servants from the two countries, which in many areas also confirmed a closeness of opinions between the countries. This fact might be important especially for collaboration on lower levels in the EU, for instance in the Council’s Working Groups.

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## Endnotes

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- <sup>10</sup> Press Release, ODS, 22. 6. 2009. On-line: ([zpravy.ods.cz/prispevek.php?ID=10376](http://zpravy.ods.cz/prispevek.php?ID=10376)).
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- <sup>34</sup> Czech News Agency, 8. 3. 2009.
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## Chapter 9

# Russia in the Czech Foreign Policy

*Petr Kratochvíl, Petra Kuchyňková*

### **RUSSIA IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT**

Czech-Russian relations pose quite a controversial topic in the Czech political debate. They may even be characterized by a long-term obsession with Russia on the part of the Czechs. Russia is often represented negatively in the Czech political debate and even as a threat to national security. Here a gradual shift may be observed from seeing Russia as a Soviet-type danger to seeing it as the ‘new Russia’ – a rising power which still has strong interests in the region of Central and Eastern Europe. In recent years a second shift is observable – that from viewing Russia as a military threat to viewing it as a colleague in matters of economy and energy. This second shift is quite important because Russia is also often portrayed positively in the Czech political debate. More specifically, it is portrayed as an opportunity, particularly as an economic opportunity. The so-called positive discourse about today’s Russia in the Czech political debate is also often accompanied with relatively little attention being devoted to the other post-Soviet countries, even though the potential in this respect is quite great (for instance, in the case of Ukraine).

The Czech political debate about Russia and Czech-Russian relations is characterized by a strong political polarization, especially in recent years, when the topic was strongly influenced by the controversial problems of the anti-ballistic missile defence system and by the increased attention paid to potential security threats connected with Russian economic interests in strategic areas (energy) or projects. In the political sense the right is close to the first type of discourse of Russia. Russia is seen by them as a potentially dangerous and rather unstable country that has to be contained. Trade with Russia is often seen as an unfortunate necessity that we have to live with (especially in connection with the import of Russian energy resources). This type of discourse was typical for some of the representatives of Topolánek’s cabinet, although the main right-wing party in the ČR, the ODS, is not completely unified on this interpretation of the ‘Russian threat’. On the other hand the left sees Russia in an oddly optimistic way. It sees Russia as a great opportunity and as a partner in dialogue. No fear of the energy and economic dependence is present in this type of discourse. The

strengthening of contacts between ČR and Russia is systematically supported especially by the Communists. To some extent it was also supported by the SPO, headed by the former Prime Minister Miloš Zeman, which had some chance of getting into the parliament after the elections, but in the end they did not succeed. The idea that today Russia is a standard country which acts as a standard partner of EU and other European organisations is often expressed by the representatives of the Social Democratic Party as well.<sup>1</sup> The polarisation of the Czech political scene on this topic also brings frequent u-turns in Czech foreign policy.

Besides the divisions on the party-political scene, a quite special actor in the Czech foreign policy towards Russia is President Václav Klaus, whose role in this matter is visible especially in recent years. In contrast to his predecessor, Václav Havel, whose position towards contemporary Russia is rather reserved, cautious, and close to the above mentioned negative discourse, Václav Klaus often emphasizes that Russia as it is today cannot be compared to the USSR.<sup>2</sup> He stresses the great power status of today's Russia as a fact that capacitates it to sovereignly conduct its own foreign policy and he often expresses similar views in regard to matters of international relations (e.g. the problem of Kosovo's recognition, the Iraq war, the Russian-Georgian war, the Western critique of the quality of Russian democracy or human rights in Russia, the struggle with climate change, etc.), which even led to him being suspected of Russophilia by some of his critics.

In general terms, Czech activities *vis-a-vis* Russia should be divided into two relatively autonomous spheres. The first is the sphere of (high) politics, which is marked by frequent changes in the mutual relations, ranging from a 'cold peace' after the Czech NATO entry and the bombing of Kosovo (1999) to somewhat warmer relations in the first years of Putin's presidency. Often, a single step taken by Czech diplomats is perceived as so irritating for the Kremlin that the relations stay sour for several years. A good example of such an evolution is the Czech and US decision to build a missile defence base in the Czech Republic. Even though in the end the plans were scrapped by the new US administration, the political relations reached an all-time low during that period.

The second sphere is that of economy. In spite of the changing political landscape, the economic relations between the two countries were steadily improving, with a continuous rise in both Russia's imports to the Czech Republic and the Czech exports to Russia. Although these ties were somewhat hampered by the double imbalance (in terms of the trade deficit in favour of Russia, which was caused by the high amounts of raw materials imported to the Czech Republic; and in terms of the trade in high-tech commodities, which was in favour of the ČR), they were long considered a stabilizing anchor in the mutual relations.

However, in the course of 2008–2009, the economic ties with Russia have become a target of close scrutiny by Czech policy-makers, who started to express their fear that Russia might use its economic leverage over the country to induce a higher level of political compliance with Russia's political goals. This change was particularly palpable in two areas: First, it became palpable in the increased sensitivity of the Czech government towards Russian companies trying to buy strategic Czech firms,

such as those dealing with transport (e.g. Czech Airlines – ČSA) and transport infrastructure (e.g. Prague Ruzyně Airport), or those involved in the imports and processing of raw materials (e.g. Transgas). Second, the whole area of Czech dependence on external energy resources has moved from the purely technical level to the more politicised arena, becoming a part of the currently fashionable ‘energy security’. The debate about the Nabucco pipeline and its Russia-sponsored alternatives is just one of the many examples where political concerns have clearly played a much more important role in the debate than purely economic calculations.

Two more deeply ingrained features of Czech-Russian relations are worth mentioning as well. In the context of the growing awareness of the CR’s dependence on Russia’s energy resources, the regular winter energy crises have been gaining more and more attention in both the Czech media and the Czech political discourse. The first of these crises, which was covered in much detail, was the Russian-Belarusian clash over energy prices in January 2007. The culmination of the trend of thorough coverage of Russia’s energy policy was the dispute between Russia and Ukraine in early 2009. This was further reinforced by the fact that the Czech Republic as the country that just resumed the EU presidency was actively involved in the settlement of the dispute, with Prime Minister Topolánek employing a self-styled shuttle diplomacy to solve the crisis.

The second fascinating feature is the positive effect of mutual visits and the negative impact of ‘indirect relations’. In other words, both Czech and Russian politicians often resorted to harsh rhetoric when talking not *to* each other, but rather *about* each other. For instance, Russia’s top generals often used explicitly threatening rhetoric in the context of the plans for the radar base in the ČR.<sup>3</sup> Another example, which may be less visible at first glance, but which is all the more sensitive in Russia, was that of the various comments about World War II monuments in the ČR.<sup>4</sup> Scathing remarks about Russia’s foreign activities by Czech diplomats, such as Foreign Minister Schwarzenberg, were also seen in a very negative light in Russia. On the other hand, mutual visits of high-ranking politicians have usually contributed to a ‘détente’ in the mutual relations. President Klaus’s visit to Moscow in April 2007 is a case in point. Surprisingly, the same can be said about direct discussions concerning the radar base in the ČR. Unlike the remarks for the international media, these discussions were quite calm and sometimes even unusually friendly. This applies, among others, to the visit by several high-ranking Czech diplomats to Moscow in August 2007.

## **RUSSIA IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: AGENDA AND EVENTS**

Undoubtedly, the single decisive element in the Czech-Russian relations in 2007 was the never ending debate about the missile defence and its components that were supposed to be located in Central Europe. In the course of 2007, the Russian view of the US radar base in the ČR evolved considerably. In the first half of the year, the comments of Russian diplomats were extremely confrontational. For instance, discussions about a possible change of the Russian military doctrine would incorporate the al-

legedly new security environment (the deputy chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the State Duma Leonid Slutskiy); others mentioned re-targeting a Russian missile so that it would aim at the bases (the commander of Russia's strategic missile force Nikolay Solovtsov). President Putin's speech at the February Munich Security Conference marked the peak of Russia's critique of the American plans. The situation calmed down a bit in the spring only to return to the forefront of the Czech-Russian agenda in the summer. Russian diplomats came up with a proposal that the United States might use the military base in Azerbaijan in June and the offer was reformulated a month later, this time offering a military base in Southern Russia. Although these offers caught Czech diplomacy by surprise, they nevertheless show that by summer 2007, Russia moved from an outright rejection of the bases to a discussion of alternative steps that would make the American plans more acceptable for Russia. In this context, the Czech delegation that visited Russia in mid-August did not have to cope with Russia's threat but engaged in real discussions with their Russian counterpart; a further change in the Russian position did not occur, however.

In 2008, as well as in 2007, one of the key problematic points of the Czech-Russian agenda was the issue of the US radar base in the context of the Czech-American SOFA agreement. The topic was to some extent influenced by the Russian Presidential elections in March 2008, especially as to the sharp discourse presented by the Russian media and Russian officials, not only those from the army circles. This was the case despite the fact that after Putin's 'nomination' of Dmitri Medvedev and after the parliamentary elections in 2007 the results of the Presidential elections were quite clear. During 2008 the Russian side sharpened its rhetoric on the level of the Russian executive as well as on the level of responsible Russian army officials expressing their refusal of the project in the form suggested by the American side and also their concern about violations of the military balance in Europe.<sup>5</sup> In parallel negotiations led by Russia and the USA about the anti-ballistic missile system in Central Europe, Russian representatives suggested, e.g a permanent presence of Russian army representatives on the bases (i.e. including the planned radar base in the Czech Republic), which was a highly controversial topic for the Czech side as well.

The end of the Russian Presidential elections campaign promised a certain relaxation in the tight Russian rhetoric aimed not only towards the Czech Republic. The new Russian President Medvedev acted as an initiator of a wider discussion about the new European security architecture (the so-called European Security Treaty proposal), but at the same time he also acted as a critic of the American unilateral security policy in recent years (including the policy of NATO enlargement support). This was in accordance with the fact that President Medvedev also threatened with retaliatory actions from the Russian side after the signature of the SOFA agreement in the summer of 2008. It is worth mentioning that Russia accompanied its sharpened rhetoric with tests of new missile systems (the RS-12M Topol with a range of 10.000 km that was supposed to be able to overcome the anti-ballistic shield).<sup>6</sup> At the same time the annual report of the Czech BIS (Security Secret Service) registered increased activity of foreign intelligence on the territory of the Czech Republic, including Russian secret service activities.<sup>7</sup>

Even in 2008, the topic of the U.S. anti-ballistic missile defence system plan as well as the Russian position towards the project had strong potential to divide the Czech political scene in connection with the Senate and the regional election campaign in the autumn of 2008. The Russian reactions were quite vigorously commented by then Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg, who labelled them as evidence that Russia still considers the former members of the Warsaw Pact as her sphere of influence. The reactions of then Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek were similar. On the other hand the conviction that the potential location of the US radar base in the Czech Republic would harm Czech-Russian political and economic relations and violate the balance of military forces in Europe was advocated by the opposition, especially by the Social Democrats (ČSSD) and the Communists (KSČM). One of the most controversial actions was the invitation of Russian general Yevgeniy Buzhinsky and the organization of the press conference with him in the headquarters of the Czech Social Democratic Party on the same day when US State Secretary Condoleezza Rice signed the SOFA agreement in Prague.<sup>8</sup> Czech President Václav Klaus, in contrast with his views on other topics of the Czech-Russian relations, held a somewhat reserved position towards the US base issue. During his visit to Washington in May 2008, he just noted that as to the radar base building, the Czech Republic would not ask Russia for permission and labelled the Russian reactions as counter-productive and encouraging for the supporters of the radar project.<sup>9</sup>

Other points of dissonance in the Czech-Russian relations of 2008 may be represented by the different positions towards the problem of recognizing Kosovo's independence and the official Czech position towards the war between Russia and Georgia in August 2008. As to Kosovo's status the Czech position could be designated as cautious: the Czech diplomacy connected the question of Kosovo's recognition with the common EU position towards the issue (EU eventually left the decision to the member states, so the recognition of Kosovo's independence from the Czech side followed only after this decision). Russia strictly refused Kosovo's independence and connected the issue with the status of the contentious areas of South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Transnistria and Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>10</sup> The issue of Kosovo's independence was not consensual even within the Czech political scene: the leftist opposition was against it with reference to the potential deterioration of the political and security situation in the Balkans. But in contrast to the US radar base issue it did not provoke either significant political tensions in the ČR or significant tensions in Czech-Russian relations.

As to the war between Russia and Georgia in August 2008, the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, even before the open conflict, expressed concerns, e.g., about the increase of the number of Russian forces in the area of Abkhazia and appealed to the preservation of Georgian sovereignty and territorial integrity.<sup>11</sup> After the breakout of the conflict the ČR officially appealed to both parties to end their military actions without discussions about who is to be 'blamed' for its beginning. On the other hand the Russian consecutive recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia's independence was officially refused by the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>12</sup> President Klaus, on the contrary, warned against one-sided conclusions as to the matter of the Russian-Georgian conflict<sup>13</sup>, and his disavowal from the common declaration supporting Geor-



gia's further approximation to NATO, signed by the Presidents of Poland, Ukraine and the Baltic states, was interpreted as one of the expressions of his pro-Russian position in the Czech foreign policy field.

In the first half of 2009 Czech-Russian political relations were influenced by the Czech presidency in the Council of the European Union. During the first six months of 2009 the ČR and her main political representatives not only diplomatically represented the Czech state, but they also took part in the transmission of the EU's common position on the platform of the EU's Common Security and Foreign Policy. Therefore one of the first tests for the Czech presidency and Czech diplomacy in connection with Russia was posed by the dispute between the Ukrainian site and the Russian company Gazprom, which led to a reduction and finally a disruption of gas deliveries via Ukraine. This influenced some of the EU member countries in an unprecedented way. In the name of EU and in cooperation with the European Commission's representatives, the responsible members of the Czech government led negotiations and tried to mediate between both sides in order to achieve a renewal of gas deliveries via Ukraine to Europe. The Czech presidency mission led the negotiations with Gazprom representatives and attempted to organize a meeting between Gazprom and Naftohaz representatives in Brussels. The shuttle diplomacy of Prime Minister Topolánek between Brussels, Kiev and Moscow included negotiations about the establishment of a technical monitoring mission with Russian Prime Minister Putin.<sup>14</sup>

In spite of the somewhat premature celebrations of the results of Topolánek's shuttle diplomacy that occurred in the media, the Russo-Ukrainian summit in Moscow that took place on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> January 2009 brought the technical agreement on further conditions of gas trading between Ukraine and Russia as well as other deals that are supposed to safeguard the renewal of gas deliveries to Europe via Ukraine.<sup>15</sup> The so-called *gas crisis* was mostly portrayed by the Czech media as politically motivated, as another example of Russian 'energy diplomacy'. Among Czech politicians this interpretation was not shared especially by President Klaus, who emphasized primarily the business reasons of the dispute and its bilateral, not 'European', character.<sup>16</sup>

Even after the settlement of the gas dispute, energy remained one of the key topics of Czech-Russian relations. After all, the Czech EU presidency named energy security as well as the reinforcement of the ENP's Eastern dimension among its key priorities. Accordingly the Czech presidency expressed its support of the Nabucco pipeline project and on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2009 Prague hosted the inauguration summit of the Eastern Partnership that meant enhanced cooperation between EU and six countries in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus (Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia).<sup>17</sup> In contrast to previous projects of enhanced cooperation between EU and the countries of the post-Soviet area (ENP or Black Sea Synergy), this time Russia officially expressed disfavour for the project, which was portrayed as a new division of Europe through spheres of interest (Russian Minister Lavrov's expression)<sup>18</sup> or a building of a 'Commonwealth of Dependent States' (Kommersant diary as a contrast reference to CIS).<sup>19</sup> The project of Eastern Partnership did not have directly negative impacts on the Czech-Russian relations (comparable e.g. with the radar cause), as it was a part of the broader CFSP of the EU, although Topolánek's government

shielded it from the position of the Czech EU presidency and attempted to be quite active in this role. Nevertheless, the Prague Eastern Partnership summit was influenced by the fact that in April 2009 the Czech Parliament removed Topolánek's government, and also by the absence of some of the key representatives of EU member countries (e.g. British Prime Minister Brown or French President Sarkozy, who sent to Prague ministers of their cabinets as substitutes for themselves). In the connection with Czech-Russian relations the fact that Russian side was somewhat fussy about the project could be demonstrated e.g. by the words of the Russian ambassador to the EU Vladimir Chizhov, who expressed his disapproval of the words of Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs Schwarzenberg about potentially uninviting Belarus to the summit if Belarus joins in the recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

The EU-Russia summit in Khabarovsk that was also supposed to be one of the highlights of the Czech EU Presidency in the context of Czech-Russian relations took place already after the designation of the new Fischer government. The ČR was represented in the EU-Russia summit by President Klaus and the new Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Kohout. The media highlighted the atmosphere of understanding between the Russian and the Czech President, who emphasized that the summit contributed to the repairing of the cracked EU-Russia relations. On the other hand the agenda also included topics that divided the EU representatives (Commission President Barroso and CFSP High Representative Solana) and Russian President Medvedev. The summit in Khabarovsk was devoted especially to the problems of European security, the visa regime and energy (Russia proposed a global energy treaty blueprint in April 2009 that might replace the Energy Charter Treaty but the acceptance of the preliminary proposal was quite cold on the EU side; EU, on the other hand, signed a memorandum of understanding with Ukraine concerning the modernization of the Ukrainian pipeline system that was also observed with suspicion by Russia, which refused to be left out from matters concerning the Ukrainian energy sector).<sup>20</sup>

In the political-security dimension of Czech-Russian bilateral relations the topic of the missile defence system was still present in the media and public discourse in the first half of 2009. But it was already influenced on the one hand by the fact that the change of the Czech government brought a change of rhetoric towards Russia even on this topic, and on the other hand especially by the fact that the Obama cabinet indicated a change of the American position towards the project.

The new apolitical government of Jan Fischer moderated its rhetoric towards Russia but some of the controversial moments of the mutual relations did not disappear. One of the most serious moments in Czech-Russian political and diplomatic relations came in August 2009 after the accession of the new government (but the decision that caused the problem had already been taken by Topolánek's cabinet).<sup>21</sup> The Czech side decided to relegate two Russian diplomats on the ground of suspicion of espionage in the field of Czech economic interests (especially energy). Reciprocal diplomatic steps on the Russian side followed.<sup>22</sup> During the period of its EU presidency ČR also tried to be active on the platform of human rights in its relation with Russia (the official EU statement towards the shooting of the lawyer Stanislav Merkelov<sup>23</sup> and the journalist Anastasiya Baburova, the start of monitoring of trials with a human rights

dimension – e.g. the trial of the people suspected of Anna Politkovskaya's murder,<sup>24</sup> the new trial of Mikhail Khodorkovskiy or the trial of Yuriy Samodurov, the director of the Sakahrov Center<sup>25</sup>). In July 2009 the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a statement expressing its concern about the murder of Natalya Estemirova, an activist of the Russian human rights organization Memorial.<sup>26</sup>

The autumn visit of President Klaus to Moscow, on the other hand, was interpreted by the Russian media as a signal of an amelioration of the Czech-Russian relations. The one-day visit was arranged during the EU-Russia summit in Khabarovsk and both Presidents devoted it especially to the signature of several business contracts between Czech and Russian companies. The Czech President dealt with President Medvedev for a longer period of time than was originally planned and the press conference followed, where the Russian President, among others, denied information about the increased activity of Russian intelligence in the CR,<sup>27</sup> and the Czech President, on the other hand, indirectly welcomed the Russian interest in investments in the CR.

### ***Economic and Trade Relations***

In contrast with the political relations between Russia and the Czech Republic during 2007 and 2008 economic relations showed a quite promising development, which was perceptible not only on the bilateral but also on the inter-regional level until the end of 2008, when the influence of the financial crisis and coming economic recession began to be visible even in the development of Czech-Russian trade relations. Although the Czech-Russian trade relations record a passive balance on a long-term basis because of the imports of Russian energy resources, after 2000 Czech exports to Russia showed annual increases. The Russian market is attractive especially for Czech machinery (cars), chemical, food and building industries.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand the Czech Republic appeared also in the focus of Russian investors encouraged by the Russian economic growth in recent years, which was supported by high prices of energy resources (oil, natural gas).

Czech-Russian economic relations were also developing dynamically on an inter-regional level. The Chamber of Trade and Industry for the C.I.S. Countries, which was set up by the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic, organized several business missions to the so-called priority regions (Penzenskaya oblast, Khanty-Mansiysk, Nizhniy Novgorod, etc.) in 2008, and two Czech national exhibitions were organized in Ufa and Volgograd.<sup>29</sup> The priority regions for Czech trade in Russia include big cities (Saint Petersburg, which is a partner of the Czech capital Prague)<sup>30</sup> and prospective regions rich in natural resources (like the oblasts in Central Ural). An important sector of Czech-Russian economic relations is tourism. From 2000 up to 2008, when the impacts of the recession began to be visible in this field (they were especially visible at the end of 2008 and during the first months of 2009), the share of Russian tourists travelling to the Czech Republic was rising substantially.

Russian deliveries of energy resources take up a substantial share of Czech-Russian trade relations, although thanks to the diversification policy of the 90's, the Czech Republic is not 100 percent dependent on Russian gas (there is a possibility to import natural gas from Norway, which accounts for approximately 24 percent of the Czech

annual gas supplies) or Russian oil (the Czech Republic was given an opportunity to use the IKL oil pipeline and the TAL pipeline system, which enable the ČR to supply itself with oil from other resources). The main events that influenced Czech-Russian relations in the energy field in 2008 were the short-time restrictions of gas deliveries via Ukraine and Slovakia that happened as a result of the dispute between the companies Gazprom and Naftogaz during the end of February and early March 2008, and the short-time restriction of Russian oil deliveries to the ČR via the Druzhba pipeline in the summer of 2008.<sup>31</sup> That time the decline of gas deliveries went almost unnoticed by the Czech energy network. On the contrary, in spring 2008 the intergovernmental Czech-Russian working group on energy cooperation discussed future increases of Russian gas deliveries to the ČR in connection with the planned building of new gas power stations on its territory.

On the other hand, the unexpected fallout of the Druzhba oil supplies at the beginning of July 2008 was commented by the media and even associated with the U.S. radar base project and the signature of the SOFA agreement. Russia stated that the restriction of oil deliveries was a part of the necessary repairs and revisions of the pipeline system and refused the ‘political’ interpretation of the event. On the other hand, Czech representatives emphasized that no technical problem or accident had been announced and that the ČR paid for the deliveries regularly and without delays. In connection with the temporary disruption of the Druzhba oil supplies to the CR, a potential gradual termination of Russian oil deliveries to Central Europe via this pipeline branch was mentioned. What was also mentioned was the possible hidden intention of the Russian side to gain some control of the Czech state company MERO CR, the owner of the Czech part of the Druzhba pipeline as well as of a part of the ‘alternative’ IKL pipeline system.

In 2009 Czech-Russian trade relations were already influenced by the fall of dynamics caused by the recession (a decrease of the whole turn-over, including a decrease of Czech exports to Russia by almost 38% during the first seven months of 2009 and a decrease of Russian exports to the ČR by 45%, which was especially caused by the fall of prices of raw materials) after the record year of 2008 when the volume of turn-over reached its maximum.<sup>32</sup> Activities aimed to stimulate economic cooperation with Russia continued even in 2009 (the Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade demonstrated the importance of Russia as a trade partner, e.g., through the publication of the Action Plan on Russia) and some Czech enterprisers even experienced success in penetrating the Russian market with their intentions (e.g. Petr Kellner).<sup>33</sup>

As to the Russian investment intentions in the CR, in 2009 the Russian company Transneft signed a memorandum with the Czech company MERO, which is the main oil importer of the ČR and provides for emergency oil supply storage as well. Transneft expressed its interest in establishing a joint venture but some of the representatives of Czech authorities in the field of energy security were more cautious and labelled the idea as premature (especially the Czech envoy for energy security Václav Bartuška).<sup>34</sup> Concerns also enclose the increased Russian interests in the cooperation in the nuclear energy sphere. The Tvel company (a part of Rosatom hold-

ing), which, since 2010, is the exclusive supplier of nuclear fuel for both of the Czech atomic power plants (in Temelín Tvel replaced the American company Westinghouse), expressed its interest in building the first plant to process the fuel elements abroad. Atomstroyexport, another part of Rosatom holding, joined a consortium with some Czech companies in a competition for the contract for building new blocks of the Temelín atomic power plant.<sup>35</sup> Concerning the significant share of the Czech state in the energy company ČEZ and the strategic importance that nuclear energy has in the Czech energy sector, the important decision-making actor in the competition will also be the Czech government.

Nevertheless, the precedential decision of the Czech government on the basis of which a Russian investor was disqualified from a big and strategically important competition took place already in the beginning of 2009. The Russian airline Aeroflot, of which a 51% share is owned by the Russian state, was disqualified from the privatization of Czech Airlines (ČSA), and the whole competition was eventually cancelled. The reason was not communicated officially but possible security threats were cited as a primary reason because the decision had been published after the matter was also discussed in the Security Committee of the Czech Chamber of Deputies.<sup>36</sup>

## **RUSSIA IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: IDENTIFICATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE KEY ACTORS**

The Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs plays a key role among the Czech foreign policy actors towards Russia. Especially in 2008 its role was visible through press releases and official notes addressed to the RF concerning especially the Russian position towards South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The Czech Foreign Ministry, which was under the leadership of Karel Schwarzenberg while the Topolánek government was in office, reacted in a more assertive way to Russia's sharp rhetoric concerning controversial topics such as the anti-ballistic missile defence system.

In 2009 the government played the key role not only as a representative of Czech foreign policy but also in the special position connected with the Czech EU presidency. In relation to Russia this position was especially visible during the negotiations connected with the January Russo-Ukrainian gas dispute. Then the government as a key foreign policy actor was somewhat weakened by the resignation of Topolánek's cabinet. Nevertheless, the new care government of Jan Fischer adapted to its role quite quickly, and its activities had some continuity with those of the previous government, although there was a remarkable change in its rhetoric towards Russia. The more resentful and careful attitude and rhetoric of the new foreign minister Jan Kohout, emphasizing the presence of divisive issues in the mutual relations but at the same time the Czech interest in good economic relations with Russia, went hand in hand with the fact that the most controversial topics of the Czech-Russia relations became less prominent.<sup>37</sup>

On the other hand, shortly after the inauguration of Fischer's cabinet, there was the affair of the banishment of the Russian diplomats but the decision had already been

made before the Fischer government entered office. Despite this, the topic of the presence and activities of foreign (not only Russian) intelligence in the Czech Republic did not disappear as an alarming issue but the comments on the official Czech side were more careful.

President Klaus must also be mentioned among the important actors of this dimension of Czech foreign policy. His role was prominent especially in 2007, in connection with his visit to Moscow accompanied by a delegation of Czech businessmen, and in 2009, when he assumed the position of the representative of the presidency country at the EU-Russia summit in Khabarovsk after the demise of Topolánek's government.

The importance of the Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade among the actors of Czech external relations towards Russia was increasing in direct proportion with the increasing importance of Czech-Russian trade relations. Contrasting with the problematic political relations (especially during 2007 and 2008), the representatives of the Ministry of Industry and Trade strived to separate the political and the economic dimension of the mutual relations, as in the field of energy, e.g. in connection with the temporary interruption of the Druzhba pipeline deliveries.

Russia is on the list of priority countries for Czech exports. As was already mentioned, in 2009 the Action Plan for Russia was published and the Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade initiated and supported the above mentioned two Czech national exhibitions that took place in Ufa and Volgograd in 2008 accompanied by important business conferences. The meetings of the Czech-Russian Intergovernmental Commission for Economic, Industrial and Scientific and Technical Cooperation are held annually, together with the meetings of special working groups (e.g. for cooperation in the areas of industry and energy).

The Chamber for Commercial Relations with the C.I.S., the Economic Chamber of the ČR and the Confederation of Industry of the ČR cannot be omitted from any list of relevant actors of the Czech-Russian economic relations. Interregional cooperation is another perspective direction of Czech-Russian economic relations. Last but not least, the activities of key companies working especially in the energy sector also influence the whole picture of Czech-Russian economic relations – sometimes in an indispensable way (e.g. the readiness of some Czech companies to cooperate with Atomstroyexport may increase the chances of the Russian company to obtain a commission for building new Temelín reactors).

During the monitored period, the Czech Parliament influenced the development of important issues connected with Czech-Russian relations several times, not only through the visits of delegations of Czech deputies and senators to Moscow and regional centres. For example, the responsible committees of the Czech Parliament also discussed the sensitive issue of the ČSA privatization and influenced its results.

The Czech embassy in Moscow, the Czech Centre and the Czech House (the latter two united in 2008 and formed 'Czech House Moscow') serve as relevant and subsidiary actors of the economic, business and cultural relations between the two countries.<sup>38</sup>

## CZECH FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS RUSSIA IN THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC SPACE

The media traditionally reflect the key political topics that are present in the political discourse. On the other hand, the media also to some extent constitute and co-design the public discourse.

During the monitored period the Czech media naturally paid attention to the main issues that influenced the political relations between ČR and Russia, such as the issue of the American anti-ballistic missile defence system and the connected Russian reactions. In this context the voices of official representatives of Russian politics and the Russian army as well as the opinions of personalities such as former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev were presented in the Czech media.<sup>39</sup> The quite sharp tone of the media discourse connected with the radar issue was reduced when this issue was replaced with other events and especially after the decision of the new American administration to reassess the previous project of the defence system. But the media reflection of sensitive issues of Czech-Russian relations, especially the radar issue, was also influenced to some extent by the internal political situation in the Czech Republic, especially in connection with the regional and Senate elections in 2008 and later in connection with the postponement of the parliamentary elections. The topics of the U.S. radar base in the ČR and the Russian position towards that issue posed quite controversial topics within the framework of the Czech public and political debate that time. For example in the summer of 2009 the attention of the Czech media was attracted with the fact that the chief of the Social Democrats Jiří Paroubek unofficially visited Moscow, where he met also the Prime Minister Putin. According to the media the visit was not previously discussed with the representatives of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Paroubek was said to promise there to Putin, that he would make the problem of U.S. radar base in the ČR one of the main topics of his party election campaign. This information was promptly denied by the spokesman of the ČSSD and the chief of the ČSSD himself portrayed his unexpected visit to Moscow as an attempt to ameliorate the aggravated Czech-Russian relations.

As to the issue of the Russian-Georgian war, in 2008 the Czech media reflected especially the reactions of Czech politicians, including the words of President Klaus that exceeded the official discourse of the Czech government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In 2009 the media portrayal of the Czech-Russian relations gained slightly darker and more conspiratorial contours, especially in connection with the demise of Topolánek's government and the words of the former Prime Minister himself about the 'celebrations' of his demise in the Russian Embassy. The issue of the banished Russian diplomats that leaked into the media also supported this conspiratorial tone and moved the media attention slightly away from the political security topics of the Czech-Russian relations to the domain of economic relations and the energy security issues. The security dimension of Russian business interests in the Czech economic and energy sphere was being mentioned in connection with the issues of the commis-

sion for the building of the new Temelín blocks, the interest of Tvel in building a nuclear fuel plant in the ČR and even the suspicions that Russian interests also rest behind the company CEEI, which obtained the commission for the building of the buffer stocks of burnt out nuclear fuel in the ČR. The premise that the new commissions in the energy sphere may become one of the main issues of the 2010 parliamentary elections campaign was not confirmed in the end. The candidate parties as well as the media were quite silent about these issues, except for some criticism from the Greens.

Nevertheless, the reflection of Czech-Russian economic and business relations and their perspectives could, as always, be treated as a domain of dailies and magazines specializing in economic issues. The mass media usually do not devote much attention to this important dimension of the mutual relations, including the special topic of energy issues. Certain exceptions might be the issue of the short-time reduction of the Druzhba pipeline deliveries, which was naturally reflected by the Czech media with more attention being paid to it, the issue of the ČSA privatization and the role of Aero-flot in the cause, and, of course, the issue of the Russian-Ukrainian gas dispute and the role of the Czech EU presidency in the event.

On the other hand, the Czech media devoted a relatively small amount of attention to the economic situation in Russia itself in connection with the financial crisis and world economic recession. Sporadic news reports and commentaries were devoted to the effects of the recession on the Czech-Russian mutual trade relations or tourism but analyses of the impacts of the recession on the Russian economic conjuncture were rare. The reason for this may be found in the information embargo on the Russian side or even in the Czech media's disinterest in this topic.

## CONCLUSION

The Czech foreign policy towards Russia and Eastern Europe as such has been burdened in the long term with stereotypes. On one hand, there has been the stereotype of the post-Soviet area with its 'otherness' and backwardness and also the stereotype of that area as a source of danger in the sense of political or security-related danger (the security concerns were related to *hard security*, internal security as well as economic or energy security in the sense of the Czech Republic's constant partial dependence on Russian resources). At the same time the Czech 'Eastern policy' has been concentrated more on Russia in the long term, and the course of events in other parts of the so-called post-Soviet area has been largely understood as dependent on or derivative from the development of Russian policy and therefore underestimated.

Another long-term weak point of the Eastern dimension of the Czech foreign policy and the Czech policy towards Russia could be described as a lack of coherent and consistent conceptualization, a lack of a long-term and coherent strategy. Political priorities and economic interests have not always been in accord, which was reflected by the occasional lack of coordination between the responsible actors of the Czech foreign policy towards Russia. Certain moments of crisis in the mutual relations (especially the issue of the radar base) had a potential to become not only topics of for-



eign policy but also eruptive topics for clashes between the government and the opposition, especially in the atmosphere of the pre-election campaign (in 2008, before the regional and Senate elections) and in the first half of 2009, when Topolánek's government was removed.

Critical moments of the mutual relations (especially the issue of the radar base and the banishment of the Russian diplomats in 2009) and the way in which information about some issues lying between the political and the economic sphere (e.g. energy security) was mediated (especially in the media discourse) did not contribute positively to the general picture of the Czech-Russian relations. The sharpened rhetoric of Russian official representatives, especially during 2008, certain controversial steps of Czech political actors (e.g. the invitation of General Buzhinski to the ČSSD seat) and the rather assertive responses from Topolánek's cabinet to the Russian position, refusing anything which could resemble Russian dictates as to the direction of the Czech foreign and security policy, illustrated the rather disturbed atmosphere of 2008.

In contrast to the political dimension, where the events seemed to confirm the abovementioned negative perception of this direction of Czech foreign policy as an erratic source of potential dangers, the economic relations were showing a gradually increasing tendency even before 2007. During 2008 the financial crisis began to influence the general turnover of Czech-Russian trade, including the promising development of Czech exports. The whole impacts of the recession on the Czech-Russian economic relations could be observed during 2009 and 2010, although these years also brought interesting information concerning not only Czech Republic as an attractive place for Russian investments, but also some success stories of Czech entrepreneurs in Russia.

The Czech EU Presidency in the first half of 2009 had several effects. On one hand, it forced the government to slightly rearrange its positions in the Eastern dimension of the foreign policy, considering the fact that it represented the voice of the whole EU. On the other hand, the adaptation to the challenges of the coming EU Presidency, which included the planned Eastern Partnership summit, somewhat shifted the attention of the Czech foreign policy towards the other countries that cooperate with the EU in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy, such as Ukraine, Georgia or Azerbaijan, where the ČR has certain economic interests. It is debatable, though, whether this can be understood as a lasting feature of the development of the Czech foreign policy or rather as a shift connected with the short-time attempt to play a more active role in the relations between the EU and its Eastern neighbours.

During the second half of 2008 and 2009, a multiplication of key topics of the Czech-Russian relations with an increasing emphasis on energy issues could be observed as well. Energy issues, including the questions of EU energy security and diversification, were also among the Czech EU Presidency's priorities (e.g. the issue of the Southern Corridor). Certain situations that the Czech EU Presidency had to solve ad hoc (especially the Russian-Ukrainian gas dispute) contributed to this development. These tendencies, which were discernible already in the second half of 2008 (the more prominent role of energy and its strategic dimension), came out fully in 2009 when the issues of *hard security* in the Czech-Russian relations (especially the issue

of the American missile defence system in Central Europe) withdrew. At that point, the media devoted more attention to the economic dimension of the mutual relations.

The withdrawal of the most controversial issue of the mutual political relations might have enabled a shift towards a more pragmatic approach, and at the same time it opened more space for other important topics of the mutual relations. Economic interests and especially the topic of energy include a security context, especially in connection with ‘espionage aspects’. But as to the complicity and multiplicity of influencing interests, these issues are too complicated for the mass media communication and too blurred to become clear topics of public and political debates. Nevertheless, a continuation of the important role of economic relations and energy may be expected not only in Czech-Russian relations.

The Czech political debate about relations with Russia is also influenced by the development of EU-Russia relations and the topics of the corresponding debate. For example, among other issues, the question of visa policy in the context of EU-Russia relations may play an important role in the near future as EU is not unanimous on the topic of the liberalization of the visa regime towards the East European countries.

Among the main actors who participate in the political debate about the Czech foreign policy towards Russia, an important role will be played by the incoming government, where some persons connected with Topolánek’s cabinet will have an important role again (e.g. Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg or Minister of Defence Alexander Vondra). An important task will be to coordinate more effectively the various aspects (especially the political and economic aspects) of the Czech-Russian relations and generally put the relations with Russia in accord with other dimensions of the Czech foreign policy (especially the policy towards other East European countries, the Czech position on the platform of EU external policy and Czech-U.S. relations).

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## Chapter 10

# The Countries of the Eastern Dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy and Czech Foreign Policy

*Elsa Tulmets*

### THE COUNTRIES OF THE EASTERN DIMENSION OF THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY (ENP) IN CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the countries of ‘Eastern Europe’ situated between the European Union (EU) and Russia, which were offered in 2003/2004 to benefit from the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), did not represent a long-term priority of the Czech Foreign Policy. As a matter of fact, until the Czech NATO and EU accessions, the successive governments particularly focused on the West. Thus, ‘Eastern Europe’ was, for many years, seen under the shadow of Russia. It interested only a limited group of people from administrations, think-tanks and civil society. Official governmental documents issued in the timeframe of 2007–2009, like the government Program Declaration<sup>1</sup> and the governmental coalition agreement between the ODS, the SZ and the KDU-ČSL,<sup>2</sup> contained only rare mentions to the Eastern partners. In general, they tended to link the countries of ‘Eastern Europe’ with the issue of EU enlargement. Nor was there any update of the Foreign Policy concept of 2003–2006, which would indicate the drawing of a stronger interest from the Czech side for the Eastern partners.<sup>3</sup>

However, several events have conducted the Czech Republic to reinforce its multilateral as well as its bilateral activities regarding ‘Eastern Europe’. The Rose revolution in Georgia, the Orange revolution in Ukraine and energy security issues had already mobilised Czech political and larger public spheres. But the last three years have marked a phase of reevaluation and change. The presidency of the Visegrad Group (V4), the preparation of the EU presidency and mainly the war which broke out between Georgia and Russia in August 2008 have provided with strong incentives to define a more engaged Czech policy towards ‘Eastern Europe’. The latter event occasioned a large national debate on the causes of the war and the position to adopt within

EU foreign policy: many parallels with the German invasion in Czechoslovakia in 1938 and the Soviet repression in 1968 were formulated. In September 2008, opinion polls indicated that 42% of Czech population expressed sympathy with Georgia, while 19% stand on the side of Russia and two fifth did not take position.<sup>4</sup> The war in Georgia – as well as further international crises – also had an impact on the way the Czech priorities for the EU presidency in 2009 were communicated from the end of 2008 on.

The coalition government lead by Mirek Topolánek used various multilateral settings to move new ideas on the EU agenda and to prepare the Czech EU presidency in the first half of 2009. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), in particular, got advantage of the Czech Visegrad Group (V4) presidency in 2007 to develop the concept of an Eastern dimension of the ENP and forge a brand which could be used for the Czech EU presidency.<sup>5</sup> In the end, the approach played against Czech interests as the Poles and Swedes were quicker in making the ‘Eastern Partnership’ accepted at the EU level. However, the Partnership is considered as the main success of the Czech EU presidency. Its preparation in fact helped the Czech Republic to find its ‘niche’ in EU foreign policy and to reinforce bilateral links with countries with which it had lost common borders since the Czechoslovak partition at the end of 1992. It also contributed to ‘socialize’, and thus ‘europeanise’ part of Czech politicians at power: a more continentalist tone was indeed added to the traditional internationalist approach of Prime Minister Topolánek and vice-Prime Minister Vondra. It is, however, not surprising that the MFA, supported by the internationalists (SZ for Karel Schwarzenberg) and then by the continentalists (ČSSD for Jan Kohout), was the only ministry to keep a busy agenda on the issue.

At the bilateral level, the Czech Republic has intensified its ties the Eastern neighbourhood, with four countries in particular – Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and Belarus. Traditionally, these benefit from a large part of Czech bilateral assistance and relations with Ukraine are of particular intensity. After the events of the Summer 2008, the Czech government improved its support to Georgia. The invitation of Belarus to the EU summit of 7 May 2009 – along the lines defined by the European Commission – also marked a clear change in Czech bilateral policy, traditionally critical toward this country. Finally, the solving of the energy crisis between Ukraine and Russia at the beginning of the Czech EU presidency, was also beneficial for the reinforcement of Czech presence in the South Caucasus. This chapter will thus highlight how Czech bilateral and multilateral activities in ‘Eastern Europe’ have growingly contributed to reinforce each other, despite the need for further improvement in this sense.

## **THE COUNTRIES OF THE EASTERN DIMENSION OF THE ENP: AGENDA AND EVENTS**

### ***Multilateral issues***

Among various multilateral issues, the presidency of the Visegrad Group (V4) (June 2007–June 2008) (see chapter on V4) and the preparation of the EU presidency (January–June 2009) were occasions to confirm Czech support in the Eastern neighbour-

hood to EU and NATO accession. Multilateral activities have particularly focused on the design of an Eastern dimension in the ENP.

### *The Visegrad Group and Eastern Europe*

The MFA made a strategic use of the Czech V4 presidency in 2007–2008 to prepare its proposition of an Eastern dimension of the ENP for the EU presidency. In 2007, the draft of a ‘non-paper on the ENP and Eastern Neighbourhood’ was circulated to Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. The three Baltic States were also consulted on the issue as well as other EU partners like Sweden and Germany. At their meeting in Prague in April 2008, the Foreign Ministers of the V4 have agreed in two common declarations to enhance bilateral relations with the Eastern ENP countries, in particular Ukraine, and on the making of a flexible, project-based and multilateral framework for the Eastern dimension of the ENP.<sup>6</sup> The V4 also welcomed the establishment of the Neighbourhood Investment Facility (NIF), which would provide supplementary investment funding. The Czech MFA made efforts to associate Sweden and Ukraine to the V4 declarations, also in order to back up NATO accession. Together with Sweden, the V4 agreed to ‘support Ukraine’s and Georgia’s aspirations to become NATO Members’.<sup>7</sup> Before the war between Russian and Georgia in 2008, they declared that joining the Membership Action Plan (MAP) by Ukraine and Georgia would be ‘an important step towards deepening cooperation in political, defense, security and other spheres’ and proposed ‘to assist Ukraine and Georgia in their implementation of effective mechanisms of public information on Euro-Atlantic integration’.<sup>8</sup>

In using the V4 presidency, Czech diplomats expressed the hope that the Czech initiative would have a greater impact on the conclusions of the EU Council of June 2008 and would thus help to prepare a legitimate basis for the Czech EU presidency to act on the issue of ‘Eastern Europe’.<sup>9</sup> However, the Czech agenda was taken over by the next V4 presidency, hold by Poland (June 2008–June 2009), which was more pro-active in influencing the European Council’s conclusions. The Czech Republic and Poland decided to avoid further tensions on the issue and created a Czech-Polish Forum at the end of 2008 to work closer on the Eastern Partnership’s practical implementation. However, the efficiency of the Forum is questioned nowadays. In 2009, the V4 concentrated on its own possibilities to develop stronger ties with the GUAM countries. During a meeting on 22 April, the International Visegrad Fund for example announced that Ukraine had the highest approved funding among non V4 countries. The Joint Declaration of the Presidents of the National Parliaments of the V4 on 3 June approved in Warsaw the conclusions of the EU summit on Eastern Partnership (see chapter on V4 in this volume)<sup>10</sup> and, in June 2009, Hungary confirmed that the Eastern neighbourhood would stay among the key priorities of its V4 presidency.

### *EU Policy and Czech EU Presidency*

From 2007 on, the Czech Republic has been particularly active in launching a multilateral EU policy towards the Eastern neighbourhood. As a matter of fact, such a policy was missing since the fall of the Berlin wall, also because the countries situated between the EU and Russia were still considered under the dominion of the latter.

With the Eastern enlargement of the EU, policy proposals from the UK and Sweden on a 'Wider Europe' were supported at the condition that the new proximity policy would also include the Southern neighbours, with whom France and Spain wanted to improve relations. The Rose revolution in 2003 in Georgia and the Orange revolution in 2004 in Ukraine finally confirmed the necessity for the EU to develop the Eastern dimension of the ENP. As the German presidency failed to have its proposition of a 'new *Ostpolitik*' or 'ENP Plus' accepted in 2007, the launch of the 'Union for the Mediterranean' in 2008 under the French presidency gave the occasion for the Czechs to propose an ambitious initiative towards the East.<sup>11</sup>

From 2007 on, the Czech MFA had already been working on a strategy that could be accepted at the EU level. The Czech non-paper entitled 'Time to act' was presented in April 2008 at the Committee for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (COEST), after the paper had been approved by the V4 partners and discussed with the Baltic States and Sweden.<sup>12</sup> The core idea of the Czech proposition was drawn in line with the conclusions of the European Council of 14<sup>th</sup> December 2007 on the development of 'both the Eastern and the Southern dimensions of the ENP in bilateral and multilateral formats on the basis of the relevant Commission communications and proposals'.<sup>13</sup> The MFA conceived its proposal as a decoupling of the relations between EU-ENP Eastern partners and EU-Russia, without excluding cooperation frameworks including all parties when necessary, like in the Black Sea Synergy. This way, a real cooperation between the EU and the ENP Eastern partners could take place.<sup>14</sup> However, the Polish-Swedish proposition on an 'Eastern Partnership' was presented at a more political level, the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC), at the end of May 2008. It thus gained more visibility among EU partners. The European Council of June eventually mandated the Commission to work on a proposition of an 'Eastern Partnership' to be ready in March 2009. After the Georgian crisis, the Commission was urged to hand out the proposition earlier. DG Relex worked on it in close cooperation with Sweden, Poland and the Czech Republic and eventually handed it out on 3 December 2008.<sup>15</sup> The document proposed to create multilateral platforms, to launch a project-based approach with additional financial incentives and steps forward on the issues of free movement of people (visa facilitation) and deep free trade.<sup>16</sup>

In the very first days of 2009, the Czech presidency had to deal with a major crisis in EU's Eastern neighbourhood, which further legitimised the launch of the Partnership (see yearbook 2008, part on 'Ukraine' below and chapter on Russia). At the end of 2008, Russia had warned that it would cut its gas to Ukraine if no agreement could be found on prices and supplies. On 1 January 2009, the gas was indeed cut. The Czech presidency had to manage a major crisis within the EU and to work on alternative projects for energy supplies (North Stream, Nabucco). On 9 January, the EU, Ukraine and Russia found an agreement on monitoring the pipeline at the Ukrainian-Russian border. However, the supplies to Europe were not restored before 20 January, after Russia and Ukraine eventually solved the issue bilaterally. The events thus forced Czech politicians to grant stronger attention to Eastern Europe and energy issues. They also slowed down the negotiations on an Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU, although the Czech presidency had been very supportive of ac-



celerating them (see part on ‘Ukraine’ below).<sup>17</sup> After the crisis, Prime Minister Topolánek multiplied meetings and travels, for example to Azerbaijan and Central Asia, in order to discuss the gas pipeline project Nabucco and to prepare the EU summit on energy security of March 2009.<sup>18</sup>

But the most discussed issue under the Czech presidency was certainly the Belarusian participation in the EU Summit of 7 May 2009, which officially launched the ‘Eastern Partnership’. Although the Czech Republic expressed in the last years strong criticism against the political regime of Belarus, it surprisingly very much engaged during its presidency in getting Belarus back in a constructive dialogue with the EU (see part on ‘Belarus’). One can see here again a sign of europeanisation of the political elite at power. Czech politicians supported the idea that sanctions against Belarus should take an end so that this country would be represented at the Prague summit and take a share in the Eastern Partnership. Some steps towards the opening of a dialogue with Belarus had already been taken within the Czech MFA at the beginning of 2008.<sup>19</sup> In the whole, it conforms with the current position of the European Commission to favour political dialogue over sanctions, even with non democratic countries and non recognised authorities. As far as Moldova is concerned, the EU approach was more inline with the traditional Czech one. Due to the fact that human rights and Moldova are long term priorities of Czech foreign policy, the government of M. Topolánek could prove engagement on the issue through official declarations and travels to the country (see part on ‘Moldova’ below).

On 7 May 2009 took place the expected EU summit on ‘Eastern Partnership’, which launched a multilateral frame within the ENP for the East, with appropriate budget and institutions. Despite the fact that some key politicians did not want or could not attend the summit,<sup>20</sup> many commentators considered that it was the ‘highlight’ or ‘highest point’ of the Czech EU presidency. Chancellor Merkel attended the meeting to show German support to the initiative and, in the context of constant criticism against the Czech presidency, congratulated Prime Minister Topolánek in front of all the participants for his good cooperation.<sup>21</sup>

After the end of the Czech presidency, public attention for Eastern Europe slowly decreased. The Summer pause was used to recover from more than six months of intensive work. But the MFA tried to keep the steady course on an agenda where the Czech Republic had managed to put its print at the EU level. On 13 July, an interministerial meeting of the EU Committee (*Výbor pro EU*) took place to discuss the further involvement of Czech ministries in the Eastern partnership at the national and European levels.<sup>22</sup> Together with the Poles, the MFA launched the idea of a special meeting on the future of the Eastern Partnership during the Swedish presidency, which finally took place under the Spanish one in January 2010.<sup>23</sup>

### ***Bilateral issues***

More than in the past, the Czech Republic realised in the timeframe of 2007–2009 the importance of ‘Eastern Europe’ for its own internal stability and supported closer cooperation with this region. However, bilateral relations were also the source of internal tensions. While the MFA for example tended to advocate for closer coopera-

tion and the opening of an EU perspective, the Ministry of Interior was more cautious because of migration, visa and EU border issues.<sup>24</sup> At the political level, Ukraine stays the priority country of the Czech foreign policy, together with Georgia, Belarus and Moldova. The latter even falls among the long-term priorities of Czech development assistance. To summarise, the priorities set by the coalition government between 2007–2009 were a) a constant support to EU and NATO accession, which was the topic of most bilateral meetings; b) the improvement of trade relations with the systematic conclusion of agreements on the mutual protection of investments; c) the steady support to society (human rights and humanitarian actions).

### *Ukraine*

Among the countries of ‘Eastern Europe’, Ukraine is without doubt the main partner of the Czech Republic, may this be at the political, economic, cultural or societal levels. The intensity of Czech-Ukrainian relations confirm the ongoing good relations between the two countries, which were formalised through two documents signed in 2007: A ‘Common understanding on cooperation for the implementation of the Action Plan EU-Ukraine’ and a ‘Plan for consultations between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine for 2007–2008’. Thus, between 2007 and 2009, bilateral meetings focused on NATO and EU accession, the negotiation of an Association Agreement with the EU in replacement of the Partnership and Association Agreement (PCA), but also the ‘Eastern Partnership’ as well as issues like migration and visa.

The visit to Prague of Ukrainian deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Volodymyr D. Chandogij in March 2007, and later on of the Minister Boris Tarasiuk himself, occasioned the signature of the above mentioned documents. In July 2007, Prime Minister Topolánek and Minister of Defense V. Parkanová travelled to Ukraine. Jaroslav Bašta, previous Czech ambassador to the Russian Federation and deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, was nominated ambassador in Kiev.

An impressive row of bilateral visits took place in 2008 to prepare the EU-Ukraine Summit of 9 September 2008 and discuss NATO issues, like the one of Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs Volodymyr Ohryzko in marge of the V4 meeting of 23 April in Prague, and of Vice-Prime Minister for European integration Hryhoriy Nemyryi on 16 May. On 16 September 2008, Prime Minister Topolánek travelled to Kiev and met with Prime Minister Iulia Tymoshenko, President Viktor Yushchenko as well as with the leader of opposition Viktor Yanukovych. They discussed the political crisis which opened up in the Ukraine on the very same day, but also the possibilities of stronger cooperation in the field of energy. They eventually signed an agreement on the mutual protection of investments.<sup>25</sup> Prime Minister Topolánek participated in the opening of the *Česky dům* (promotion of Czech economy) in the Eastern city of Donetsk, attached to the general consulate opened in 2006 in addition to the one in Lviv.<sup>26</sup> On 23 September 2008, the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that it would start to evaluate the pilot projects of the practical centres, which forward demands of Czech visa.<sup>27</sup> Bilateral consultations were organised on 27 September on the question of European integration, to which Ukrainian deputy Foreign Minister Kon-

stantyn Yeliseyev and Czech first deputy Foreign Minister T. Pojar took part.<sup>28</sup> Deputy Foreign Minister Yeliseyev again visited Prague on 20 November 2008.

In 2008 and 2009, Russian-Ukrainian relations have particularly affected Czech energy sector. During the gas crisis which started on 1 January 2009, supplies of gas from Ukraine to the Czech Republic were cut during 20 days (compared to 4 days in 2006 and 3 days in 2008). Czech Premier Topolánek, Vice-Premier Vondra, Minister for Trade Říman and Minister for Energy Bartuška were particularly involved in solving the crisis. They travelled several times to Ukraine and made good use of the EU presidency to reinforce bilateral relations. No less than six Czech-Ukrainian high ranking meeting took place between January and May 2009, also to support the opening of negotiations on the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine.

A recurrent topic in Czech-Ukrainian relations is certainly the migration issue. On 22 January 2008 took place in Prague a conference where illegal migration and visa issues since the Czech Republic's official entry in the Schengen zone on 21 December 2007 were discussed. It revealed that, in November 2007, Czech police registered 126,266 Ukrainians living legally in the Czech Republic, among which 31,920 with a permanent permit of sojourn.<sup>29</sup> But informal figures are higher as the number of illegal workers is difficult to evaluate. At the end of 2008, the Ministry of Interior announced a restrictive visa policy, where foreigners were financially incited to go back home and controls of the regularity of the working situations intensified. Under the transitory government lead by Prime Minister Fischer, the Ministry finally proposed to liberalise again its visa regime in September 2009.<sup>30</sup> This decision was immediately followed by a financial scandal on the visa issuing process through the practical centres introduced in Ukraine in 2008, which implicated diplomats and among others the Czech ambassador in Kiev.<sup>31</sup>

In 2008 and 2009, discussions took place at both Chambers of the Czech parliament on the financial compensation to Czechs from the Carpatian Ukraine, who were mobilised and stayed there during World War II.<sup>32</sup> President Klaus was first reluctant to sign the law passed by both Chambers, but he eventually signed it.<sup>33</sup>

As far as trade and investments are concerned, Czech companies are particularly present and Ukraine is the only country in Eastern Europe where CzechCenter, CzechTrade and CzechTourism all have a representation. One might mention the existence of a 'Mixed commission for trade, industrial and scientific-technical cooperation', which helps to reinforce bilateral economic cooperation. Companies like Sazka, Sitronics Telecom Solutions, Škoda, skupina Presbeton, Aquel Bohemia or Finep are present in Ukraine. Various Czech NGOs have organised trainings projects for Ukrainians on EU issues and others are active in Ukraine, mainly in the field of humanitarian aid, like the Archbiskopal Charita from Olomouc (*ACHO*), the humanitarian organisation *Samari* from Zlín and the organisation 'Aid without borders' (*Pomoci bez hranic*) from Brno.

### *Belarus*

The Czech Republic has criticised for many years the political regime lead by Belarusian President Lukashenko and traditionally supports democratisation process in Belarus.<sup>34</sup> However, important measures were taken in 2008 and 2009 to open a dia-

logue between Belarus and the EU as well as to improve Czech-Belarusian relations. This new position was progressively prepared within the MFA since the beginning of 2008.<sup>35</sup> With some exceptions, like President Klaus, Czech politicians at power have ‘europeanised’ and conformed to the general EU tendency to open official dialogue with Minsk. This double-track diplomacy, supporting opposition on one side and opening the dialogue on the other, created a window of opportunity for Czech companies to invest in the country.

In 2007, three topics have marked Czech-Belarusian relations and occasioned debates in the Czech Republic: the Russian-Belarusian conflict over energy provision to Belarus, the Belarusian candidacy to the Council on Human Rights of the United Nations, and Czech defense of Human Rights in Belarus. Debates also took place on EU visa policy toward Belarusians. In October 2007, the vice-President of the lower Chamber of the Czech Parliament (*Sněmovna*) and President of the KSČM Vojtěch Filip paid a private visit to Belarus, which was used in a propagandistic way (see yearbook for 2007).

In 2008, the Czech MFA strongly condemned the violent action of the Belarusian police forces against the supporters of the Belarusian opposition in Minsk on 25 March 2008.<sup>36</sup> But on the other side, it started pledging for more dialogue instead of sanctions, especially in times of financial and economic crises. In cooperation with the V4, the Czech Republic proposed in April 2008 to support ‘EU’s offering full partnership with Belarus in the ENP framework provided that Belarus takes concrete and convincing steps towards democratization, respect for human rights and the rule of law’.<sup>37</sup> Another declared priority was the extension of people-to-people contacts, ‘without the EU refraining from its requirements towards the Belarusian regime and its representatives’.<sup>38</sup>

The number of bilateral visits realised in 2008 and 2009 particularly attest from the intensification of the relations. On 16 May 2008, the chief of opposition Jiří Paroubek (ČSSD) signed in Prague an agreement of reciprocal cooperation with the representatives of the social-democratic party in the perspective of the parliamentary elections of September.<sup>39</sup> In August 2008, the MFA welcomed the release of opposition leaders, like Aljaksandr Kozulin, from prison.<sup>40</sup> After the parliamentary elections of September 2008, the Czech Republic reaffirmed the necessity to support opposition parties and civil society in contributing to the democratisation process in Belarus. After he participated in the Forum 2000 in Prague, the chief of opposition Aljaksandr Milinkevič met Prime Minister Topolánek on 14 October.<sup>41</sup> And on 24 October 2008, the first vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Tomáš Pojar travelled to Minsk to discuss the future of Czech-Belarusian relations.<sup>42</sup>

Under the Czech EU presidency, bilateral visits were even more mediatised and some issues occasioned political debates. In January 2009, a delegation of Czech politicians and investors travelled to Belarus. A row of issues were discussed and negotiated to improve bilateral Czech-Belarusian economic relations.<sup>43</sup> The main event was, however, the visit of Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg on 17 April to Belarus: it was the first time in post-soviet times that a Czech Foreign Minister went to this state.<sup>44</sup> The invitation to the EU summit in Prague occasioned mixed reactions among

Czech politicians and NGOs.<sup>45</sup> In April, President Klaus indicated that he would not give his hand to President Lukashenko if he was to come to the EU summit on Eastern Partnership.<sup>46</sup> The senators from the ‘Commission for the support of democracy in the world’ also indicated that they felt embarrassed by this perspective.<sup>47</sup> A compromise was finally found: Belarus would be represented, but not by the President himself. On 27 July 2009, the status of the Czech *Chargé d’affaires* in Minsk was upgraded to the one of ambassador.

The start of a political dialogue with the EU and the opening of Belarusian market to investments draw a way for renewed bilateral economic relations, where Czech businessmen was so far active in real estate development and public transportation (e.g. Škoda Electric). In June 2009, the Czech Chamber of commerce and the Belarusian Chamber for commerce and industry signed an agreement for the improvement of economic cooperation. Czech civil society, like *Člověk v tísni*, *Mezinárodní sdružení Občanské Bělorusko* and *Asociace pro mezinárodní otázky*, organise ongoing projects supporting democratisation and support to civil society in the country, especially with the financial help of the ‘Transition’ programme of the MFA. The association *Mezinárodní sdružení Občanské Bělorusko* was particularly active in asking a more flexible position of the EU on the reduction of the visa fees.<sup>48</sup>

### *Georgia*

Since the war with Russia in August 2008, Georgia came at the forefront of Czech foreign policy towards the East after Ukraine and Belarus. It has mobilised particular interest among the public and Czech investments have increased in the country. In 2007, bilateral meetings like the visit of Prime Minister Topolánek to Tbilissi and of the President of the Georgian Parliament Nino Burdshanadze to Prague, mainly confirmed Czech support to integration in EU and NATO structures. The Czech government also used its presidency of the Visegrad Group to ‘welcome Georgia’s progress achieved so far in the implementation of the ENP Action Plan and support further deepening of the EU-Georgia relations’.<sup>49</sup> It also called for a start of negotiations on a deep and comprehensive FTA as well as on a visa-facilitation and re-admission agreement. Before the war with Russia, it already asked for ‘a more proactive stance of the EU on the breakaway regions, on the basis of Georgia’s territorial integrity, reaffirming in this context the Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the EU on Georgia of 18 April 2008, and its firm commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders in particular’.<sup>50</sup> The V4 also supported Georgia in joining the Membership Action Plan (MAP) as a first step towards NATO accession.

However, very contradictory reactions were expressed among Czech politicians on the war which broke out on 7 August 2008 between Georgia and Russia about South Ossetia. Some politicians, among others President Klaus, were against sanctions towards Russia and any assistance to Georgia, the Prime Minister Topolánek, on the contrary, stressed the need to pressure Russia, may it be through sanctions. The Foreign Minister Schwarzenberg recommended, in the perspective of the upcoming Czech EU presidency, to favour political dialogue and negotiations with Russia as

well as assistance to Georgia.<sup>51</sup> Ex-President Václav Havel also reacted on the issue, asking the EU to take a resolute step towards Russia.<sup>52</sup> The six-Point Plan for Peace negotiated on 12 August 2008 by French President Sarkozy with Russian President Medvedev certainly contributed to establish a cease-fire in asking for a return to the situation prior to the outbreak of hostilities on 7 August 2008. But Czech diplomacy would have preferred the proposition to recognise the territorial integrity of Georgia. On 12 and 21 August 2008, the Foreign Minister K. Schwarzenberg proposed important financial aid.<sup>53</sup> During the extraordinary EU Summit of 1 September 2008, he also asked for the organisation of an International donors' conference in Prague, which finally took place in Brussels on 22 October without Russian and Georgian representatives. The 27 member states also agreed to send out an EU observation mission of the cease-fire in Georgia and to postpone the negotiation of the economic agreement with Russia planned in mid-September. After the EU summit, Prime Minister Topolánek met with Prime Minister Vladimir Gurgenzidze.<sup>54</sup> Czech Senate as well as Foreign Minister Schwarzenberg, during a speech at the United-Nations, qualified the entry of Russian soldiers in Georgia as an aggression.<sup>55</sup> Georgia's Foreign Minister Eka Tkeshelashvili visited Prague on 27 October 2008 where various issues of cooperation between the Czech Republic and Georgia were discussed after the international donors' conference had agreed to give CZK 90 billion to Georgia. Foreign Minister Schwarzenberg confirmed, that the Czech Republic would further support Georgia on its process to NATO accession.<sup>56</sup>

Since the war with Russia in August 2008, Czech relations with the separatist and pro-Russian Abchazia stayed tensed. In Summer 2009, Russia provoked again Georgia in saying that it was not ready to enter NATO and in evoking the possibility of another war. On 22 September, ex-President Václav Havel, together with further previous European political leaders, called the people of the European Union in a text published in MF Dnes to draw an active strategy which 'would help Georgia to regain its territory and to enjoy territorial integrity'.<sup>57</sup> On 8 October, a debate took place at the Senate on the retreat of Russian soldiers from the Georgian soil, a few days after the publication of the Commission's report on the war in Georgia.<sup>58</sup> It indicated that political elite was still divided between previous members of the government – like ex-Foreign Minister K. Schwarzenberg (TOP 09) and ex-Vice Prime Minister A. Vondra (ODS) – who supported further help to Georgia, and members of the ČSSD and the KSČM, who did not want any conflict with Russia.

In general, Czech companies have improved investments in Georgia, especially in the fields of energy, bank and health. The company Energo-Pro has, for example, invested further in the field of water energy and is thus one of Georgia's main energy provider, while the company Block invested in one of Georgia's main hospitals.<sup>59</sup> After the war of 2008, the Czech humanitarian NGOs were very active, like „Hand for Help“ from Liberec, which provided assistance in the medical field.<sup>60</sup>

### *Moldova*

Moldova has become one of the four priority countries of the Czech Republic in Eastern Europe and represents one of the eight long-term priority countries of Czech

foreign development aid.<sup>61</sup> Czech politicians are divided over the official position to hold. While the MFA was in favour of EU accession and of an active support to the liberalisation of the visa regime, the Ministry of Interior regularly put the brakes on the visa issue. President Klaus declared in 2007 that he was against Moldavian EU accession as long as the Transnistrian issue would not be solved. Nevertheless, since the Czech EU accession, the growing importance of bilateral relations was marked by the opening of a Czech embassy in Chisinau in 2005 and of a Moldavian one in Prague in 2007. In 2008, together with its Visegrad partners, the Czech MFA has welcomed one in 'the entry into force of the Regulation on granting additional autonomous trade preferences to Moldova',<sup>62</sup> called for a further strengthening of the EU-Moldova relationship and proposed to start a reflection on a new agreement going beyond the PCA. It has also underlined its continuous support to the settlement of the conflict in Transnistria. The Prime Minister of Moldova, Zinaida Greceanii, visited Prague on 2–3 September 2008, where she met Prime Minister Topolánek and President Klaus. Beside official consultations and visits, she signed an agreement on the common protection of investments.<sup>63</sup>

In 2009, the Czech EU presidency has given more visibility to Czech traditional position in favour of human rights. Bilateral meetings have concentrated on the controversial issue of the Eastern Partnership, which Moldavian politicians, especially President Vladimir Voronin, saw as an anti-Russian project.<sup>64</sup> On 22 April, Premier Topolánek travelled to Moldova during an official EU visit, where he met representatives of opposition and hold negotiations with Prime Minister Zinaida Greceanii and President Voronin.<sup>65</sup> After a restrictive visa policy in 2009, the Ministry of Interior opened again its visa regime towards Moldova.

Czech-Moldavian economic relations have particularly improved in the last years. The main Czech exports to the country are realised by Škoda Auto and businessmen are present in the banking sector. At present, there are approximately thirty Moldavian-Czech companies operating in Moldova.

#### *Armenia and Azerbaijan*

Like in the past, Czech relations with these two countries are less developed than with the above mentioned ones. However, irregularities during electoral times and energy issues occasioned official declarations and meetings. At the beginning of 2008, the MFA for example condemned the violent repression of protestations after the Presidential elections on February in Armenia and asked the government find a solution through constructive dialogue. However, the MFA has welcomed 'the efforts of the Azerbaijani authorities to comply with the international standards for democratic elections'<sup>66</sup> after a new President was elected in October 2008. It indicated its support for the deepening of mutual relations in order to favour the political developments, course of reforms and rapid economic growth of Azerbaijan. The official EU visit of Prime Minister Topolánek in Bacu on 14 February 2009, to discuss the Nabucco project with the Prime Minister Artur Rasizad and the President İlham Alijev,<sup>67</sup> the occasion to enhance bilateral economic relations.<sup>68</sup> On 6 May 2009, President Klaus met President I. Alijev in Prague<sup>69</sup> and in July, Minister of Finance Eduard Janota signed an

agreement on the common protection of investments.<sup>70</sup> On 18 February 2009, Armenian Foreign Minister Edvard Nalbandjan expressed his interest for the Eastern Partnership during a meeting with Minister Schwarzenberg. The Czech Minister indicated that some progress in the field of human rights and dialogue with civil society would be expected, and made thus direct reference to the violent events of March 2008.<sup>71</sup> Czech companies have particularly improved their investments in Azerbaijan, which ‘thanks the production of gas and oil is a strategic country for the Czech Republic’.<sup>72</sup>

## **THE COUNTRIES OF THE EASTERN DIMENSION OF THE ENP: IDENTIFICATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF KEY ACTORS**

### *Political and diplomatic actors*

From 2007 on, coordination of Czech policy towards ‘Eastern Europe’ very much focused on the preparation and management of the Czech EU presidency (for a detailed analysis, see yearbook 2008). The President and the Prime Minister were very solicited because of their function before and during the presidency. But, as far as the relations to the East and the Eastern Partnership is concerned, the MFA – in particular the departments for North and Eastern Europe (OSVE) and of Common Foreign and Security Policy (SZBP) – was the key actor, together with the Office of the Vice-Prime Minister for European Affairs. They were in regular contact with the Czech Permanent Representation in Brussels, with meetings taking place per video conference. They constantly travelled to Brussels in order to take part in the various official and less official meetings there, among others of the Committee for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (COEST). The department of Human Rights and Transformation Policy (LTP) is more concerned with the implementation of the ‘Transition’ programme and works in close cooperation with a network of very active NGOs. However, further ministries like the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Finance, as well as the Ministry of Energy and the Ministry of Interior had also their word to say during the EU presidency, e.g. on the gas crisis in Ukraine, an alternative EU gas project in South Caucasus, renewed political dialogue and economic relations with Belarus, or the liberalisation of visa issues with Ukraine. The Office of the Prime Minister for European Affairs played a key role so to find consensus among Czech actors, like on the visa issue which traditionally opposes the MFA and the Ministry of Interior.

A lesson of the Czech EU presidency was clearly that communication within the MFA and between Czech actors has improved. The diplomats interviewed, all young and very qualified, indicated the importance of the persons in place for the advancement of certain dossiers and the necessity to know each other well in order to facilitate informal communication. During the Presidency, the ministry tried to compensate its lack of specialists in these two departments in hiring young experts with a strong experience in NGOs and in relying on exchange diplomats and Czech civil servants from the European Commission. However, better links would still need to be done between the strategic issues and the operational ones (e.g. ‘Transition’ programme) at the MFA and with others ministries (e.g. technical assistance) so that scarce Czech



resources in the economic, technical and humanitarian fields are used in a meaningful way. Before the EU presidency, the Czech Permanent Representation in Brussels was however little involved in the decision process on the Eastern Partnership, as the most important decisions were taken in Prague. Representatives sitting and presiding COEST meetings did essentially communication, but played a crucial role of reporting on discussions at the EU level and on getting support from the other member states to the Czech position. A reevaluation of the key role of the Representation in the field of EU foreign policy would thus also need to be made.

### *Economic Actors*

Czech economic, trade and financial activities are managed by the MFA (overall coordination), the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Ministry of Finance, CzechTrade, CzechInvest, CzechCenters and CzechTourism. According to interviews, direct communication and coordination between the MFA and the Ministry for Trade and Industry particularly improved since 2009 on the issue of economic diplomacy.<sup>73</sup> Ministries and companies also realised that Czech NGOs can provide Czech investors and firms with valuable information on the countries. Czech companies concentrate on key countries like Ukraine, Georgia and more and more Belarus, Moldova and Azerbaijan. The country of biggest interest is without doubt Ukraine, although Czech media do not report many new investments for 2009, perhaps due to the financial crisis. They highlight, however, renewed opportunities to invest in Belarus and in the South Caucasus. The Czech Republic is still the main foreign investor in Georgia.

Despite the multiplication of bilateral agreements to facilitate Czech trade and investments in the East, economic information on 'Eastern Europe' could be further improved. There is still little information on internet on the economic situation of the countries and Czech investors need to rely on personal knowledge and contacts to make their way to these markets. A reinforcement in personal in the already existing structures could be a way to improve communication with and visibility of Czech companies in the region. Public statistics on Czech investments abroad would also need improvement, so to increase mutual interest among the public and to allow for a better promotion of Czech interests via the MFA, the Ministry of Trade and Industry and their structures abroad.

## **CZECH FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD THE COUNTRIES OF THE EASTERN DIMENSION OF THE ENP IN THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC SPACE**

Czech media coverage contributes to give a rather negative image of 'Eastern Europe'. Furthermore, it very much focuses on specific events, like the gas crisis in Ukraine in January 2009,<sup>74</sup> the Czech involvement in getting Belarus on board for the May summit or the summit on Eastern Partnership itself. After the Czech EU presidency, articles and radio reports on the topic became more seldom and focused more on Russian reactions to events in Eastern Europe.

Relations towards Eastern Europe have in the past years been supported by a small number of research institutions and think tanks, among others the Association for International Affairs (AMO), the Institute of International Relations (IIR), the Prague Security Studies Institute (PSSI) and Europeum (Charles University). These organisations have been very active in increasing public awareness on the issue, through conferences, publications and media appearance. Some of them have also thought to influence steps of the policy design and evolution, especially in providing the ministry with expertise and analysis on the field. Some of their members were even invited to join the ministry before and during the EU presidency, where they usually remained. On 5–6 May 2009 took place a big international conference – ‘Eastern Partnership: Towards Civil Society Forum’ – organised at the MFA under the Czech EU presidency by a row of Czech, Polish, Swedish research institutes and organisations. It allowed for an open dialogue with civil society just before the official EU summit.

As far as the larger civil society is concerned, engagement was particularly visible these last years through the activities financed by the programme ‘Transition’ financed by the MFA. The invitation of Belarus to the May summit occasioned mixed reactions, also in the media. A group of eight NGOs for example wrote a letter to the government in February 2009 so to avoid the Belarussian President Lukashenko to be invited at the Prague summit on the Eastern Partnership.<sup>75</sup> As in the past, Czech NGOs very much contribute to implement humanitarian projects in the framework of Czech development policy (see bilateral relations).

## CONCLUSION

To conclude, the Czech policy towards the East has gained a new dynamic between 2007 and 2009. Various events in the neighbourhood in addition to the intensive preparation of the Czech EU presidency have contributed to particular changes in Czech foreign policy towards a neighbourhood which common borders had been lost with the Czechoslovak partition in 1992. However, the Czech Republic still needs to sharpen its goals in the region and to mobilise further the population so to make sure that the momentum reached under the Czech EU presidency as well as the support to the ‘niche’ policy of the Eastern Partnership will remain lasting ones.

In general, the elaboration of a unified concept – the ‘Eastern Partnership’ – at the European level contributed to improve coordination of the various actors involved in the bilateral as well as in the multilateral levels of Czech foreign policy. As a matter of fact, one can see some sensible changes along the five criteria defined by Petr Kratochvíl in the yearbook of 2007, which still need further improvement. (1) Eastern Europe certainly became a priority of Czech foreign policy, but work still needs to be done to enhance public interest for the issue. (2) One notices a growing involvement of other ministries in Eastern Europe, which corresponds to the general internationalisation of technical ministries which have to answer global issues. However, the MFA remains the most involved governmental institution in Eastern Europe. (3) The ENP mobilised more referents during the EU presidency. Although some of them stayed af-

ter June 2009, efforts need to be done so that continuity is guaranteed and Czech brand kept on the Eastern Partnership. (4) Indeed, a classical dilemma of diplomacy is rotation. But the fact that ex-vice-Prime Minister for European Affairs Stefan Fülle became Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood helps the MFA to be kept informed and influence EU's further steps. (5) Although internal restructuring allowed for a better internal coordination of European issues, further efforts need to be done so that the ENP will not be splitted between the competencies of various MFA departments and that communication prevails over internal and interministerial rivalries.

As far as economy and trade is concerned, one notices a growing interest of Czech companies for trade and investments in Eastern Europe, although a high share is devoted to energy (gas and oil).<sup>76</sup> With the economic crisis and increased competition from newly industrialised countries, Czech companies are in a pressing need to look for new markets and to invest in lower-cost countries. From this perspective, 'Eastern Europe' seems to be a natural choice for Czech business due to the knowledge of local environment as well as overly good reputation of Czech industry and products in the region. As about 80% of the Czech trade is done with the EU, the economic integration of the Eastern neighbours with the EU seems to be the best way of securing Czech business interests.<sup>77</sup>

Czech NGOs have stayed, over the timeframe of 2007–2009, very much engaged in the promotion of human rights and in providing assistance in this region. However, despite debates which took place in 2008 after the war in Georgia and more important media coverage of the issue during the first part of 2009, it is not sure that the population got increasingly more interested in the Eastern part of Europe. Although there is clear interest for the Western Balkan, 'Eastern Europe' is still perceived through the negative prism of Russia.<sup>78</sup> Maybe Czech citizens still needs to realise that the Eastern neighbours are closer to them than any other transition countries in Asia or Africa. As ex-Prime Minister Topolánek summarised after a three-hour press conference on the launch day of the Eastern Partnership: 'It is not possible to behave as if there would be nothing further East from us'.<sup>79</sup>

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## Chapter 11

# The Balkan Dimension of the Czech Foreign Policy

*Filip Tesař*

### THE BALKAN DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: CORNERSTONES AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

#### *Introduction*

The Czech foreign policy has been interested in the Balkans since its birth. Nevertheless, this interest was not very balanced: in the beginning, the Czech concerns were focused on Romania and, less evidently, on Bulgaria. Of the Western Balkan countries, the Czech foreign policy put Croatia first, followed by Serbia. Despite considerable differences in the approaches towards individual countries, at the general level a regional approach formally prevailed. This approach was seriously applied after the Czech accession talks started, but the four mentioned countries are still the main focus regarding strategic, contractual, economic and cultural ties, as well as development assistance, external relations of the Czech regions and towns, and non-governmental associations. Among them, the principal Czech partner is Romania. Bosnia-Herzegovina, despite some historical ties with the Czech Republic, is hindered by its slow-going transition, which influenced, e.g. the development of the bilateral contractual relationship and the Czech FDI. If Greece, which before 2007 was the only Balkan EU member, can be counted as a member of one region together with the transition countries, it is rather distant in the Czech view as well. Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro are also quite distant countries in the Czech view, and Kosovo is the remotest one.

The framework of the Czech policy is derived from the official EU and NATO policies towards the Balkans. Thus an indefinite consensus prevailed – excluding KSČM – about the EU's and NATO's enlargement, especially in regard to the EU and NATO candidate countries. In the coalition agreement of 29 December 2006<sup>1</sup> and in the following policy statement from the government of 17 January 2007,<sup>2</sup> the coalition pledged to support further enlargement (without mentioning the Balkans) and a common approach of the EU towards its closest neighbourhood. The less clear the EU's policy was, the less agreement there was among Czech policy makers. The main disagreement thus occurred in the case of the recognition of Kosovo, where the

EU failed to reach a common position. In general, the Czech policy towards the Balkans preferred to follow the Czech Republic's partners and allies. This tendency was further strengthened by the establishment of the caretaker government in May 2009.<sup>3</sup>

### *Political Context*

The Balkans are not a very frequent subject of debates among Czech political parties. Most of their attention was given to the issue of Kosovo. However, this was mostly in the first half of 2008, between the proclamation of independence in February and the Czech recognition three months later. Only the Communist Party, which, out of all the parliamentary parties, is probably the least involved in the Czech foreign policy making, really tried to open the debate about the Czech position toward Kosovo's status in 2007. In 2009, it tried to revoke the Czech recognition of Kosovo as well. In October 2009 the Communists proposed an act that would ban violations of international law, primarily the CBSE Final Act. According to the complainants the act would be applied to the Kosovo case because the Czech ambassador was still not nominated, meaning that the process of recognition was not completed. Simultaneously they tried to prevent a government attempt to complete the recognition by proposing another act according to which the government would have to gain the support of the parliament in such cases.<sup>4</sup> The Communists were most decided in their views on the Balkans: they challenged Croatia's accession to the EU because of the expulsion of the Serbs<sup>5</sup> and condemned the deployment of the Czech soldiers in Kosovo as a military occupation and defence of foreign interests.<sup>6</sup>

According to the shadow foreign minister of the ČSSD Lubomír Zaorálek, the Balkans are a priority of his party in the long term.<sup>7</sup> However, this statement is not testified by the party's politics in the course of 2007–2009. In 2007, Party Chairman Jiří Paroubek informed the Serbian President Boris Tadić that the ČSSD supports Serbia, but since then, the party's interest in it vanished, except in the case of Kosovo. Like the Communists, the ČSSD compared the recognition of Kosovo to the Munich Agreement. The resistance to the recognition of Kosovo was the main topic for Jan Hamáček and Lubomír Zaorálek, the party's two experts on foreign policy. Libor Rouček, the first vice chairman of the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament and the parliament's vice chairman since 2009, was probably the ČSSD politician who was most familiar with the Balkan issues.<sup>8</sup> However, he acted at the European level and did not significantly influence the domestic politics. Jiří Dienstbier, who had an above average interest in the Balkans, was elected to the senate in 2008 on the list of the ČSSD, even though he was nonpartisan. Senator Jaromír Štětina, who was elected on the list of the Greens, and Senator Karel Schwarzenberg, who was nominated by the Greens in 2007 for the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs, were both conversant in Balkan affairs. The chief of the Greens' foreign department Jiří Čáslavka and the party's vice chairman (chairman since 2009) Ondřej Liška were among those who engaged in Balkan affairs to a greater extent (but principally in connection with Kosovo). In general, the Greens have probably the most comprehensive view of the Balkans of all the Czech political parties, apparently thanks to their link to the German Greens.



Within the ODS, the leading government party until the spring of 2009, the party's expert on the foreign policy Jan Zahradil gave his opinion markedly only when he greeted Bulgaria's entry into the EU in 2007. Although the ODS, in fact, enforced the recognition of Kosovo within the government, the support for this move was far from universal within the party. The enforcement succeeded only thanks to the personal efforts of Topolánek and Vondra, while the party in general was rather indifferent to the issue. The ODS supports NATO's enlargement in the Balkans because for them, enlargement means strengthening the transatlantic bond. Similarly, they view the EU's enlargement as an enlargement of the European free-trade space. Thus, they pay little attention to the Balkans themselves. The KDU-ČSL pays virtually no attention to the Balkans.

***Background: Support for the EU and NATO enlargements in the Balkans***

Support for the EU and NATO enlargements in the Balkans is probably the main element of the Czech government policy towards the Balkans. Despite the fact that according to a poll, the public support varied from 73% (Croatia) to 25% (Albania),<sup>9</sup> both of Topolánek's governments endorsed enlargement as a whole. The subsequent government of Jan Fischer adopted the former cabinet's policy towards the Western Balkans, including the support of the EU and NATO enlargements, but it did not publicly emphasize it.

Nevertheless, while the Czech support for the EU enlargement was stable, it was rather vague as well. The most concrete support was oriented towards Romania and Bulgaria, which are seen as the two Balkan countries that are the closest to the Czechs historically. The Czech Republic supported the accession of Romania and Bulgaria on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007, long before their entry. Later, in statements of Czech officials, the Balkan country that was most frequently mentioned was Croatia, the only Western Balkan country negotiating its accession. It is also culturally close to the Czech Republic as well as to the majority within the EU. However, Czech officials also mentioned Macedonia/FYROM, the second Western Balkan candidate country, which was in a much more difficult position given both its preparedness for accession talks and its name dispute with Greece. Until fall 2008 Czech Republic, together with Bulgaria, backed the opening of Macedonia's accession negotiations, but as the Czech presidency of the EU Council approached, the Czech Republic harmonized its attitude with that of the majority of the EU. In the presidency programme only 'improving' the EU-Macedonia/FYROM relations is mentioned in this respect.<sup>10</sup>

As for the NATO enlargement, the Czechs were substantially more visible in regard to this issue. The reasons were that since 2007 until the spring of 2009, the government was led by a pro-Atlantic party (ODS), which linked enlargement with strengthening the transatlantic bond, and that the NATO enlargement is not so sensitive an issue as the EU enlargement. NATO is perceived more as a geographical than as a cultural community, and unlike the enlargement of the EU, its enlargement is not very expensive. All the parliamentary parties, excluding the Communists, generally agreed regarding Croatia's and Macedonia/FYROM's membership, but as to Albania, the deputy chairman of the Chamber of Deputies Lubomír

Zaorálek, a shadow foreign minister of the ČSSD, criticized its ability to be a NATO member.<sup>11</sup>

***The main disagreement: Recognition of Kosovo***

No other issue on the Czech political stage attracted as much interest as the independence of Kosovo. The Czech government recognized Kosovo as an independent state on 21 May 2008 despite the strong disagreement of the parliamentary opposition and the President, discrepancies within the coalition, and the indignation of a part of the public, which, in general, is more pro-Serbian than pro-Albanian.<sup>12</sup> Thus, it was a minority decision, and it is no wonder that the opposition took the opportunity to strike the government's procedure.

While the ministry shaped its attitude toward Kosovo's status in the long run, since 2004, the involvement of politicians in the debate was fleeting (excluding a few individuals like former UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in the former Yugoslavia Jiří Dienstbier). Politicians turned their attention to Kosovo shortly before the proclamation of independence, and that attention vanished soon after the Czech recognition. Although the foreign committee of the Chamber of Deputies recommended putting the issue of Kosovo's status into the agenda of the Chamber shortly after the release of the so-called Ahtisaari Plan in February 2007, it was only the Communist Party that persistently tried to do it. Representatives of other parties constantly blocked the attempts and waited for the common position of the EU. When Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg took the course towards recognizing Kosovo's anticipated independence, the deputies became more active. It seems that the majority of politicians considered 'neither recognition nor rejection' to be the best option. Thus the Kosovo issue exemplified not only the disharmony among Czech foreign policy makers regarding the Balkans, but also the majority's passivity regarding this issue. Many of the protagonists of the dispute were heavily influenced by stereotypes – the proponents of the recognition by their pro-U.S. stand, and the opponents by their cultural bias against both Albanians and the U.S.<sup>13</sup> Not only was the discussion about Kosovo biased and of limited scope, but its impact on the policy making was negligible. After the foreign minister enforced the recognition, the debate stopped. Therefore, this dispute displayed the considerable, if not fundamental, role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Czech policy making towards the Balkans.

**THE BALKAN DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY:  
AGENDA AND EVENTS**

***The European and transatlantic agenda in regard to the Balkan dimension of the Czech foreign policy***

Bulgaria and Romania's accession agreements were ratified quickly, and the Czech Republic opened its labour market to citizens of both countries immediately after their EU entry. On many occasions the Czech representatives demonstrated their support for and interest in Croatia's integration and openly supported Macedonia/FYROM as

long as the final preparations for the EU Council presidency approached. It was apparent that Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro also have Czech support, yet this support was limited by the common position of the EU. Montenegro was also disadvantaged by the fact that it belonged to a group of Balkan countries which aroused very little interest in the Czech Republic.

The Czech Republic was more active in the case of the EU visa liberalization for the Western Balkan countries. This topic entered the Czech foreign policy in connection to the preparations for the EU Council presidency and was adopted, along with the support of the enlargement, as one of the key Balkan topics in the presidency programme. Once again the Czech representatives backed Macedonia/FYROM when in 2008, together with France, then the EU's presiding country, the Czech Republic acknowledged Macedonia/FYROM's progress in its preparations and openly supported its liberalization.

In 2007, the government announced its support for Croatia and Macedonia/FYROM's accession to NATO in the immediate future, as well as its support for Bosnia-Herzegovina's invitation to an intensified dialogue. This support was quite decidedly repeated at the Bucharest summit in April 2008, where, together with Turkey and Slovenia, the Czech Republic openly disagreed with the decision to exclude Macedonia/FYROM from the enlargement until a solution of the name dispute is found.

### ***The Czech Presidency of the EU Council and the Western Balkans***

The priorities and aims of the Czech presidency were concretized since 2007. As for the Western Balkans, the presidency's main priorities and aims were respectively: maximal progress in the accession talks with Croatia, improving the EU's relations with Macedonia/FYROM, preparations for a possible granting of candidate status to other countries in the region, Kosovo's possible involvement in the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP), normalization of the relations between Serbia and Kosovo, including mutual participation in regional cooperation activities, Serbia's prospects of becoming a candidate country, and enhancement of the EU's role in Bosnia-Herzegovina. For the whole region, the presidency sought a strengthening of the civil society and people-to-people contacts, progress in the fulfilment and evaluation of criteria based on road maps, with the aim of achieving a visa-free regime, a strengthening of the cooperation regarding preparedness to respond to terrorist attacks, and involvement of the ESDP operation in the Western Balkans.<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately, the presidency failed to unblock of Slovenian-Croatian dispute over the access to the sea. Here, the presidency did not even try to mediate or substantially press the sides of the conflict. The presidency handed the problem over to the European Commission (to the commissioners for enlargement and for maritime affairs and fishery). Since fundamental progress in Croatia's integration was the first priority in the Western Balkan agenda of the Czech presidency, and, at the same time, the least problematic point from the view of the EU, many other points were also postponed, such as the transmission of the international administration in Bosnia-Herzegovina from the UN to the EU, or Kosovo's involvement in the SAP. In the case of Serbia, the association agreement remained frozen due to the opposition of the Netherlands.

In the Western Balkan agenda, the presidency succeeded in those issues which had standard procedures or road maps and no serious political obstacles. First of all, it succeeded in reaching the agreement regarding Montenegro's application to accession, which was passed on to the Commission for evaluation. It also accepted Albania's application. The Czech presidency prepared a path to the introduction of a visa-free regime with Macedonia/FYROM, Montenegro, and Serbia (end of 2009) and contributed to Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina's advance towards it. Although the presidency did not manage to meet the majority of its proposed aims, it succeeded in constantly keeping the Western Balkan agenda on the list of priorities of the EU's external policy, and it was able to pass the agenda on to its Swedish successor.

### ***The Legal Basis of the Czech Republic's Relations with the Balkan Countries***

In the area of the EU and NATO agenda, 7 agreements were ratified in all, including:

*The Treaty Concerning the Accession of the Republic of Bulgaria and Romania to the European Union* (2006, effective since 2007)

*The Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Albania, of the other part* (2008)

*The Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Montenegro, of the other part* (2008)

*Protocol on NATO Enlargement to the Republic of Croatia* (2009)

*Protocol on NATO Enlargement to the Republic of Albania* (2009)

In the area of economy, 2 agreements were ratified, including:

*The Agreement between the Czech Republic and Bosnia-Herzegovina on the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income and Property* (2009)

With this agreement the contractual basis in the area of economy, which consisted of agreements on double taxation and on promotion and protection of investments, was completed. The Czech Republic ratified such agreements with all the Balkan countries except for Kosovo, which, as a newly (2008) born state, is in a highly specific situation. In the course of 2009, changes in agreements on promotion and protection of investments with Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Romania were also ratified, and negotiations on the same topic were initiated with Montenegro as well. The reason for this was that the Czech Republic was under obligation to harmonize its legislation with the *acquis communautaire*. In the case of Romania there was no point in harmonizing with it due to Romania's entry into the EU. Thus, the Czech side used negotiations to push modification of the existing agreement in regard to the host country's permission for arbitration proceedings.

In the area of military and security cooperation, 6 agreements were ratified, including:

*The Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic and the Ministry of National Defence of the Hellenic Republic on Military Cooperation* (2007)

(The Czech Republic concluded a cooperation agreement on a similar basis with all the Balkan countries except for Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo.)

*The Agreement between the Czech Republic and the Republic of Macedonia on the Exchange and the Mutual Protection of Classified Information* (2009)

(Negotiating this agreement, the Czech Republic manifested its affirmative attitude in reference to Macedonia/FYROM's accession to NATO, despite the opposition of Greece.)

In the area of social affairs, the following agreement was ratified:

*The Social Security Agreement between the Czech Republic and Republic of Macedonia* (2006, effective since 2007)

(The Czech Republic also concluded such an agreement with Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, and Romania.)

In other areas, 8 agreements were ratified in all. Four multilateral agreements concerning the Balkans were also ratified. During February and March 2007 the legal succession with Bosnia-Herzegovina was finished (6 agreements were cancelled). Two agreements with Bulgaria were also cancelled.

The relative significance of single countries in the Czech external relations is indirectly demonstrable by the number of bilateral agreements: Croatia had 40 in total (10 of them were ratified by the parliament), Romania 40 (10), Bulgaria 32 (9), Macedonia/FYROM 30 (8), Montenegro 28 (7), Serbia 26 (7), Bosnia-Herzegovina 23 (7), Greece 20 (4), Albania 14 (4), and Kosovo 0 (0). The building of the contractual relationship with Romania is the most dynamic (25 bilateral agreements were concluded in 1990–2009), followed by those with Croatia and Bulgaria (20 bilateral agreements each). The building of the contractual relationship with other countries is much slower (Montenegro 13, Serbia 11, Albania 10, Macedonia/FYROM 8, Greece 6, Bosnia-Herzegovina 2). Relations with Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo in this respect were affected by the dissolution of the Union of Serbia and Montenegro in 2006–2008. In contrast, relations with Albania grew rapidly between 2007 and 2009.

There is also a difference in the approaches to the individual topics. If documents relating to the EU's (accession, association) as well as NATO's enlargement were discussed in both Chambers and ratified quickly, in the order of months, the ratification of other agreements usually took a longer amount of time – for example, the agreement on double taxation with Bosnia-Herzegovina was ratified two years after it was signed.

### ***Economic Relations***

The economic cooperation of the Czech Republic with the Balkan countries is characterized by an excess of exports over imports. The main Czech trade partner in the Balkans is Romania by a huge margin, followed by Bulgaria, Greece and Croatia. Romania, followed by Bulgaria, is the most dynamic Czech trade partner in the Balkans. The turnover of the Czech trade with Romania increased by 140% from the Czech entry into the EU until 2008, when it reached almost 1% of the total value of the Czech trade and 1.4% of all exports. Nevertheless, it dropped to 0.8% of the trade and 1.1% of exports in 2009 due to the global financial crisis. In the course of 2007–2009, the value of both the overall trade with Romania and exports to it was equal to the trade

with and exports to Bulgaria, Greece, and Croatia. In comparison with this, the trade with Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina is only of marginal value, while the trade with Macedonia/FYROM, Montenegro, Albania and Kosovo is insignificant.

The global crisis primarily affected the trade with the four main partners. The exchange of goods decreased by almost 30% in the case of Romania and Croatia, by almost 20% in the case of Bulgaria, and by more than 10% in the case of Greece, mainly due to the conditions in the Balkan countries. The exchange of services was generally less affected. The export of both goods and services was reduced more than the import. Nevertheless, the crisis did not affect the overall picture of the Czech trade in the Balkans, where Romania and the three abovementioned countries make up the core of the Czech business activity in the region.

Unlike the top four, Serbia remains the country with an unfilled capacity in the mutual trade exchange. During 2007–2009, imports from Serbia have been growing faster than Czech exports there. The cause is probably the uncertainty about the country's political future, including the Stabilization and Association Process connected to Kosovo's status. In the external activities of the Czech regions and NGOs cultivating friendships with the Balkan countries, Serbia is the most popular among the ten countries of the region. Nevertheless, despite several business promotion activities (workshops on business opportunities in Serbia in 2007 and 2008, and the conference Czech Days in Belgrade, organized by the Czech and Serbian Chambers of Commerce and the association Czech Top 100, in 2007), Czech entrepreneurs remained overly cautious. President Václav Klaus, who is personally very much loaded in favour of Serbia, tried ineffectually to dispel their fears during his visit to Serbia in 2008. During this visit, he met not only his Serbian counterpart, but also the Prime Minister, the chairperson of the parliament, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Economy and Regional Development, the minister of Trade and Services, the governor of the National Bank, the President of the autonomous Vojvodina and the mayor of Belgrade.

According to the 2003–2006 state export strategy and the following export strategy for the years 2006–2010, four Balkan countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Serbia) were put on the list of the priorities. The Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade had prepared the individual strategies of promotion of trade interests for all four countries (for Bulgaria and Romania in 2006, and for Croatia and Serbia in 2007).<sup>15</sup> Since April 2009, when the Ministry of Industry and Trade reduced the list, only Serbia remained on it,<sup>16</sup> which means that extra state support is currently sufficient in the cases of Bulgaria, Croatia, and Romania. The agency CzechTrade covers the whole region, including Kosovo. However, its priorities are generally in accord with the export strategy: it has offices in Zagreb (since 1999), Belgrade (2000), Sofia and Bucharest (2005). Czech Centres, another agency promoting the Czech export, has offices in Bulgaria and Romania.

Czech investments in the Balkans were directed almost completely towards Bulgaria and Romania until 2007. Until the end of 2009 the Czech FDI in these two countries reached about 6% and 5%, respectively, of the total amount of the Czech FDI. These countries also invested in the Czech Republic, but only to an insignificant extent. When the Czech subjects invested in Bulgaria and especially in Romania, they

invested in quite a broad scope of activities. The situation in other countries is incomparable in terms of both extent and scope. No Czech FDI are recorded in Kosovo and Montenegro, whereas in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Macedonia/FYROM and Serbia, Czech FDI are insignificant. In 2008, the Czech energy giant ČEZ won the tender on the privatization of 76% of Albania's state distribution network. The contract was realized in 2009. In 2007 ČEZ won the tender on the modernization of the power plant Gacko I, the extension of the mining in the adjacent coal mine and the construction of the new plant Gacko II. This investment, totalling 1.4 milliard EUR, should be the biggest single foreign investment of the Czech subject, and obviously, it is also the biggest foreign investment in Bosnia-Herzegovina; nevertheless, when the contract was not realized during 2008, ČEZ decided to sell its 51% share. ČEZ entered a similar tender in Kosovo as well. In 2008 it advanced to the second round.<sup>17</sup>

In the field of tourism, the most popular Czech destination in 2007–2009 was Croatia. In the Balkans, the second favourite destination was Greece, followed by Bulgaria and Montenegro.

### ***Development and Transition Assistance***

Among the eight priority receivers of the Czech development assistance were two Western Balkan countries, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia (excluding Kosovo).<sup>18</sup> Both Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina were constantly among the top receivers in the course of 2007–2009, although their shares slightly dropped. Serbia received 24% of the total financial resources in 2007, 21% in 2008, and 19% in 2009, while Bosnia-Herzegovina received 17%, 18%, and 15%, respectively. Of the non-priority receivers, the most attention is paid to Albania, followed by Macedonia and Kosovo, and, lastly, Montenegro.

Both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia are among the priority receivers of the Czech transition assistance as well (Kosovo remained on the list after its separation from Serbia). Unlike in the development assistance, within the transition assistance, funds are allocated not according to political preferences but through public competition. Thus, what is decisive is the interest of domestic NGOs and, of course, the quality of the submitted projects. There was an obvious declining trend in the case of both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia in the course of 2007–2009. All impacts of the development and transition assistance on the economic ties between the Czech Republic and the two main receivers are demonstrable.

### ***Cultural Relations***

During 2007–2009 no Balkan country was placed independently among the priority partners within the Czech cultural policy. Since all EU countries are placed on the list automatically, Bulgaria and Romania are perceived as priority partners since 2007. In both 2007 and 2008, the Ministry of Culture assigned about 3% of the total amount of the funds available to its grant programme for cooperation with the Balkan countries (five projects in 2007, and seven in 2008). Czech artists and performers made guest appearances in Albania (1x), Bosnia-Herzegovina (3x), Bulgaria (1x), Romania (3x) and Serbia (3x). The reason for such a modest level of cooperation lay primarily

in the low interest of the Czech artist community and not in the priorities of the ministry. In 2009 the ministry particularly supported projects of cultural exchange with more individual participants. Artists from Croatia and Romania were the most active in the projects, but representatives from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Greece, Kosovo and Serbia took part in them as well.

The cultural exchange with the Balkans remained largely unidirectional during 2007–2009: presentations of Czech culture in the Balkans were much more common than presentations of Balkan culture in the Czech Republic. Only the case of Greece is the exception due to the activities of the international Greek cultural associations (the Lyceum Club of Greek Women and the Society of Friends of Nikos Kazantkis). Beside the Ministry of Culture, the Czech Centres are very active in promoting Czech culture abroad. In the Balkans only two Czech Centres existed, namely, those in Bucharest and Sofia, which organized several activities (film, theatrical, graphic, and literary) every month during 2007–2009. For this reason the cultural cooperation with Bulgaria and Romania is incomparable with that of the other Balkan countries. It is further strengthened by the fact that only Bulgaria and Romania have similar institutions in Prague. In promoting Czech culture the Czech embassies in Zagreb, Belgrade and Sarajevo, organizing several activities every year, are quite active as well. Likewise, the embassy in Tirana became more active since 2008.

The biggest project of the Czech-Balkan cultural exchange was probably the ‘Days of Czech Architecture in Belgrade’. This project was under the patronage of the Czech Ministry of Culture and the Czech embassy in Serbia, it included three exhibitions, and it was supplemented by lectures from leading Czech architects. It was organized by the Prague Centre for Central European Architecture, and it took place in February and March 2007.<sup>19</sup> An example of a smaller activity organized without any contribution from the state is the festival ‘Balkan Days’, which was organized by the city of Studénka in May 2007. Choruses from Bosnia-Herzegovina (the Republic of Srpska), Serbia and Macedonia participated in the festival.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, such activities are rather isolated.

In 2008, Jiří Menzel’s film *I Served the King of England* was selected as the best film at the international film festival in Durrës, Albania.

Under the state programme for the preservation of the Czech cultural heritage in foreign countries for the years 2006–2010, an upkeep of the facilities of the Czech communities in Croatia, Romania and Serbia was under way. The Czech Republic covered the costs of dispatching three teachers of the Czech language to Romania (as these would occasionally also teach courses in Serbia) and two to Croatia.

## THE BALKAN DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: IDENTIFICATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF KEY ACTORS

### *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

During 2007–2008, the Czech Ministers Karel Schwarzenberg and Jan Kohout met all their Balkan counterparts except for the Greek one, not counting the encounters



at the multilateral meetings. They met with Bosnia-Herzegovina's foreign minister three times. Overall, both ministers kept up the dynamic communication with the Balkan partners as well as the communication about the Balkans with the partners within the EU.

Schwarzenberg was the main creator of Topolánek's government policy towards the Balkans. Regarding Kosovo, Minister Schwarzenberg was the main protagonist of its recognition by the Czech Republic. He visited Kosovo a month before the proclamation of its independence in January 2008. Later he didn't respect a resolution of the Foreign Committee of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament. In this resolution the committee demanded that the minister ask the committee about its position before the final decision is made. Concerning EU's enlargement, Minister Schwarzenberg promoted the accession prospects for the whole region. Nevertheless, he lost dynamics during the Czech presidency of the EU Council. He took a stand to argue that the Balkan countries should bear the responsibility for further integration, that Croatia and Slovenia have to settle their dispute, and that Bosnia-Herzegovina should assume responsibility for its fate.

Within the ministry the mechanisms for CSFP, development and transformation assistance, economic diplomacy, etc. were completed by 2005, and between 2006 and 2008 the network of the Czech diplomatic representation in the Balkans was completed. Under Minister Schwarzenberg, the Balkan agenda was incorporated into the broader agenda of South Europe. Within the ministry itself the Balkans were a quite important topic under the authority of the first deputy minister. The Balkans policy is relatively continuous, and various diplomats close to former President Václav Havel, who personally paid much attention to the Balkans, including Karel Schwarzenberg, participated in it. With Schwarzenberg's appointment the internal structure of the ministry was ready for the co-ordinated policy, and thanks to his personal attachment to the Balkans, the importance of the region within the ministry grew, but after his departure it weakened.

### ***Government***

The Czech Government as a whole rarely took a specific stance towards the Balkans (Kosovo's recognition was the main example of this). Apart from the foreign minister, who was a workhorse of the Czech Balkan policy, only the Ministers for European Affairs and Prime Minister Topolánek entered the policy-making. Topolánek, who gained conversancy with Balkan affairs only in the course of 2008, met with his counterparts from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Macedonia/FYROM and Romania during 2007–2009. His successor Jan Fischer did not meet with any Balkan Prime Minister. Other ministers met their counterparts from Balkan countries only occasionally (there was one such meeting for Albania and two for Bulgaria, Macedonia/FYROM and Romania). Like Schwarzenberg, Topolánek found himself bound by the limits of the consensus within the EU during the presidency. He termed the Croatian-Slovenian dispute as an internal problem, not an EU problem, and compared it to the Czech-Austrian conflict concerning the nuclear power plant Temelín.

The Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs Alexandr Vondra shared Schwarzenberg's position towards the Balkan issues, including the recognition of Kosovo, although he was not so open in his public statements. As a leading Czech politician responsible for the preparation of the programme of the presidency, he met the real limits of the consensus within the EU relatively sooner than Schwarzenberg did: already in the autumn of 2008 he frankly admitted that negotiations with Macedonia/FYROM cannot be opened without Macedonia/FYROM's agreement with Greece.<sup>21</sup> Vondra, as well as his successor Štefan Fülle, perceived Croatia as an example and an impetus for the whole region.<sup>22</sup> At the end of 2009, Fülle was nominated for the post of EU Commissioner for Enlargement, and the enlargement agenda is currently primarily connected with the Western Balkans.

In 2007, the decision to abandon further engagement in Bosnia-Herzegovina was made within the Ministry of Defence, while in Kosovo the helicopter unit was deployed at the same time as a supplement to the Czech mission. Unlike the mission in Afghanistan, the mission in Kosovo wasn't reduced during 2007–2009, probably due to the fact that this Czech contribution to the NATO's efforts was visible (the KFOR mission initially had about 50 thousand personnel, but it had only 11 thousand in 2009, while the Czech crew stably numbered about 450 during the ten years) but safe for Czech soldiers.

### ***President***

In 2007–2009, President Václav Klaus met with the Presidents of Serbia and Romania two times, and once with the Presidents of Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria and Greece. During his mandate Klaus met all his Balkan counterparts, excluding those from Montenegro and Kosovo. Klaus belonged to the strongest opponents of Kosovo's independence, he did not conceal his pro-Serb position and after the Czech recognition of Kosovo he publicly stated that he was ashamed of it. After the recognition he persistently refused to appoint a Czech ambassador to Kosovo.

The President displayed feelings of satisfaction concerning the NATO's enlargement, while in the case of the EU's enlargement he was rather indifferent.

### ***Parliament***

As for the parliament's committees, the absolutely most favoured partner during 2007–2009 was Croatia, the most neglected was Montenegro, and Kosovo was, strictly speaking, ignored. In spite of this, Kosovo was the hottest topic in the parliament, especially in the lower Chamber and its foreign committee. The committee adopted four resolutions relating to Kosovo in 2008. In the first of them, the committee criticized the Minister of Foreign Affairs for his visit to Kosovo and demanded that he ask for the committee's position before making decisions of this sort.<sup>23</sup> The committee's next resolution<sup>24</sup> was adopted as Resolution No. 643 of the Chamber of Deputies. Here the Chamber stated that during talks on the future status of Kosovo, not all possibilities were exhausted. It also stated that the solution to the problem would be in harmony with international law and demanded that the government use all the possibilities available to it to fulfil this resolution.<sup>25</sup> In the third resolution the com-

mittee reacted to the minister's attempt to enforce the recognition in the government and criticized him for it. In the last resolution the committee expressed its dissatisfaction with the minister in regard to Kosovo.<sup>26</sup> It seems that apart from their hostility to the recognition of Kosovo, the main problem for the opponents was that Minister Schwarzenberg acted independently of their will.<sup>27</sup>

### ***Regional Authorities***

Among the Czech regions, partnerships with Balkan countries appear only sporadically. The most favoured Balkan country among the Czech regions is Serbia. The South Moravian region cooperated with the Šumadija region (Central Serbia) since 2003, when it opened an information centre in Kragujevac. In Šumadija the South Moravian region sponsors a broad scope of rather small projects in the domain of public administration, education, culture and economy, which usually serve, among others, as training for drawing on EU funds. The region further promotes economic cooperation and Czech exports to Serbia, supports Serbian students in Brno, organizes research fellowships for Czech students in Serbia and for Serbian students of Czech studies in the Czech Republic, runs Czech language courses for Serbian citizens, and, together with the region of Olomouc, organizes Czech-Serbian summer camps. In 2007, together with Masaryk's University, the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, the region staged a symposium called 'Contemporary Serbia – Politics, Culture, the EU'. Also in 2007, in cooperation with Masaryk's University, the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and the Society of Friends of Southern Slavs, it organized a symposium dedicated to the 200th anniversary of the birth of František Zach, an outstanding Czech Serbophile born in Brno. Since then, the region issued a 'František Alexandr Zach Award' for merits in pursuing the cause of Czech-Serbian solidarity.

The region of Olomouc cooperated with the autonomous Serb province of Vojvodina since 2003. Their main field of cooperation is economic and regional development, followed by travel, culture, science, education, sports, health and social affairs. In 2009 the region ran a new project called 'Education and Development in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina' with the intention to hand on its experiences with drawing on the EU funds. The region of Hradec Králové has cooperated with the Romanian county of Sibiu since 2005, but not very intensively. The South Moravian region signed an agreement on cooperation with the Croatian county of Zadar in 2007, while the region of Pilsen signed a cooperation agreement with the Romanian county of Caraş-Severin in 2009. Since 2007, the region of Zlín has negotiated a possible cooperation with the Romanian region of Bacău. The region of Ústí has negotiated cooperation with the Republic of Srpska in Bosnia-Herzegovina since 2009. The South Moravian region also cooperated, without an official agreement, with the Bulgarian region of Varna. Czech regions generally do not cooperate with Albania, Greece, Kosovo, Macedonia/FYROM, and Montenegro, although some Greek and Albanian regions showed an interest in cooperation with the Czech Republic.

In the external partnerships of Czech towns it is apparent that there is a tendency to focus on the main Czech destinations in the Balkans. Six Czech towns and districts

have a partner in Greece, three in Bulgaria, Croatia, and Serbia, and one in Montenegro and Kosovo.

## CONCLUSION

A strictly regional approach to the Balkans is applied by Minister Schwarzenberg and, to a lesser extent, also by Prime Minister Topolánek and President Klaus, although he has his own priorities. For members of parliament, politicians in regions and the public, Romania, Croatia, Serbia, and Bulgaria are much closer to the Czech Republic than some other Balkan countries (particularly Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro). Also on a lower level of the government's policy (export promotion, development and transition assistance, cultural exchange) there exists a group of countries excluded from the sphere of closer cooperation (Albania, Greece, Kosovo, Macedonia/FYROM, Montenegro). It chimes with sporadic expressions of antipathy to this outer circle (ČSSD in relation to Albania, the majority of politicians regarding Kosovo).

It is of interest that the closer circle corresponds to the sphere of interest of Austria, a country similar to the Czech Republic in terms of size, location, history, and culture. Nevertheless, a discussion about the Czech interests in the Balkans still did not begin: both the Kosovo issue and the preparations for the Czech EU presidency were wasted opportunities for discussions of this topic. The roots of the actual Czech policy towards the Balkans lie in the beginning of the 2000s, when the EU opened the path to integration for the Western Balkan countries, Bulgaria and Romania negotiated their entry into the EU, and the Czech Republic concluded its accession talks. The Czech approach copied the common EU position on one side and derived from particular experiences of the government's departments on the other. Thus, the actual Czech Balkan policy started out as poorly coordinated and suffered from a discrepancy between the general approach at the top level and the particular interests and attachments in the lower level policy and among the public. It is clear that the Czech Republic had to determine its interests in the Balkans before the integration of the Western Balkans into the EU. Nevertheless, the majority of Czech politicians are poorly informed about the Balkans and during 2007–2009 they displayed little interest in information about them. For this reason their view of the Balkans is still based on the past (there is a tradition of relations with Serbia and Serbians, but not with Kosovo or Albanians, for example), and they deal to a great extent with an image of the Balkans, not with the region itself. Nevertheless, the general view of the region among politicians and the public's view of it concur, which indicates that a consensus on this issue is attainable.

For now, however, the Balkan policy remains mainly on the Foreign Ministry's shoulders. While in connection with the EU's presidency the influence of the department of the Minister for European Affairs and of the Prime Minister grew, after the government's fall in 2009, the importance of the Balkans declined not only within the government, but also within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Without the politicians' effort and will to promote development of the ties with the Balkan countries, and a clear vision of the future, no improvement of the situation is conceivable.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> On-line: ([www.vlada.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=20394](http://www.vlada.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=20394)).
- <sup>2</sup> On-line: ([www.vlada.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=20840](http://www.vlada.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=20840)).
- <sup>3</sup> Policy Statement from the Government of the Czech Republic. On-line: ([www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/dulezite-dokumenty/policy-statement-from-the-government-of-the-czech-republic-58897/](http://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/dulezite-dokumenty/policy-statement-from-the-government-of-the-czech-republic-58897/)).
- <sup>4</sup> On-line: ([www.psp.cz/eknih/2006ps/stenprot/062schuz/s062117.htm](http://www.psp.cz/eknih/2006ps/stenprot/062schuz/s062117.htm)).
- <sup>5</sup> On-line: ([www.psp.cz/eknih/2006ps/stenprot/046schuz/s046021.htm](http://www.psp.cz/eknih/2006ps/stenprot/046schuz/s046021.htm)).
- <sup>6</sup> On-line: ([www.psp.cz/eknih/2006ps/stenprot/053schuz/s053018.htm](http://www.psp.cz/eknih/2006ps/stenprot/053schuz/s053018.htm)); On-line: ([www.psp.cz/eknih/2006ps/stenprot/062schuz/s062119.htm](http://www.psp.cz/eknih/2006ps/stenprot/062schuz/s062119.htm)).
- <sup>7</sup> *Radar, nebo medvěd*. Respekt, 16. 2. 2009. On-line: ([www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/zahranicni\\_vztahy/z\\_medii/radar\\_nebo\\_medved.html](http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/zahranicni_vztahy/z_medii/radar_nebo_medved.html)).
- <sup>8</sup> On-line: ([www.liborroucek.cz/?page=parlcnnost](http://www.liborroucek.cz/?page=parlcnnost)).
- <sup>9</sup> Special Eurobarometer: *Attitudes towards European Union Enlargement* (2006), p. 68; Standard Eurobarometer 69: *Annexes* (2008), p. 153–159.
- <sup>10</sup> *Pracovní program českého předsednictví: Evropa bez bariér*. On-line: ([www.eu2009.cz/program](http://www.eu2009.cz/program)).
- <sup>11</sup> On-line: ([www.ceskatelevize.cz/ivysilani/208411000370402-udalosti-komentare/](http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ivysilani/208411000370402-udalosti-komentare/)).
- <sup>12</sup> Standard Eurobarometer 69: *Annexes*, EC, November 2008, pp. 154, 156, 159.
- <sup>13</sup> Tesař, Filip (2010): *Konsenzus není nutný? Uznání Kosova v Česku*. In: Drulák, Petr–Handl, Vladimír: *Hledání českých zájmů: Vnitřní rozmanitost a vnější akceschopnost*. Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů.
- <sup>14</sup> On-line: ([www.businessinfo.cz/files/dokumenty/090106\\_cz-pres\\_programme\\_en.pdf](http://www.businessinfo.cz/files/dokumenty/090106_cz-pres_programme_en.pdf)).
- <sup>15</sup> On-line: ([www.businessinfo.cz/cz/rubrika/exportni-strategie-cr-2006-2010/1001404/](http://www.businessinfo.cz/cz/rubrika/exportni-strategie-cr-2006-2010/1001404/)) ([www.mpo.cz/dokument24972.html](http://www.mpo.cz/dokument24972.html); <http://www.mpo.cz/dokument25083.html>); ([www.mpo.cz/dokument30243.html](http://www.mpo.cz/dokument30243.html); <http://www.mpo.cz/dokument35457.html>).
- <sup>16</sup> On-line: ([www.mpo.cz/dokument58287.html](http://www.mpo.cz/dokument58287.html)).
- <sup>17</sup> On-line: ([www.finance.cz/zpravy/finance/181402-cez-planuje-dalsi-expanzi-na-balkane/](http://www.finance.cz/zpravy/finance/181402-cez-planuje-dalsi-expanzi-na-balkane/)).
- <sup>18</sup> On-line: ([www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/zahranicni\\_vztahy/rozvojova\\_spoluprace/obecne\\_informace\\_o\\_zrs\\_cr/koncepce\\_zrs\\_cr\\_2002\\_2007/teritorialni\\_a\\_sektorove\\_priority.html](http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/zahranicni_vztahy/rozvojova_spoluprace/obecne_informace_o_zrs_cr/koncepce_zrs_cr_2002_2007/teritorialni_a_sektorove_priority.html)); ([www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/zahranicni\\_vztahy/rozvojova\\_spoluprace/dvoustranna\\_zrs\\_cr/prioritni\\_zeme/index.html](http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/zahranicni_vztahy/rozvojova_spoluprace/dvoustranna_zrs_cr/prioritni_zeme/index.html)); ([www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/zahranicni\\_vztahy/rozvojova\\_spoluprace/dvoustranna\\_zrs\\_cr/transformace\\_systemu\\_zahranicni.html](http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/zahranicni_vztahy/rozvojova_spoluprace/dvoustranna_zrs_cr/transformace_systemu_zahranicni.html)).
- <sup>19</sup> *Informační servis Obce architektů*, 04. February 2007, p. 5.
- <sup>20</sup> *Zpravodaj města Studénka*. June, 2006, pp. 8–9.
- <sup>21</sup> On-line: ([balkaninsight.com/en/main/news/15765/](http://balkaninsight.com/en/main/news/15765/)).
- <sup>22</sup> On-line: ([www.vlada.cz/cz/evropske-zalezitosti/projevy-fule/projev-s--fuleho-jak-posilit-postaveni-eu-v-globalnim-svete--berlin-25--11--2009-65096/](http://www.vlada.cz/cz/evropske-zalezitosti/projevy-fule/projev-s--fuleho-jak-posilit-postaveni-eu-v-globalnim-svete--berlin-25--11--2009-65096/)).
- <sup>23</sup> On-line: ([www.psp.cz/sqw/text/text2.sqw?idd=20282](http://www.psp.cz/sqw/text/text2.sqw?idd=20282)).
- <sup>24</sup> On-line: ([www.psp.cz/sqw/text/text2.sqw?idd=25854](http://www.psp.cz/sqw/text/text2.sqw?idd=25854)).
- <sup>25</sup> On-line: ([www.psp.cz/sqw/text/text2.sqw?C=653&T=k2006psp5u](http://www.psp.cz/sqw/text/text2.sqw?C=653&T=k2006psp5u)).
- <sup>26</sup> On-line: ([www.psp.cz/sqw/text/text2.sqw?idd=29437](http://www.psp.cz/sqw/text/text2.sqw?idd=29437)).
- <sup>27</sup> On-line: ([www.psp.cz/sqw/text/text2.sqw?idd=26515](http://www.psp.cz/sqw/text/text2.sqw?idd=26515)).

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## Chapter 12

# The Middle East, the Mediterranean and Afghanistan in the Czech Foreign Policy

*Jaroslav Bureš*

### THE MIDDLE EAST, THE MEDITERRANEAN AND AFGHANISTAN IN CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

The Mediterranean and the Middle East, although they did not fall under the priorities of Czech foreign policy after 1989, had to be taken into account by the Czech Republic after it joined NATO and the EU due to the wider interest of the trans-Atlantic allies in regional stability and security. For this reason, issues like terrorism, immigration, the Middle East peace process, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, peacekeeping missions, and the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation were among the most frequently discussed topics in the Czech political scene during the 2000s. The Middle East agenda have affected our relations with allies and they have been the subject of home competition on left-right axis. The only long-term Czech interest relating to the region was the mainly rightist government's attempt to reduce the Czech Republic's one-sided dependence on imports of Russian oil and gas, which was demonstrated by the support for the Nabucco pipeline project during the Czech EU presidency.

Czech foreign policy was implemented during the greater part of the period through the coalition government of M. Topolánek, in which the right-wing Civic Democratic Party (ODS) played the main role as it cooperated with small centrist parties. The polarisation of the main political parties, i.e. the Czech Social-Democratic Party (ČSSD) and the ODS, after the parliamentary elections in 2006 was negatively reflected in the approaches to the Middle East. An influential Atlanticist current, which was characterised by a greater emphasis on strong roles for the U.S. and NATO in European affairs, began to operate within the ODS. The leadership tended to believe that the U.S. has an exceptional ability to destroy menaces that globally threaten European security and that the U.S. thus requires political support and also other kinds of support from

the Czech Republic. By contrast, in the ČSSD leadership there prevailed a Europeanistic stream that supported a more autonomous European approach at the foreign policy level. Paroubek's government, whose term ended in March 2006, advocated a policy of 'any bearing' based on solid and versatile relations within the EU. In that framework should be placed the coordination and preparation of Czech foreign policy towards the Mediterranean and the Middle East, which was focused on key European issues (oil, gas, security). The government interest in the Middle East issues was compounded by the Bush administration's policy focused on Middle East security policy. Government interest in the Middle East issues has been strengthened by the policy of the Bush administration focused on the Middle East security. The ODS has accepted the role of an uncompromising fighter against all forms of international terrorism. It advocated strict isolation of unadaptable problematic (rogue) states and actively promoted the Czech military participation in peacekeeping missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. On the other side, the pro-EU Social Democrats have refused a direct military engagement and preferred civilian missions. They have also promoted a more flexible approach to difficult countries in the region based on versatile dialogue, bridge building and conflict prevention. These attitudes were best expressed during the negotiation and approval of the Military Strategy of the Czech Republic, which was prepared by Topolánek's government in 2008.<sup>1</sup> The document enumerated all the threats that have been present in the region in the immediate or latent form. The opposition criticised the document on the grounds that it placed great emphasis on military interventionism (military missions) and marginalised preventive diplomacy aimed at conflict prevention, unlike the similar Security Strategy document written in 2003. They disagreed with the excessive emphasis on the risk of ballistic missiles in the ownership of so-called 'rogue states' while stating that terrorism, organised crime, corruption and lack of energy are more acute threats.<sup>2</sup>

In general, the approaches of the two political currents represented by the ODS and ČSSD did not differ significantly at first glance. The coalition agreement in force during the term of Topolánek's government recognised the need to coordinate the European policy towards the close neighbors in order to achieve stability.<sup>3</sup> The Foreign Policy Concept of the Czech Republic for 2003–2006, which was prepared by the center-left government of V. Špidla, put the emphasis on safety features. It also defined the basic and specific approaches to the region of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), including the Middle East conflict. Most of the propositions of this approach were almost in line with the general objectives Topolánek's coalition government because it reflected the main axioms of European and transatlantic Middle East policy at that time. The basis for solving the Middle East conflict was provided by unspecified UNSC resolutions, interested stakeholders and the participating countries. Key decisions have to draw on the security needs of Israel and the vision of the establishment of an independent, viable Palestinian state. In the EU, emphasising the transatlantic dimension signaled an emphasis on cooperation and strengthening security in the broader Middle East.

The Czech diplomacy in relation to the Middle East and the Mediterranean was dominated by a reactive approach triggered by international developments and the

immediate external pressure. This situation could be explained, *inter alia*, by the fact that Mr Topolánek's coalition government had formulated the concept of foreign policy, which allowed for more flexible ad hoc decision-making in individual cases. In some cases, when a program lacked cohesion, it resulted in chaotic and barely coordinated action. Foreign Minister K. Schwarzenberg, who was nominated for the Green Party, and the competent departments of the MFA usually prevent the transmission of partisan, ideological differences into foreign policy, as reflected most markedly in the pragmatic approaches to dealing with problematic (rogue) states (Iran, Syria). The politicisation of the problems intensified when the conflict issue was debated in Parliament and when it was placed on the agenda of the Prime Minister's office. As examples could be mentioned the contradictory approaches to the Iranian parliamentary delegation that visited the Czech Parliament in 2007; the ODS and the Prime Minister's reservations about and depreciatory criticism of the non-official visit of the Social Democrats' chairman Paroubek to Syria in 2008; the ODS and the government's condemnation of the European parliamentary delegation led by Social Democratic politicians which met Hamas in 2009; and the faux pas caused by the Prime Minister's spokesman, who called the Israeli operation in Gaza 'defensive' in 2009.

All Czech governments since 1993 have declared a balanced approach to the Middle East conflict and promoted the peace process. During the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century it has been more difficult to consistently maintain a balanced position for Czech diplomacy because the regional situation was getting worse, the Arab-Israeli relations were at a low point and the peace process was halted in 2009. A partial inconsistency was apparent in the approach of the U.S. and the EU, which helped to polarise the Czech political scene in the years 2007–2008. The Czech Republic's pro-Israel stance was balanced by its formal support for the peace process, Palestinian reforms and continuing economic and financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority. During the Paris Donors' Conference in November 2007, the Czech Republic promised to continue in the second phase expansion of the most important Czech long term energy project, which is focused on electricity distribution to the area Tubas in the Palestinian Autonomous Territories. Nevertheless, some Arab countries deemed the ČR a pro-Israel country, which could be reflected in their tentative support for its candidacy to the UNSC.

Although Topolánek's coalition government has promised a balanced approach to the Middle East conflict, in practice it sided with Israel, which was manifested most markedly during the Israeli attack against Gaza in late 2008–2009 and by its active promotion of the Israel-EU Summit during the Czech EU Presidency. This attitude stemmed from the efforts of right-wing political leaders to confirm the reliability of the transatlantic ties to the U.S. – a close strategic ally of Israel. The role of pro-Israel politicians in the critical positions of the MFA and the government was also indispensable. The political protagonists of the two rival political parties sometimes accused each other of imbalance and biased attitudes in favour of Israel or the Arabs.

Stopping the construction of the radar was a political strategic goal of the ČSSD, and it was supported by its electoral base.<sup>4</sup> Refuting the merits of the Iranian threat facilitated and enhanced the electoral preferences. It is worth noting in this context



that a nonbinding agreement to start expert negotiations on the missile defense was raised in 2002 by the government of V. Špidla (ČSSD). The ODS strategic document 'Vision 2020' expressed support for a new missile defense system, including the deployment of the necessary elements in Central Europe. The document stated that the nuclear tests in North Korea and the tests of new ballistic missiles in Iran, all in connection with the aggressive rhetoric of the leaders of these countries, can not remain without an adequate response.<sup>5</sup>

Although the Iranian threat has been ranked by some media sources as one of the three biggest threats in 2009, in spite of the fact that the Iranian leadership have not backed down from developing Iran's nuclear and missile program, we could say that the Czech Republic is much more interested in the Russian potential dangers than the risks associated with Iran and other radical Middle East states, even if this view is mainly associated with right-wing politicians.

Reducing the fear of the 'Iranian threat' was perceived by the opposition as an effective course of action against the establishment of the radar base, which has been refused by the majority of potential voters of these parties. A significant role was played by the dichotomy of extreme anti-Americanism and Russophobia that prevailed in the pacifist Czech environment. These factors had little effect on the concrete and more factual assessment of the topic.

Another conflictual issue against the background of the rivalry of the right and the left wing parties was the Czech stance to the radical states that the Bush administration listed under the categories of 'rogue states' and the 'axis' of Atlanticists of the ODS, the Christian Democrats and supporters of smaller right-wing parties consistently advocated on various occasions the political isolation of these countries and criticised any incoherent attitude of the left as a betrayal of the Czech Republic's allied solidarity with the USA, NATO or Israel.

Since 2007, the opposition's efforts were concentrated on the early termination of the mission in Iraq, which was eventually fulfilled due to external reasons. The decisive factor was the lack of interest of the Iraqi government and the reluctance of the allies to engage in the mission under difficult circumstances. The particularly crucial decision of the Obama administration to hasten the departure of U.S. troops from Iraq by the end of 2011 played a key role. Along these same lines, in February 2009, the Czech Republic finally ended its military commitment in Iraq after nearly six years of its presence there. Its attention was shifted to the Czech presence in Afghanistan.

The ČSSD and the ODS originally had irreconcilable positions on the issue of the deployment of the Czech mission in Afghanistan, but they came to a partial agreement after the onset of President Obama. In November 2009 the MFA submitted a document entitled 'Perspectives of the ČR's participation in stabilising Afghanistan for the period 2010–2012', which recommended focusing on five key areas of the Czech operations in the country: building institutions, promoting good governance and rule of law, reconstruction, development and strengthening security. The main target of the assistance of the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) should again be the province of Logar. The Foreign Ministry pledged to seek an increase in aid to 100 million crowns for the period 2010–2011 even in the event of anticipated budget cuts. Mili-

tary involvement should remain at least at the level approved by the Parliament of the ČR in 2009 and focus on training Afghan security forces.<sup>6</sup>

A part of the Czech right, particularly the conservative wing, has had a critical attitude towards Islam. Especially the conservative right has expressed strong reservations towards multiculturalism, which was deemed by them to be an irrational figment of the European New Left and the NGO sector that distorts the integrity of Europe. Concerns about the possible immigration of Muslims as EU citizens to the ČR have appeared because they are under no obligation to know the Czech language under the new asylum law. About eleven thousand members of the Islamic community had an interest in a dialogue with the Czech non-Muslim society, an interest that was mainly made evident on web servers. The Muslims expected that the majority society would accept them, but the Czechs are generally suspicious of foreigners and expatriates. Under the influence of the negative stereotypes spread by the Czech media, the Czechs had a fear of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism, as demonstrated by the STEM agency studies in 2007.<sup>7</sup>

A public opinion research conducted after the bloody attacks in the U.S. on 11. 9. 2001 and a series of attacks in Europe has shown that the Czech public has a great fear of terrorism connected with Arabs or Muslims (although the fear of non-Arab Muslims is rather subconscious). The National Action Plan against Terrorism for 2005–2007 warned that the risk of a terrorist attack against a foreign state or the interests of the ČR abroad could be closely linked to foreign policy.<sup>8</sup> The risk of a terrorist attack in the ČR was not directly under the assessment of the policy of the Department for Organised Crime (ÚOOZ), but it is quite fair to assume that the ČR still risks terrorist attacks to some extent with regard to the Czech participation in certain missions, the ČR's participation in the counter-terrorism alliance and the Czech EU presidency. The ČR could be transformed into a secure 'logistic base' for terrorists, as stated in the annual report of ÚOOZ in 2008.<sup>9</sup> The National Security Council also warned of the threat of Islamic fundamentalism and its links to organised crime.<sup>10</sup> The Annual Report of the ÚOOZ only caught the transit of people suspected of terrorism across the Czech territory, where they were given conscious or unconscious assistance (e.g. visas). However, a reason that was frequently given for visits by extremists was that they sought treatment at the spas in Karlovy Vary and Teplice. The main security threat was from the radical Muslim communities in foreign countries, as alleged in a report by BIS in 2006, i.e. not from the Czech Muslim community, which is mostly moderate.

## **THE MIDDLE EAST, MEDITERRANEAN AND AFGHANISTAN IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: AGENDA AND EVENTS**

The foreign policy towards the Middle East and the Mediterranean during the examined period was not very active, as proposed by the mentioned concept in 2006, but it rather responded to stimuli coming from the conflicted region, the EU, the U.S., the UN, and Israel. The opposition Social Democrats accused Topolánek's government of ignoring the Arab countries and the Barcelona Process. Attention to the

region increased during the Czech presidency of the EU, which was reflected in the personal and conceptual areas.

During the Czech presidency, the Czech foreign policy in relation to the Middle East and the Mediterranean has been forced to provide a much better account of the needs of the common foreign and security policy and strategic interests, especially those of the southern European member states. The reactive and rather passive approach of previous years was replaced by a more active interest in the region and the search for a consensual EU position on key issues. This strategy failed in the event of the crisis in Gaza. The governmental perception of security risks related directly or indirectly to the region and was based on the said Military Strategy, but as a way to immediately respond to potential threats, it had undergone changes owing to several factors. With the advent of the Obama administration, there was a convergence of European-American attitudes. The members of Topolánek's government then less frequently invoked and stressed the need for transatlantic solidarity in discussions with the opposition.

Due to the lack of interest of U.S. officials in the Middle East issue in the early months of 2009, the EU and the Czech Presidency had to take more responsibility for security in the region. The ČR's lower level of experience and limited interests in the region forced the Topolánek government to rely more on the support of influential interested EU countries, such as France, Spain, Germany and Sweden. A part of the agenda of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership was undertaken with the Franco-Egyptian duo, which presided over the Union for the Mediterranean. There were also common plans for the Czech presidency in the framework of the EU Troika level. The Czech MFA prepared in advance schedules of activities envisaged in the Middle East and the Mediterranean. They had to continually adapt to ad hoc tasks, and some were also canceled due to the crisis in Gaza. Neither Topolánek's nor Fisher's governments developed any concept of Czech foreign policy which could be coordinated with the pan-European position. The Czech MFA only issued a publication dealing with the Czech perspective of participation in the stabilisation of Afghanistan for the period 2010–2012.<sup>11</sup> ČR activities under the ISAF (NATO) focus on three areas: support for deployed forces, building Afghan security forces and the deployment of the contingent called the 601<sup>st</sup> Special Forces Group. Only the January crisis over Russian gas supplies speeded up the adoption of the first measures in favour of the Nabucco pipeline, which was to allow deliveries of gas from the Middle East.

The fall of Topolánek's government during the Czech EU presidency was not so much due to differences with the opposition on foreign policy approaches, but it was accelerated mainly by the calculus of the internal situation. Only Gaza and the overly pro-Israeli attitudes during the Gaza crisis were declared by the leadership of the ČSSD as symptoms of the failure of the presidency. In all other matters, the rate of discrepancies in 2009 was lower than that of the previous year, but this was not due to the changing views of the two principal political rivals in regard to the issues at stake, but to their taking into account the larger pan-European attitudes. For example, in 2009, the leaderships of both the ODS and the Social Democrats have refused to allow the Dutch anti-Islamist G. Wilders to deliver a speech in the Senate. Another

possible reason could be the government's pragmatically justified need to consult problems of the Afghan mission with the opposition, as there were concerns about the recurrence of Social Democratic obstruction. The less emphasised threat of Iran signaled the ODS's disappointment with the repeal of the U.S. radar base construction and the role traditionally played by the EU's cautious approach towards Tehran. The above information shows that during the presidency, the attitudes of the ruling ODS showed signs of Europeanisation, and the potentially anti-American attitudes of the Social Democrats were weakened after President Obama took the office. Both factors reduce the intensity of the conflicts in the evaluation of the Middle East problems. However, the positions of both parties remained utterly different, in particular on the question of future missions in Afghanistan and the evaluation approaches to balancing the Middle East conflict.

The interest of the Fischer caretaker government, which took office on 8. 5. 2009, in the Middle East and Mediterranean issues was small and confined to economic, humanitarian and a contractual matters. Career diplomat J. Kohout (ČSSD), who became the head of the Foreign Ministry, has successfully reduced the impact of domestic political conflicts in the Czech Middle East policy. The government made efforts to seek the maximum understanding of the main political currents and continuity of the strategy of the Czech presidency. It can be concluded that with the exception of a few months of the Czech presidency and the short term Fischer government, the Czech scene was sharply polarised on the left-right axis, which was reflected most markedly and continuously in the following contentious topics.

### ***The Middle East Conflict and the Palestinian Question***

Some influential politicians from the ODS/Topolánek government, mainly from the ODS, sympathised with the position of the pro-Israeli and conservative Bush administration, but they also had to take into account the decision of the so-called Quartet of powers, in which the EU held a significant position. In practice, the emphasis was on promoting all-round cooperation with Israel and moderate Arab political circles, which were ranked as follows: Jordan, Egypt, GCC countries, and President Abbas and Fayyad's autonomous Palestinian government. The Topolánek government has begun to clearly defend Israeli security interests within the EU and NATO and used various political channels for these purposes – e.g. the Czech presidency of the EU, the NATO contact embassy in Israel and NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue. Prime Minister Topolánek, in one of his speeches, said that Israel is a holder of Western civilisation's values as much as the ČR, as Israel advocates freedom and democracy in a region where they do not have an easy life. Thus support for 'Israel's struggle for survival' been expressed.<sup>12</sup>

The declared balancing tactics of the Topolánek's government were undermined by the Israeli invasion of Gaza. After that followed the Arab and Muslim world protests and the harsh EU criticism of the IDF's inhumane approach to civilians. The statement of Prime Minister Topolánek's spokesman about the nature of the Israeli operation, which he identified as defensive, not offensive<sup>13</sup>, certainly reflected the con-

tent of unofficial observations of some government politicians who sympathised with Israel in the media. This statement provoked much criticism from both the Palestinian side and many EU countries. The spokesman's formulation was immediately rejected in the statement of the government and branded a serious mistake.<sup>14</sup> The event has temporarily complicated the ČR's relations with some Arab countries.

The government's attitude to the events in Gaza has been criticised by the opposition, the media and some NGOs as a fundamental departure from the traditional balanced position. The government apologised for the relative failure of Schwarzenberg's EU mission and mentioned the tense situation in the Middle East and the extreme antipathy of both sides to the conflict. According to Jan Hamáček, the Chairman of the Foreign Committee of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament, the Czech diplomacy as a mediator was handicapped by its pro-Israeli attitude. Schwarzenberg's mission had no predetermined goal. The delegation, unlike Sarkozy's mission, did not engage in dialogue with all the relevant partners, especially Syria, although the Hamas leadership in exile was located. The sole culprit was identified as the Islamists from Hamas, but this evaluation was rejected by Arabs. The diplomacy focused solely on humanitarian assistance to Palestinians, but there was no clear vision for a peaceful solution. The Gaza event, according to Hamáček, revealed that the Czech politics was not free from double standards.<sup>15</sup>

The Czech Republic and the Netherlands were the two main opponents of conditioning the quality of the relations with Israel by the positive development of the Middle East peace process, while on the contrary, Belgium, Ireland and Greece were in favour of the condition. Topolánek and the Italian foreign minister asserted that the improvement of the EU-Israel relations should take place regardless of the progress in the peace process.<sup>16</sup> The Czech Presidency was suspected of laxity and passivity, which indirectly impeded a criminal investigation of the Israeli army during and after the operation and allegedly encouraged the continuity of the military operation. The proof of this was the position of the Czech Republic to the so-called Goldstone report, which summarised the results of the UN investigation of the 'Cast Lead' operation. The UN General Assembly subsequently emphatically agreed to the recommendations in the document. However, the Czech Republic was among the 18 countries that voted against this report.<sup>17</sup> The ČR turned a blind eye to the violations of international law during the conflict in Gaza, according to the director of the Czech branch of Amnesty International in Prague, D. van der Horst, which did not allow the EU to take a united stand.<sup>18</sup>

In the second half of the presidency a summit between EU leaders and Israel in Prague was planned. It should have contributed to the promotion of relations between the EU and Israel. However, due to the nature and consequences of 'Operation Cast Lead' this step was postponed. Czech Republic promoted the enhancement of the relations after the end of the military operations, and only after the change of the government was there a reassessment of the positions. In June there was a 'freeze' of the process of promotion of relations from the EU side due to the human rights situation.

### ***U.S. Missile Defense in Central Europe***

Another area of disagreement between the opposition and the government was the evaluation of the so-called Iranian threat in the context of building the U.S. missile defense system in the Czech Republic and Poland. A U.S. Intelligence Report (NIE) in 2007 confirmed that Iran's military nuclear program had been finished in 2003. The NIE report encouraged the opposition to criticise the government's exaggeration of 'the Iranian nuclear threat'. The Shadow Foreign Secretary of the ČSSD Lubomír Zorálek argued that the main threat was terrorism, not Iran. He expressed surprise that the Czech government had completely ignored the NIE report and the facts mentioned therein. Foreign Minister K. Schwarzenberg nevertheless advocated the deployment of the U.S. missile defense system in the ČR, claiming that the system will not only focus on the carrier rocket with a nuclear warhead, which Iran did not possess, but also on chemical and nuclear warheads of missiles. According to him, although Iran did not represent an immediate threat, it could become one in the future because it refused to adequately explain its nuclear program specialisation to the IAEA inspectors.<sup>19</sup> He said that he was very committed to ensuring that all issues related to Iran would be dealt with through diplomatic channels or intense talks, a view that was maintained by most Czech politicians regardless of party affiliation.<sup>20</sup>

The ČSSD was very skeptical of the possible real existence of evidence of an Iranian threat.<sup>21</sup> Iran, in its view, did not possess the intercontinental ballistic missiles and warheads that it would need to be a huge threat. American missiles would not protect Europe because in this case the American defense would be positioned closer to the hotbed of the threat – i.e. Iran. It was not clear when Iran would actually be able to produce ballistic long-range missiles equipped with nuclear warheads because there was a large variance in time estimates and in the information provided by the U.S., NATO and various experts.<sup>22</sup> Many opposition politicians increasingly presented the view that the radar would be aimed at monitoring Russian strategic bases and that the highlighting of the Iranian threat was only a cover-up. In this context, the opposition criticised the new Military Strategy of 2008, which advocated a defense against ballistic missiles.<sup>23</sup>

Discussions on this issue escalated after the onset of President Obama, who began to question the immediacy of the Iranian threat and the need for missile defense deployment in Central Europe. In July 2009 a group of Czech Atlantists, among whom was the former president Václav Havel, sent an open letter to Obama in which they sought confirmation of the existing safeguards for Central Europe in relation to the construction of the planned missile defense. This document brought a further split between ex-president Havel and ČSSD Chairman Jiří Paroubek, who, in a personal letter, accused Havel of attempting to divide Europe and the world. According to Paroubek, the letter to Obama supported a return to the world of confrontation, which had resulted in the two military conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq that were unleashed during the Bush presidency.<sup>24</sup> The Letter of the Atlantists mobilised supporters of conservative policies who argued that Iran is a threat not only in the ČR but also in the U.S.

The ČSSD evaluated the U.S. move as a victory for the majority of citizens of the ČR. The Iranian Embassy in Prague had a similar standpoint and saw the decision as

a confirmation of the absence of the Iranian threat.<sup>25</sup> Czech Atlanticists did not consider the decision as final and most of them believed that it would be reappraised after the U.S. talks with Iran and Russia end in an impasse.<sup>26</sup>

### *Different Attitudes Toward 'Rogue States'*

Members of the ODS and the smaller right-wing parties refused to meet with an official Iranian delegation in October 2007, arguing that Iran denies Israel's right to exist and that it questioned the Holocaust. The Social Democratic and Communist opposition, on the other hand, did not have trouble dealing with the Iranians, although each party reported different reasons for this ease in the relations. Jan Hamáček, the Chairman of the Foreign Committee of the Lower House of the Czech Parliament (ČSSD), defended the visit by saying that probing Iran's position would be helpful with regard to the Czech EU presidency. Similar arguments were raised by the ministers of foreign affairs and interior. Helena Bambasová, a deputy of the Foreign Ministry, promised promotion of the Czech diplomatic representation in Iran at the level of ambassadors during her mission in Teheran in June 2007. The Communist leader V. Filip expressed willingness to negotiate with Iran as an expression of solidarity with a country that has been subjected to intense American pressure.

Topolánek's government condemned the unofficial visit of the Social Democratic Party delegation led by Chairman Paroubek in Syria in February 2008, insisting that the mission was in contradiction with the official foreign policy stance. The journey to Syria allegedly undermined the EU and the trans-Atlantic allies' strategy toward a radical country that supported the terrorist organisation Hamas, created instability in Lebanon, had good relations with Iran and is engaged in extreme policy towards Israel. The ČSSD has also been criticised for dealing with the Syrian Baath Party, which advocated an extreme position and dominated the totalitarian system. Prime Minister Topolánek described the visit as an unwelcome initiative of the Social Democrats that was in conflict with foreign policy strategies of the government and contrary to the foreign policy of the government. He refused the Social Democratic opposition to self-realised independent foreign political activities, which ought to be reserved only for the government.

The Social Democrats rejected the limited sovereignty in foreign policy areas. According to them, their visit was not secret because it was consulted with the Foreign Ministry and also funded by the state. The visit could not undermine the common EU attitude because Damascus was involved in the Barcelona process and visited by the leading EU politicians, including Czech representatives. Paroubek said he urged the Syrian leadership to take humanitarian action in relation to Syrian dissidents.<sup>27</sup>

It was evident that different political parties had different opinions in relation to post-war Iraq. At the end of 2006 the ODS strongly condemned the Iraqi-Czech citizens' 'initiative' Call for Iraq, in which the ČSSD was engaged. The ODS criticised the alleged involvement of exiled Iraqis who were associated with the regime of S. Hussein. They disagreed with the actions of the Iraqi government through the embassy. The main aim of the campaign was rather to discredit the competitive Social Democratic action since the United States in 2007 agreed with the involvement of

a Baathist who did not belong to the inner political and kinship circle of S. Hussein in the political life and criticised the Iraqi government for sectarian attitudes. Discussions on this issue stopped in the wake of the Obama administration taking office. Obama has not insisted on a strict isolation of countries that sponsored terrorism and expressed his willingness to negotiate without preconditions with Iran and Syria.

### *The Attitude Towards Peacekeeping Missions in Iraq and Afghanistan*

The tumultuous political debate about the continuation or termination of the civil-military missions in Iraq and Afghanistan was carried out annually in Parliament. Topolánek's ODS and the government advocated the strengthening of the civilian and military presence in Afghanistan. The ODS expressed its longstanding position on the mission in the document 'Vision 2020' which was published in 2009. Active participation in missions was recognised as an effective way of ensuring the security of the ČR and its allies. The objective of the defense policy was to face the threat of global terrorism by sending troops into risk points within the international community's efforts and under NATO, the EU and the UN.<sup>28</sup> Social Democrats have traditionally had reservations about a direct military engagement and maximally tolerated the training of local security forces by Czech instructors. In July 2009, the Orange Book of the ČSSD foreign policy, written in 2009 by Shadow Foreign Secretary L. Zaorálek cleared up their position.<sup>29</sup> The ČSSD promised to support only the participation in foreign military missions with realistically attainable and meaningful goals agreed at the international level. In the case of the mission in Afghanistan it was necessary to change the overall focus of the mission. The solution should be sought together with other key countries, such as Pakistan, China, Iran and Russia. The civil, socio-economic reconstruction on the basis of an agreement with the Afghan national team should also be strengthened. It is also necessary to prepare the exit strategy for the Czech troops in Afghanistan. The Social Democrats were not clear about the exact meaning and purpose of the missions, which have not been able to ensure stability and security under difficult conditions. They accused the government of being unable to initiate a discussion on possible peaceful solutions. The activation of the Islamist resistance and the mounting heavy losses, which did not spare the Czech contingent, confirmed the traditional concerns of the ČSSD about the worsening security situation. Their criticism has been aimed at the large military force in comparison with the small civilian components, the small geographic concentration of the mission and the lack of total assistance. The Ministry of Defence, according to the ČSSD, did not take into account the duty of detaching Czech soldiers for combat readiness groups of the EU, which most likely limited the Czech involvement in missions.

The position of the Social Democrats underwent some changes in 2009. If the Social Democrats refused to vote in Parliament to increase the mission in Afghanistan in 2008, they were more open to finding a solution a year later, although their basic position on the mission had not changed. In February 2009, the mission plan was approved after the ČSSD Parliament deputies lifted the ban on promoting the mission in Parliament. 480 troops and a hundred soldiers of the Prostějov elite group of special forces to combat terrorists as a part of the ISAF should now be deployed in Afghanistan.



In October 2009 the ČSSD and the ODS agreed to preliminarily approve the mission for two years in advance to avoid obstructions. The strategic long term aim of the ČSSD, submitted as part of its own proposal to reduce the budget deficit, was not to increase the number of troops in foreign missions of the ČR.

### ***Islam and The debate on Multiculturalism***

A critical approach to Islam was apparent in the ČR. Prime Minister Topolánek said that Islamic collectivism was a threat to Western individualism like other collectivist ideologies (communism, fascism, Maoism, Kimirsensism).<sup>30</sup> The nationalist right has criticised the people of ex-president Havel's circle since they actively supported the Spanish-Turkish project of the Alliance of Civilizations initiative, which was adopted in 2008 by the Czech government and was aimed at promoting an understanding of both the Islamic and the Western world. They identified initiatives such as the new project Eurabia, which is focused on the creeping Islamisation of Europe.<sup>31</sup> Anti-Islamist activists also spoke out against the building of a new mosque in Brno. On the other hand, the government and the opposition, perhaps with the exception of the Christian Democrats of the KDU-ČSL, supported the Turkish EU membership. Prime Minister Topolánek, during a speech at Ankara University, highly praised the Turkish model state based on state secularism and a moderate form of Islam.<sup>32</sup>

The opposition Social Democrats have scolded the Topolánek government for its dismissive attitude to multiculturalism. The ODS have been criticised for their alleged view of multiculturalism as a security risk in the context of increasing migration, which is associated with negative phenomena such as terrorism, drugs, people smuggling and organised crime.<sup>33</sup> Materials and reports of the intelligence service (BIS), the Interior Ministry and other government institutions did not mention that during the years 2007–2009, there was no significant increase in militancy and calls for violence from Czech Muslims. The 2008 BIS report stated that the BIS could not find any Muslim in the Czech Republic who could be proved to be an Islamic radical or a person with ties to the jihad fighters. Muslim organisations in the ČR have acted in moderation and no suspicious financial transactions<sup>34</sup> were recognised on their part.

In 2008 it was confirmed that the campaign against Islam had a pan-European character, and some politicians and religions consciously or unconsciously participated in it. The Czech archbishop Miloslav Vlk warned against the growing influence of Islam, which, according to him, remained in the Middle Ages in its culture and opinions. European thinking is based on the Greco-Roman culture and embodies values other than those of Islamic civilisation. The cause of the increasing role of Islam symbolised, in his view, the crisis of the European identity, and correspondingly he called for a spiritual renewal of Christianity.<sup>35</sup> Extremists interpreted his words as a call for confrontation, but the Archbishop embraced the view that an intensive dialogue between Christianity and Islam is needed. He argued that the Christian world was much more open to Islam than the Muslim world to Christianity.

In November 2009 the Dutch opponent of Islam G. Wilders was invited by a right wing senator to deliver a speech at the Senate. Wilders and his Czech supporters joined together to resist the Lisbon Treaty, which made it so that changes in the im-

migration policy would be decided on through majority voting, which could reportedly lead to an Islamisation of the ČR. The two biggest Czech political parties, the ČSSD and the ODS, as well as the other parties, sharply refused his presence at the Parliament, referring to his flat, simplistic connecting of Islam with terrorism and his incitement to religious hatred in his film *Fitna*. Though Wilders did not even come to Prague in the end, the related attacks against Brno and Prague's small Muslim communities continued (pasting derogatory posters, threats, attempts to desecrate mosques, etc.). The most serious offence was the putting up of the Danish cartoons insulting the Prophet Muhammad in public places in Prague and Brno, which was condemned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The anti-immigrant and ultra-right-wing National Party was the most active in this sense. In the same year the number of crimes with anti-Semitic overtones was twice the number of such crimes in 2008 in both the ČR and other EU states. Czechs started believing that foreigners were a problem because of their helping to increase crime and unemployment, as was shown by surveys of the Public Opinion Research Centre in 2009.<sup>36</sup>

### ***Approaches to Terrorism and Extremism***

Discussions on terrorism took place very often over the last five years owing to the greater sense of threat. In 2008, they were conducted in the context of the following major events: the war in Gaza, which dealt with the countries that allegedly support terrorism (Syria, Iran), the mission in Afghanistan, and the U.S. radar. The ODS and the government insisted that the fight against terrorism could include both the forceful elimination of terrorism and the parallel improvement of the economic and social conditions of the population. The ČSSD again put the emphasis on prevention of terrorism and the external isolation of areas contaminated by terrorism.<sup>37</sup>

The position of the Czech political scene toward the issue of terrorism has been tested in its response to a meeting of the European Parliamentary Peace Mission led by M. Vlček (ČSSD), the chairman of the Chamber of Deputies, with representatives of the Hamas Islamists in Gaza. President of the Senate P. Sobotka described the event as a gross violation of both the Czech and the European foreign policy because Hamas was on the blacklists of terrorist organisations in the EU and the U.S. The Greens and the Christian Democrats have also reacted very negatively to the meeting. The Foreign Ministry has imposed the following conditions for the normalisation of relations with Hamas: stopping terrorist actions against Israel, official recognition of the Israeli state, and a positive attitude towards the peace process on the basis of key documents. The conditions were similar to those that had been accepted by the Quartet. Some EU members sought to mitigate the conditions for the participation of Hamas in the government of national unity. They promoted only an implicit recognition of the three Quartet conditions by Hamas or even their recognition by only those Hamas members who participated in the Palestinian government, i.e. not the entire movement. The Czech and the Dutch diplomacy stand out strongly against a similar deviation from the agreed-upon rules of the Quartet.<sup>38</sup> M. Abbas, the Palestinian President, during the February meeting with his Czech counterpart, described Hamas as a part of the Palestinian people and made clear his intention to invite them into the future na-

tional unity government, which was acknowledged by the Czech head of diplomacy as a legitimate step.<sup>39</sup> The integration of Hamas into the government was supported by Egypt, and Israel secretly treated with Hamas.<sup>40</sup> Arab countries considered Hamas as a legitimate national-liberation movement, even though some of them sharply criticised Hamas activities and approaches. Many European parliamentary delegations dealt with Hamas in 2009 (those of France, the United Kingdom, Sweden, the Netherlands, the USA and three other unidentified European countries).<sup>41</sup>

The lobbying activity of the 'Friends of Free Iran' (an organisation that includes two Czech MPs), which has been running from 2007 at the level of the European Parliament, has been carried out successfully. The leftist People's Mujahideen Organization (PMOI), which had fought against the Iranian regime with weapons in hand until 2001, was removed from the European blacklist of terrorist groups in 2009. Representatives of the National Council for Resistance in Iran, who also represented the People's Mujahideen Organization, visited Prague in late January 2009 to lobby the new EU presidency country, which had had 'bitter experience with the "Munich appeasement".' Deputy Prime Minister Vondra justified removing them by a previous EU court decision, but he considered their removal to be temporary, as their status could change at any time in the future as new arguments would be presented.<sup>42</sup> The ČSSD-ODS contradictions in this case were obliterated, and the Social Democrat MP Jiří Havel (ČSSD) acknowledged that the organisation had been wrongly placed on the EU list.

### *The Czech EU Presidency*

The Middle East and Mediterranean countries traditionally did not belong among the priorities of the Czech foreign policy, but the eighteen month program of the Council, which was drawn up in June 2008 by the French, Czech and Swedish Presidencies, devoted great attention to the regions.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, the Czech presidency was not too concerned with these troubled regions and preferred the eastern dimension of the ENP and in particular the Western Balkans. As for the MENA region, only one of the three priorities under the Presidency program 3E – i.e. energy security – related to this region. Prime Minister Topolánek, who was counted as a strict Atlantist, declared at the beginning of the presidency that he would place emphasis on intensive dialogue with representatives of the new U.S. administration in key areas, which included cooperation with third countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan and Middle East countries.<sup>44</sup> He has also expressed interest in the Czech presidency's handling of the southern dimension of the CFSP, in particular in the strengthening of EU-Israel relations and the peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Middle East.

In November 2008, the Foreign Ministry planned many activities for the area, but it only managed to push through some of them due to the escalation of the conflict in Gaza. Some complications in the ČR's relations with Arab countries, Iran and some European countries were caused by the Czech initiative for the convening of the EU-Israel summit and the ČR's incorrect assessment of the Israeli onslaught on Gaza. Paris tried to control or at least influence the orientation of the Czech Presidency in this field, as it did during the preceding Slovenian EU presidency, but these attempts

were not always accepted by the Czech Republic without reservations. The United Kingdom and Sweden similarly tried to support the Czech Presidency. The advisory role of the Republic of Germany was highly appreciated because it helped the ČR to effectively avoid the confusion that other European countries faced and find solutions to some urgent Middle East problems. The crisis in Gaza and the following pressures from some European countries and the European Parliament resulted in the postponement of the EU-Israel summit, which had been called the priority in the Middle East. The Middle East peace process reached an impasse during the Czech presidency owing to the domestic and regional political situation. The only significant activity during the presidency was Schwarzenberg's EU mission, which did not achieve its objectives. The Czech Presidency has sought, in relation to the Middle East conflict, the EU's maximum contribution to solving major problems, while avoiding damaging its relations with Israel. The ČR was focused on humanitarian issues in the first phase, and later on the political, i.e. finding ways of dealing with the Middle East conflict in cooperation with the other members of the Quartet. The main efforts were focused on the Israeli settlement activity, particularly in East Jerusalem and other occupied territories. The aim was achieved by opening the Gaza border crossings. Although support was declared for the Palestinian national reconciliation, the regional turmoil and the negative internal reaction to the EU parliamentary delegation meeting with members of Hamas and Fath challenged the declared aim. Other activities were planned in advance of the Czech presidency. Specifically one could mention the Middle East summit and the reconstruction conference in Sharm ash-Sheikh; a Brussels meeting of the EU-27 with selected Arab countries, the Palestinian Authority, Turkey and Israel; the Quartet meeting in Trieste; the Jordan-EU summit; and the Troika meeting with Middle East leaders. The preparation of the Association Council meetings could be assessed as common routine work. Contrary to expectations, the discussion failed to enforce the new Action Plan of the EU-Israel Council on this agenda and complicated the Czech relations with the EC. The Presidency, together with the EC, only submitted the extensions of the current Action Plan to Israel. The Association Council expressed its readiness to advance the EU-Israel relations only with regard to the state of the peace process. The Presidency issued a statement on the presidential elections in Iran on 12 June, including the EU's concern about the 'unfair practices during the election process'. At the same time it expressed hope 'that the outcome of the presidential election will bring an opportunity to resume dialogue on nuclear issues and clarify Iran's position in this regard'.<sup>45</sup> During the Presidency the Czech Republic's traditional status as a consistent defender of human rights was confirmed only in part because the ČR was not able to respond to the human rights violations during the Israeli invasion of Gaza. The ČR managed to reach a decision on this issue during its Presidency of the EU. This decision allowed EU Member States to accept former prisoners from Guantanamo. The ČR proved to be a good mediator, although in April 2009, the Interior Minister rejected a U.S. request for the ČR to admit the Middle Eastern detainees from Guantanamo who did not receive their sentence yet.

### *The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership*

The Czech attitude towards the Barcelona process has long been reserved. Its interest in the area under the Barcelona process became greater due to the following factors: EU membership, the creation of the Schengen border, the threat of terrorist attacks, and the activation of Islamist movements and efforts to remove the one-sided dependence on Russian oil and gas. The Czech government clearly preferred the eastern dimension of the EU Neighbourhood Policy, even if this preference was simultaneously connected to the Czech understanding for the interests of the European Mediterranean countries, which have been traditionally oriented toward the southern dimension. The most important event in this respect was the heads of government meeting in Paris in 2009, during which the Union for the Mediterranean was approved. The Czech government has taken a cautious stance to the meeting, which was similar to Germany's stance to it. The Czech government disagreed that the new institution became the exclusive domain of countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea and that it could be isolated from the rest of Europe, although it was dependent on EU funding. The aim was to ensure that the new structure did not prevent the new EU enlargement eastwards and to the preferred Balkan area. The ČR, on the other hand, also supported the extension of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership of Mauritania and Albania.

Moreover, after the events in Gaza, Arab countries have begun to ignore the Union for the Mediterranean. The Czech Presidency strove to formulate a unified EU position on the status of the Secretariat of the Union and bring it into line with the ideas of Egypt, which, along with France, presided over the Union for the Mediterranean. The Presidency also managed to hold two major events – the Ministerial Conference on Sustainable Development in Paris and the meetings devoted to the civil protection of the Union for the Mediterranean in Marseille, which started the process of cooperation in these two new areas.

The ČR was involved in the dialogue between NATO and the southern Mediterranean countries (MED NATO), which was started in 1995. In 2008, the key document entitled 'Measures for cooperation with Mediterranean countries' was prepared. This project was financially very expensive and it was also complicated in terms of time, and therefore the ČR advocated austere budget measures. As a result of the ČR's close ties to Israel, pronounced Czech efforts to strengthen and deepen the dialogue in areas such as 'public diplomacy' became manifest. The ČR belonged to the followers of a pragmatic and flexible cooperation, which should be tailored to the specific needs of partner countries as well as to the Alliance itself. In this spirit and with these intentions, the Czech NATO contact embassy worked in Israel. The ČR was politically interested in the closest possible relations with the Alliance of the Mediterranean countries, and thus it supported the so-called Liaison Arrangement, which was the name of a program aimed at setting up offices in the NATO headquarters in Mediterranean countries, strengthening the public diplomacy section and increasing the role of contact embassies.

### ***Economic Cooperation***

Trade statistics demonstrated the growing trade turnover in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) compared to previous years, and a favorable trade balance was also present irrespective of the reduced performance of the economy. This trend was probably connected with the larger interest of Czech exporters in nearby non-European markets, but also with greater support for exports to these areas by the state. In the case of the Maghreb and Egypt, there has been a growing interest in this area due to the significant reduction in the tariff barriers to trade in the context of creating the Euro-Med free trade area, which should have originally been created in 2010. In Iraq and Iran relatively progressive investment laws were adopted, which opened up space for Czech investors. The Czech Republic has managed to conclude an agreement preventing double taxation agreements with Syria and also agreements on the promotion and protection of investments with Yemen, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. The biggest commercial successes in the past three years have been achieved in countries with which trade stagnated in the past for different reasons, such as Algeria, Libya, Iraq and Iran. Since the ČR joined the EU in 2004, turnover of foreign trade rose significantly, which was reflected in the given territory as well. Growth was positively affected by reduced tariffs and the gradual liberalisation of trade in the Euro-Mediterranean region and the Gulf. Yet the Middle Eastern countries' share in the total Czech foreign trade has remained about the same or slightly stagnant, owing to the simultaneous growth in turnover in other key regions.

The total Czech exports to the MENA (excluding Turkey) and Afghanistan in the period 2007–2009 continued to rise, according to the sources of the Czech Statistical Office. In 2007, the round figure for the total exports was 1.89 billion USD, but in subsequent years it increased to 2.3 billion USD (2008) and 2.34 billion USD (2009). A positive feature was the highly positive trade balance, which grew dynamically from 1.27 billion USD (2007) to 1.67 billion USD (2008) and 1.87 billion (2009). It was obvious that Czech exporters, in the context of the economic-financial crisis and reducing demand in the EU, found a new outlet for their products and services. The major trading partners remain the UAE and Israel. Turnover with them averaged nearly 600 million U.S. dollars. In addition to this, trade with the UAE was marked by highly positive balances. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Algeria and, in 2009, Iraq and Iran were ranked among the countries where the trade turnover ranged from 0.1–0.2 billion USD.

In the past five years, most state financial claims to countries in the region have succeeded in resolving a cancellation or a transfer to private companies. The following countries had the largest civil debts in 2008: Sudan (1.93 million CZK), Iraq (1.34 million CZK) and Iran (0.84 million CZK). Also, Libya failed to pay its significant military debt.

### ***Diversification of Energy Sources***

During its EU presidency, the ČR supported the construction of the Nabucco pipeline, which reduced the nearly absolute Czech dependence on Russian gas.<sup>46</sup> The Russia-Ukraine dispute in early 2009 revealed the potential risks. Yet the project was dis-

rupted by the small interest of the key EU countries, the trade policy of the supplier countries and the safety risks of the region. During the meeting of the countries of the so-called Southern Corridor in Prague in 2009, the Czech Prime Minister promised in his speech that the Nabucco project had started the process of wider cooperation in the Middle East and the adjacent regions, which would not be limited to the energy field.<sup>47</sup> While the participants expressed support for the project, it is worth mentioning that the Middle East was represented only by Egypt and Turkey at the conference. The final decisions should be taken only in 2010.

### *Czech Foreign Aid*

Project countries, including the Palestinian territories, have been primarily funded by the MFA since 2009. Based on Government Resolution 801/2008, a total of 60 million CZK in assistance funds was allocated to the Palestinian Authority, which was included in the group of four priority countries that were deemed qualified for receiving long-term assistance. Assistance to the Palestinians was an instance of the traditional Czech interest in a balanced position to both of the actors in the conflict – i.e. Israel and the Palestinian administration. Palestinians highly appreciated the Czech power system project realised in the region Tubas, in which the ČR invested more than CZK 200 million over the past 15 years, and expressed considerable interest in further cooperation. Yemen was ranked among the top ten countries qualified for the direct Czech foreign aid on the basis of the Government Resolution of 2002 and 2004. It was decided that it would receive a quota of 6% of the total Czech foreign aid.<sup>48</sup> Although there was a program of development cooperation between the ČR and the Yemen Arab Republic for the period 2006–2010 that was focused on water and energy, it has not been implemented with regard to the lack of interest on the Yemeni side and the precarious security situation in the country.

## **THE MIDDLE EAST, MEDITERRANEAN AND AFGHANISTAN IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: IDENTIFICATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF KEY ACTORS**

The principal guarantee and coordinator of the Middle East and Mediterranean policy has unambiguously been the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). In connection with the presidency, although there was also the authority for the Office of Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs, headed by A. Vondra, but he left the southern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Barcelona process and the overall policy towards the Middle East in the competence of the MFA. K. Schwarzenberg was appointed Minister for the Green Party, although he was not a member of it. The Greens have traditionally pushed for some foreign policy issues related to the region: foreign aid, human rights, democracy and energy. The minister was of a conservative right-wing political orientation, so some contradictions between him and the Green Party membership existed mainly with regard to the installation of the US anti-missile radar in the ČR. But he was able to perform cross-party and occasionally take a pragmatic

opinion in relation to the Middle East and the Mediterranean. The career diplomat J. Kohout was appointed as Foreign Minister of the government of J. Fischer. He served for a long time as Permanent Representative of the ČR in the EU and was a member of the ČSSD. He was characterised by a pragmatic, non-ideological approach, but the Middle East did not belong to his preferred areas.

Alongside the foreign minister, other key roles were played by his deputies and the political director M. Povejšil. The First Deputy Minister T. Pojar was appointed as the ambassador to Israel in late 2009. H. Bambasová was then appointed as the new First Deputy Minister. The Director General of Non-European Countries and Development Cooperation J. Karfík, a former ambassador to Egypt, ran the Department of Middle East and North Africa, oversaw the development assistance and was responsible for the agenda of the Barcelona Process. At the end of 2009 he was appointed ambassador to the Slovak Republic and was replaced by Mr. Grepl. A. Slabý was appointed as a special envoy for Euromed in 2007. He was in charge of the ‘Mediterranean diplomacy’ and visited countries of the Mediterranean to explain to them the priorities of the upcoming Czech presidency. During the presidency a few interns and consultants from Germany helped him with the agenda. He attended a session of the Euro-Mediterranean Committee and participated in the preparation of the Ministerial Conference of Euromed and other events that took place during the presidency. Appointing the EUROMED envoy symbolised greater respect for the southern Euro-Mediterranean dimension of the EU’s CFSP. In September he was appointed ambassador to Tunisia, and the post of envoy for the Mediterranean remained vacant until the end of 2009.

The main coordinating center of the Czech Middle East and Mediterranean policy was the Middle East and North Africa department (BVA), whose director was J. Rychtar until September 2009. After that, T. Smetánka, an Arabist and former ambassador to China, was appointed as the new director. The BVA coordinated activities associated with the Barcelona Process. The BVA department and its subordinate working group COMED secured the work connected with the Barcelona Process. The Chief Coordinator for the Barcelona Process was P. Kobližka. Every two months he attended sessions of the Euro-Mediterranean Committee (the Euromed Committee). He oversaw the activities of the Anna Lindh Foundation for dialogue between cultures in the Mediterranean (ALF), which brought together a network of NGOs in 37 countries of the Euro-Mediterranean area. The Czech ALF network had been established at the Institute of International Relations.

The BVA department helped to ensure the functioning of the Czech embassies which were situated in the territory. The ČR had a relatively dense network of embassies in almost all Arab countries, Israel, and Iran, with the exception of some small Gulf states (Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman), Mauritania and Sudan. An important step was taken in 2007, when the restoration of the embassy in Afghanistan was realised. In 2008 Libya abolished its embassy in Prague. The Czech and the Iranian side agreed provisionally to reciprocal elevated diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level, but by the end of 2009 nothing happened in this respect.

The BVA closely cooperated with the different departments of the MFA that were responsible for the relevant agenda. In the economic field there was a cooperation be-



tween the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MPaO) and the Department of Bilateral Economic Relations (ODEV), which belonged to the organisational structure of the MFA. The MPaO conducted business and economic sections of embassies and Czech-Trade offices. Czech Centres affiliated to the MFA have been established in Dubai and Tel Aviv.

Other MFA departments also dealt with the Middle East agenda. The Department of Human Rights and Transformation Policy monitored human rights issues. At the time of the Presidency the role of the Political Director M. Povejšil increased as he cooperated with the European Troika. NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue has been entrusted to the Department of Security Policy (OBP). The Department EUPO2 was competent to handle the issue of energy self-sufficiency and strategies. The special envoy for energy security V. Bartuška was appointed as well. He became involved in negotiations aimed at finding alternative sources of energy, especially natural gas (the Nabucco pipeline) and coordinated his activities with the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs and various ministries, especially the MPaO. During the presidency a major consideration in the framework of the EU's CFSP was Gaza, and for this purpose the approval of the GAERC conclusions of the document on the Middle East peace process and the solution to the Gaza crisis at the COPS level was prepared and secured. The ČR also acted as an intermediary between the EC and Israel. The Mediterranean and Middle East policy was prepared by the policy section of external relations at the Permanent Mission of the ČR in Brussels, which was led by B. Fajkusová (during the Presidency) and M. Kaplan (since mid-2009). The specific agenda was dealt with in two working groups. One group dealt with the Middle East and the Gulf (MoG), and the second was responsible for the Maghreb and Mashreq region (MaMa).

The Middle Eastern and Mediterranean agenda was discussed at the level of the Czech Parliament. Discussions of deputies with representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Defence in the foreign and security committee the Chamber of Deputies concerning the Middle East topics were held regularly. Three members of the Czech parliament formed a permanent delegation in the Euromed Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA). The Chamber of Deputies created the Czech-Arab group headed by Communist MP V. Filip. There was also the Czech-Israeli group, which was the largest Middle East-related group of the Czech government.

Certain contradictions emerged during the Czech EU presidency. The Middle East Department insisted that the foreign minister visit both Israel and the Palestinian Occupied Territories during his December visit to the Middle East, while the Czech embassy in Israel did not recommend for him to visit the Palestinian territories. This shortage was overcome during the presidency, and further visits were carried out in both places. Yet in the second half of the year, Prime Minister Fischer left out his planned visit to the Palestinian territories during his official visit in Israel. The view that Israel has waged a defensive war in Gaza was presented at the Cabinet level and disseminated by the mass media on many occasions. Nevertheless the spokesman of the Prime Minister Jiří Potužník failed to understand that the debate on this view was only an internal debate, and unprofessionally and without consultation with the Foreign Ministry, he presented the view as an official position of the Czech Presidency. This ex-

ample showed ill-defined or rather misunderstood competencies. The MFA, and not the Office of the Government, must always be responsible for the country's foreign policy.

Another dispute arose between the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the type and level of enforcement of the EU-Israel summit. Both institutions agreed to that meeting in principle at the very beginning of the presidency. The Middle East Department of the MFA, immediately after the events in Gaza, advised the government not to put too much emphasis on this task, while Deputy Prime Minister Vondra insisted on the summit's implementation even during the Czech presidency, although this initiative has been condemned by some EU countries and it negatively complicated relations with Arab countries.

Both right and left political parties showed an interest especially in those issues that were most watched by the public and supported by their electoral base. Periodicals, radio and television were mostly focused on those attractive causes and scandals that would ensure high ratings or readerships. Also, conflictual topics have sometimes been pushed into the media space by different interest groups and lobbies for specific reasons. Most reports on the Middle East and the Mediterranean were taken over from foreign agencies and had the character of one-sided campaigns that lacked a deeper meaning. Among the most watched topics with ties to the region have been the following: Islamist terrorism, the Middle East conflict and the Palestinian issue, human rights, migration, negatively conceived and presented versions of Islam, foreign missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the 'Iranian threat' in the context of building a U.S. radar base in the ČR. Only minimal attention has been devoted to the Barcelona Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Muslims and/or Arabs in the Czech Republic complained about the rather pro-Israel and anti-Arab position of the Czech media that negatively affected public attitudes toward their community. The media have featured terms such as 'Islamic terrorism' or 'Palestinian terrorism', which generalised and simplified issues and helped in creating long-term negative stereotypes.

### **CZECH FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE MIDDLE EAST, THE MEDITERRANEAN AND AFGHANISTAN IN THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC SPACE**

The Czech media published the most fragmented, superficial, schematic and significantly negative references to Islam and Muslims, which, together with the low knowledge of Islam in the Czech society, helped to create negative stereotypes of Islam in it. A research project funded by the Global Development Network and CERGE-EI that was implemented in 2008–2009 has examined the perception of Islam in the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic.<sup>49</sup> The final outcome revealed relatively serious gaps in the knowledge of Islam among college students. Nevertheless the project found that two thirds of the respondents felt that a Muslim believer can live without major problems in Western society, and liberal views prevailed in relation to the construction of mosques.

In the past few years a network of web sites strongly criticising the so-called 'Islamization' of Europe and multiculturalism was created. They warned the public and politicians against Muslim immigration and the influence of Islam. Some websites hosted discussions on Islam, which often erupted into Islamophobic campaigns. They defended the Israeli policy and promoted the Christian-Jewish character of a Europe freed from Islam, which was seen as incompatible with Western values. The vehicles for these ideas were far-right currents (such as the National Party), conservative and religiously oriented right-wing groups and nationalist right-wing Zionists. The most famous sites of this sort were: *www.eurabia.cz*, *www.pravdaoislamu.cz*, *eurojihad.org*, *www.nebezpeci.info*, *www.cs-cr.cz*, and *www.euportal.cz*. As a result of the activities of Islamophobic extremists, the Muslim community started being more active. The Brno association Libertas Independent Agency was strongly involved in this matter. Other websites that were managed mostly by Muslims have been trying to disperse fears of Islam, and they have shown an interest in the integration of Muslims into the majority society. They usually avoided conflictual issues. The most famous sites of this sort were considered to be *www.bezczury.org*; *www.mesita.cz*; *svazmuslim.cz*. Munib Hassan ar-Rawi, the representative of the Muslim Foundation in Brno, which was elected in 2009 to lead the Czech Muslim community, declared himself as a supporter of the integration of Muslims in the Czech society. He promised that he would seek the acquaintance of his co-religionists with local customs.<sup>50</sup>

CVVM and STEM, considered as the most influential Czech Agencies for Public Opinion Research, continuously carried out authorised public opinion polls. The findings of their research confirmed that the Czechs had a strongly provincial way of thinking. In studies of the Public Opinion Research Centre in December 2006 and 2008, Czech respondents showed symptoms of a strong fear of terrorism (89% in 2008), which could be explained by the increased dissemination of information on this issue through the media. Far fewer people (11 and 18%) considered minorities and refugees as a threat, which was connected with the fact that most people had not been significantly confronted with this problem.<sup>51</sup> ČR still belonged among ethnically and culturally homogeneous national units, which was mainly due to the closed character of the country under the Communist governments. The media insufficiently informed about real life in the Middle East and Arab countries, but it was full of negative news on a subject that scared Czechs (terrorism, human rights abuses and a deficit of democracy in Islam, conflicts). The result was an aversion to nationals and ethnic and religious groups from the region. In a CVVM poll from 2007, Czechs evaluated Muslims, Palestinians, and Afghans very negatively, and their view of Israelis according was only slightly better. In January 2007, the Opinion Research Centre confirmed these findings. Similar results also appeared in a 2008 poll conducted by the STEM agency. Eight out of ten respondents rejected the idea of a Muslim neighbor. Arabs and Afghans were mostly associated with terrorism. In the CVVM studies from January 2008, Iraqis, Afghans and Palestinians had the most negative evaluations. The CVVM results from March 2008, on the contrary, revealed a high religious tolerance among the Czechs, which has increased since the early 90s by 20%, which was due, inter alia, to the very small percentage of religious believers in the ČR compared to

other EU countries. This trend was confirmed by the municipal elections in 2009, in which small parties with anti-Semitic, xenophobic or Islamophobic programs received very few votes. Also, the coexistence of the citizens of Prague and Brno with the Muslim community centered around the mosque was completely smooth.

We can say that the political elite and civil society showed little interest in Middle East issues in the course of the worsening socio-economic situation. The information published in the media had a biased character or was in the form of targeted campaigns. Small extremist groups that started to implement racist, anti-Semitic and Islamophobic activities exploited this situation.

## CONCLUSION

Czech attitudes toward the region became multilateralised after the ČR joined NATO. They grew even more multilateralised after the Czech EU membership, when there was a convergence of Czech and European positions within the CFSP and the CSDP.

The approaches to the problems of the region pursued by Topolánek's center-right government have been affected from the beginning by world-view positions which could be characterised by an emphasis on the strengthening of Euro-American relations, an enhanced role for the U.S.-led NATO, mistrust and a critical attitude towards the EU, unequivocal support for Israel's security interests, and consent for the isolation of radical regimes and forces in the Middle East. With the approaching of the Czech presidency and especially after the defeat of the conservatives in the U.S. election, there occurred a reversal of the government's previous categorical attitudes towards more flexibility. Minister Schwarzenberg, who was nominated by the Green Party, sought to reconcile American and European attitudes, but he largely failed to apply them in diplomatic practice. The foreign minister has been under constant pressure from the ODS Atlantists and pro-Israeli lobbyists and partly from Europeanists. The staffing structure of the MFA during the term of the Topolánek government has been reflected in the decision making process. The role of a pro-Israeli Atlantist performed by First Deputy T. Pojar was balanced by the appointment of the pragmatic Europeanist J. Kohout (ČSSD), who was nominated to the post of deputy minister. Another deputy post was secured by the more flexible H. Bambasová, who pursued a decisive but pragmatic approach in the Czech relations with Iran. Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs A. Vondra has been an unequivocal Atlantist, but the Middle East and Mediterranean politics was prepared by the MFA, with the possible exception of energy security. The Department for the Middle East and North Africa of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has advocated a balanced policy towards the Middle East. The Czech permanent representation in Brussels also prepared and evaluated the Mediterranean and Middle East agenda – mainly during the Czech Presidency. Two working groups were created for this purpose.

The government and the MFA showed an interest in issues of the Mediterranean dimension of the ENP only to the necessary extent. The primary concern was to maintain good relations – especially with South European member states of the EU for

which the Mediterranean was a priority. The proof of this position was Prime Minister Topolánek's absence at the Euro-Mediterranean Summit of Prime Ministers in Paris in 2008, which was attended only by Deputy Prime Minister A. Vondra. Appointing a special envoy and coordinator for the Mediterranean and strengthening the working groups in Brussels were probably forced steps that have been taken to ensure the smooth running of the Presidency in all segments of the CFSP. During the Czech Presidency of the EU, the Czech diplomacy realised that support for the Euro-Mediterranean partnership helped to create conditions for a better perception of Czech interests at the EU level in the eastern dimension of the ENP and also in relation to the Western Balkans. The Mediterranean dimension has been strengthened in the cultural field on the part of the non-governmental sector and civil society, including the Czech network of the Anna Lindh Foundation for dialogue between cultures in the Mediterranean Programme and the Alliance of Civilizations, which was an EU program that was adopted by the Czech government.

The term of balanced policy in relation to the Middle East has been accepted by all Czech governments since 1993 and was used primarily as a means of maintaining good links with both Israel and Arab states. A balanced policy was easier to implement in a period of an active peace process than in a period of heightened confrontation like the period from 2001 until the present. The center-right government preferred economic and humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian Authority and also full political and strategic support for Israel at all levels (i.e. EU, NATO, and UN), especially in its fight against Palestinian Islamist extremism and terrorism. The Israeli attack on Gaza in 2009, which caused an unusually high number of civilian casualties, has changed the attitudes of the EU countries. There was criticism of the Czech initiative for the convening of the EU-Israeli summit and the enhancement of EU-Israeli relations. The evaluation of the Israeli action as a defensive measure by the Czech presidency, even though it was denied at the time, was very negatively perceived by the EU and especially by the Arab countries. The Czech EU presidency's declared balanced policy has been seriously questioned. Its position on the events in Gaza affected the overall image of the EU in the Mediterranean, the functioning of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the southern dimension of the ENP.

The Czech foreign policy towards the Middle East conflict oscillated since 2007 between the European position (which was more pro-Arab) and the U.S. stance (which was more pro-Israeli). The Prime Minister condemned the construction of new Israeli settlements as an illegal act (the EU position), but he had an understanding for the Separation Wall built by Israelis who did not follow the boundaries of the Occupied Territories (the pro-Israel stance). Although the government has supported the idea of a Palestinian state, it never specified its boundaries, which suited the radical Zionists, who plan to return only a portion of the Arab occupied territory. The pro-Israel Foreign Ministry, the media and the pro-Israel lobby also influenced the Czech foreign policy. By contrast, the pro-Arab lobby was virtually nonexistent, and pressures for greater cooperation with the Arab world did not come from the economic sphere either. The Czech Arab Chamber of Commerce, which was created in 1994, de facto stopped existing in 2007. The Czech-Arab Business Council, formed in 2008 under

the supervision of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Transport Union, has not confirmed the expectations for it. With the upcoming Czech presidency and after the defeat of the conservatives in the U.S. elections in 2009 began a gradual retreat from the previous categorical positions. The contradictory attitudes of the government were first confronted with the pan-European approaches formulated in the CFSP and later with the interests of European countries.

The strong political polarisation of the Czech political scene on the left-right axis meant an obstacle to finding a rational and pragmatic approach to Middle East issues. The ODS, as an opposition party in the first half of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, has declared zero tolerance to the government of the Social Democrats. After the ODS came to power in 2006, it preferred for the share of opposition parties in the creation of the foreign policy for the Middle East to be minimal, which was also reflected in its relations with MENA states and Afghanistan. The Czech public has generally accepted the sub-measures for strengthening the country's security against the threat of terrorism and of the troubled countries, as these sub-measures were obviously supported by the ODS. However, the public refused the installation of the U.S. military radar and the ČR's active (especially military) participation in peacekeeping missions, and this refusal was recommended by the programs of the opposition Social Democrats and the Communists. There was an apparent mismatch of the Czech right and the Czech left in their approaches to the following topics: the Palestinian question and the Middle East conflict, the level of relations with Israel, the Iranian threat, the U.S. missile defense, the role of the Baath party in Iraq, attitudes toward the so-called radical countries (rogue states), the role and focus of the peacekeeping missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, and multiculturalism. Conflicts were transferred mainly to the agenda of the Parliament – for example, during the annual approval of the peacekeeping missions. Conflictual discussions on Middle East issues took place even in the mass media. Conversely, there was only a minimum of discrepancies when the following topics were discussed: economic cooperation, foreign aid, Turkey's EU membership, international migration, and the need to diversify energy resources, strategic resources and transport routes. The politicians of the ODS and smaller center-rightist parties acted as consistent Atlantists, and some of them also acted as Eurosceptics. They tried to push the EU to a greater consideration of American and Israeli interests in the Middle East, and they also tried to pressure it to reject European unilateral measures on key issues such as the Middle East conflict, attitudes toward terrorism and Afghanistan. The ČSSD's foreign policy was based strictly on the EU's CFSP and the opinions of social-democratic parties and governments belonging to the Socialist International, which have often been diametrically opposed to the Bush strategy. This stance has been testified in practice by their support for dialogue with Iran and other problem states, which was a different approach to solving the Middle East conflict.

The situation changed after the arrival of the Obama administration because now the EU and U.S. positions on the issue of the crisis in the Middle East and the dialogue with radical countries like Iran or Syria converged. In 2009, the Middle East foreign policy ceased to be subject to the overly polarised partisan rivalry between the two largest Czech parties. The Social Democrats began to be more responsive to the ap-

proval of the Afghan mission and did not refuse a temporary and precise Czech participation in it. The ODS has ceased to be implacable in its approaches to the radical states in the Middle East. Both sides refused to give the Islamophobic G. Wilders permission to deliver a speech in the Czech Senate. Confrontation attitudes transferred from foreign political and security subjects in the internal economic and social issues in the second half of 2009 in connection with the forthcoming parliamentary elections. The Israeli military attack against Gaza in late 2008 and 2009 decisively influenced the direction of the Czech Presidency in relation to this region because many of the planned actions were subsequently postponed or canceled due to the lack of interest in Arab countries. The crisis in Gaza radicalised the region and resulted in a paralysis of the actions of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean that lasted several months. Chances to re-launch peace negotiations have been limited. The absence of the southern European countries (Spain, France, and Italy) in the Prague Summit of the East Partnership in May 2009 symbolised the preferences of the southern dimension of the ENP in the European context. The Czech Presidency eventually managed well as concerns the planned agenda – i.e. the management and preparation of a meeting of the Councils Association, the negotiation of a framework agreement with Libya, the debate on EU-Syria relations and others. There has been a positive assessment of the cooperation between the two working groups in the Czech mission in Brussels and the headquarters (MaMa / MOG). Problems arose in the cooperation between the Presidency and the GS Council, which often made a decision without consultations with the Czech side. The events surrounding the Iranian crisis have shown a lack of cooperation among the different departments of the MFA, the lack of clarity of their competence, and the unclear instructions from the headquarters. The unbalanced Czech position toward the Middle East conflict was sharply criticised in the framework of the Euromed countries. The criticism was focused on the double standards in assessing human rights and terrorism, and the lack of activity during the Iran election crisis. The EU-Israel summit, which was to become one of the main activities of the Czech presidency, was not organised. Most EU countries rejected the Czech initiative with regard to the negative reaction of the Arab/Islamic world. The Nabucco project promoted by the ČR and Poland was postponed owing to the regional situation and the overall long term positions of Russia and key EU countries.

Political relations with Iran remained at very low levels. Tehran could not withstand the Persian broadcasts of Radio Farda, which were broadcasted by RFE-RL in Prague, and the regular Czech criticism of human rights violations in Iran, which was especially frequent during the Czech Presidency. Promising bilateral trade with Iran began to develop particularly after Iran had lifted some of its restrictions on trade with the ČR. Although in 2008 a lot of talks were under way concerning a possible full-fledged resumption of relations at the embassy level, no step has been made in this regard.

The second half of 2009 was marked by Fischer's caretaker government, which presented itself as 'non ideological and apolitical'. It wanted to pursue a realist foreign policy based on a consensus with the political parties and, if possible, civil society during the decision making process. Efforts have been focused primarily on

addressing the economic, fiscal and social issues, and the Middle East and Mediterranean foreign policy has been on the periphery of interest if not directly associated with internal security. The opposite trend was evident since 2009 in the area of economic cooperation and possibly triggered the increased interest of Czech companies in this neglected region. Czech exporters have found new markets in Algeria, Iraq and Iran, with which trade had previously rather stagnated. Until recently, relatively closed markets have begun to open themselves up to our industrial products, and the tariff burden was systematically decreased, especially in the Maghreb countries, the GCC and Egypt. Since 2004 there has been a dynamic growth in trade turnover with the countries of the region, and the period 2007–2009 was considered as extremely successful in this regard. Exports to these territories exceeded 2 billion USD and there was a tendency to dynamic growth, which was particularly important, taking into account the EU sales problems in 2008–2009. The active trade balance and the share of machinery exports in the export structure also grew. The countries that were characterised by maximum trade liberalisation (UAE, Israel) have become our biggest partners. The individual and commercial transactions were of a relatively random nature despite the ideal composition of exports. Three Middle East countries – the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Turkey – were included in the list of the most privileged countries for doing business with that was elaborated by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry for the years 2006–2010.

In connection with the economic and social crises, some small ultra-right Islamophobic and anti-Semitic groups were activated, but these have not received a large amount of public support. Opinion polls indicated a certain contempt for, a mistrust for and sometimes even a fear of the nationals from the countries of the Middle East among the Czechs, which was due to negative, one-sided media reports that focused on terrorism, violence, intolerance and human rights violations in Muslim countries. In this period, there were no security risks associated with the Islamic community of the Czech Republic. The Muslim community's relations with the Czech majority society have been exemplary and smooth.

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## Chapter 13

# The Far East in the Czech Foreign Policy

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### **THE FAR EAST IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT**

This chapter deals with the region of East Asia, namely the People's Republic of China (PRC), Japan, the Korean Republic (South Korea), the Democratic Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea), the Republic of China on Taiwan (ROC Taiwan), and includes also Mongolia and Vietnam. As East Asia lies far beyond the sphere of the specific priorities of the Czech foreign policy, the main concern of bilateral and multilateral ties is cooperation with booming Asian economies. However, such a long term prospect, which is parallel with similar prospects of all EU member countries, followed a common development with the former East Central European communist states, which were economically integrated within COMECON and politically dependent on the former Soviet Union's Asian policies. Since 1989 and after the split of the Eastern bloc, Czechoslovakia, which was divided into the Czech Republic (ČR) and the Slovak Republic in 1993, developed its own autonomous Asian policy, which was no longer ideologically based and dependent on Moscow. Besides continual bilateral relations with East Asian communist states, the post-communist era thus brought new perspectives by establishing new relations with two new economically important partners – South Korea and Taiwan.

While the ČR has gone through rapid political democratisation and economic transition, which brought it closer to the Asian democracies in Japan, the Korean Republic, and Taiwan, the relations with the surviving post-totalitarian countries China, North Korea and Vietnam remained politically pragmatic, which meant that divergence in political culture was no basic obstacle in bilateral ties. The themes of human rights abuse and support for Tibetan exiles led to new and relevant movements in Czech society. Nevertheless, the Czech political right, NGOs, and most of the Czech media driven criticism of China did not derail the mainstream consensus of the two main political parties – the Social Democrats and the liberal conservative Civic Democrats – on the priority of economic matters over political issues.

Despite the consensual, largely economy-driven motivations, the Czech East Asian policy still lacks a more systematic and conceptual approach, having had no specific

governmental level program documents and guidelines. The government Program Declaration from 2006<sup>1</sup> includes no mention of Asian countries. Among all the analytic materials which have been drawn up on a ministerial level, the most comprehensive text is *The Czech Republic in Asia: A Strategy for the Development of Relations with Regions and Countries in Asia* (2006). This internal document, which has been reviewed by Czech academic circles, was written in the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs and aims at defining the Czech mainstream policy in order to find alternative economic partners to diversify the Czech west-oriented export dependence, and to develop the already existing tradition of bilateral relations with Asian countries. However, East Asia was just included within the whole of Asia in this document without any regional specification.

The *Ministry of Industry and Trade* (MIT) in conjunction with the *Trade and Investment Council* (Rada pro obchod a investice), i.e. MIT experts and deputies of entrepreneurs' organizations, worked out their own *Export Strategy for the Period 2006–2010*.<sup>2</sup> This document dates back to 2005 and, from the Czech perspective, points at economically relevant countries throughout the world. In East Asia it is focused on fast growing economies as well as those states that have an existing tradition of bilateral economic ties, namely China, India, Mongolia and Vietnam. The list of top priority countries has been continuously updated, eventually leading to the releasing of Mongolia in 2009.<sup>3</sup>

According to Czech experiences, East Asia is a generally difficult export destination, whereas the economic impact from its countries became important in regard to the growing relevance of foreign importers since the economic boom of the late 1990s. Despite the strategic attention paid to East Asia (mostly to China), the real Czech economic outcome in terms of exports and investments remained a continuous disappointment. Instead of tapping the enormous Chinese market and prolonging the tradition of Czech export and investment expansion in the 1950s, the ČR itself became a target for a deluge of cheap Asian imports.

The exciting Czech experiences in economic and, on a lesser scale, political affairs in bilateral relations with East Asia show the decreasing relevance of national policy and the growing trend of EU level policy. The ČR experienced being in the role of an EU representative country for the first time during the EU-Japan and EU-Korean Republic regular summits. Prague also hosted the EU-China summit in 2009 due to the cancellation of the formerly planned summit for December 2008 in Lyon.

The Czech left, including the Social Democrats and the Communists, uphold China as an enormous economic export and investment challenge against the Czech liberal and conservative right – the Civic Democratic Party and the Christian Democrats – who usually define the PRC as a security threat and a human rights violator. Nevertheless, the whole political mainstream agreed on the priority of the economic allure of the booming Chinese economy. Despite the continuously reserved Chinese attitude, in 2007 ČR sent to China a higher number of state as well as regional leadership delegations than to any other Asian country – i.e. it first sent a delegation of provincial leaders led by the Mayor of Prague, which was followed by visits from the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Industry and Trade, and a delegation of the

Senate. The oppositional (Social Democratic) party leader Jiří Paroubek also visited Beijing that year. The main topics of this diplomatic activity were boosting Czech exports, support for Czech investment attempts, and also lowering the growing trade deficit with China. As the Czech diplomatic activity received no reciprocal reaction, as usual, in the following years the number of Czech high level visits to China decreased to a medium routine level.

Off-mainstream relations with China have been taken over by the Greens (Strana zelených), which upholds the most China-critical views in Czech policy, playing up the topics of Tibet, Taiwan, and human right violations in the PRC. On the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary (March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2009) of the suppressed Tibetan anti-Chinese uprising in 1959, the Greens established ‘The Parliamentary Group of Friends of Tibet’. Despite the protests of most left-wing deputies, on this occasion, the Greens also hung the Tibetan national flag from the windows of their offices in the building of the Chamber of Deputies, and The Green Ministers of Environment, as well as the Minister of Education and Sport, keep the Tibetan flag on the Ministerial buildings, for the first time in the history of any Czech democratic government (2006).<sup>4</sup> The Tibetan flags thus regularly decorated several buildings of the Czech parliament and governmental residences.

## THE FAR EAST IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: AGENDA AND EVENTS

### *Bilateral Relations*

The Czech relations with East Asian countries have been accelerating mainly on the bilateral level, whereas the multilateral sphere was rather inactive, except for the EU agenda during the Czech presidency in 2009. China has traditionally been the key focus of Czech ambitions in the whole of Asia since the 1950s. However, this Asian economic giant has paradoxically been the main failure of the Czech economic activities in Asia. As the Czech dreams of exporting to the PRC remained massively outweighed by Chinese imports, the remaining lesser Asian economies – especially Taiwan, Japan and the Korean Republic – eventually became considerable foreign investors.

During 2007–2009, the Czech political agenda experienced a long desired upgrading of the Czech relations with mainland China. Beijing only recognized the emerging relevance of the Czech Republic as late as in 2005, since this was the year of the first ever visit of the Chinese Prime Minister in Prague, just next year after the Czech accession to the EU. China is an outwardly dividing political theme in the Czech domestic arena. Due to its criticism of China for human rights violations and its support for Tibetan exiles as well as Chinese dissidents, ČR ranks among the most assertive countries within the EU.<sup>5</sup>

The Czech criticism of China on the basis of its human rights record was implicit in the lingering official attitude towards the Beijing Olympic Games. On the occasion of his state visit in France, the EU presiding country at the time, Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg expressed to his counterpart Bernard Kouchner his concern about a possible undemocratic misuse of the Chinese Olympic Games, as Schwarzen-

berg pointed at the historical parallel to the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin and suggested a boycott of the opening ceremony.<sup>6</sup> Both ministers agreed to meet with the Dalai Lama on the official level, as President Nicholas Sarkozy eventually also met with him several months later in Poland. In addition, the Czech Parliament passed a Resolution appealing to the PRC to stop the violent treatment of Tibetans in the Tibet Autonomous Region, allow UN Red Cross assistance in the region, and open a dialogue between Beijing and the Dalai Lama.<sup>7</sup>

Even though the highest political circles of the ČR reached no consensus, most of the top state representatives – such as, for example, President Klaus, Premier Topolánek, the Chairmen of both the Upper and the Lower House of Parliament, the Mayor of Prague, and, significantly, the Minister of Education and Sport – cancelled their attendance in Beijing. Besides this, Prime Minister Topolánek posed with a Tibetan flag-like badge on his jacket for photographers, and after this diplomatic scandal, he eventually visited the Olympic Games on a private basis and off the official schedule, which was in protest cancelled by the Chinese hosts.<sup>8</sup> Significantly for the ČR's unbalanced Chinese policy, the Dalai Lama received cordial acceptance on his (altogether eighth) visit in Prague in 2008 and 2009, having been unofficially received by Premier Topolánek and later by Premier Fischer in the premier's private residence, as well as by ex-President Havel and Tibet supporting Parliamentary Deputies.<sup>9</sup> However, Premier Fischer experienced a Chinese diplomatic revenge by receiving cold response about his planned visit in Shanghai Expo 2010. As the Czech Prime Minister found no Chinese counterpart to meet with on the occasion of Czech National Day in the Czech Pavilion, his schedule had to be eventually cancelled.<sup>10</sup>

Compared to the Czech relations with the PRC, the Czech bilateral ties with Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, and, at the non-official level, also Taiwan have been showing a more upward trend, as was significantly confirmed by the state visit of Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung in Prague (2007) and the visit by Czech Premier Topolánek in Hanoi (March 2008), having thus followed the previous high level visit of President Klaus in Vietnam in 2006. Indochina used to be an important economic partner in the 1970s–1980s, and then the booming Czech relations with the re-discovered Vietnam after downgrading the previous communist era ties led to more successful efforts from Czech investors there than in the more desirable China.<sup>11</sup>

Among all the Czech bilateral relations with the partners in East Asia, the relations with Japan have the most continual tradition, as it was undisturbed by ideological and political distortions. The relations, which had a tendency to increase over the course of the last decade, were underlined by the high level visit of the Czech state delegation led by President Klaus and Foreign Minister Schwarzneberg in Tokyo in 2007.<sup>12</sup> The increasing attention of East Asian states to ČR eventually made evident the increased political contacts between Prague and Seoul, which have been massively investment driven in recent times, as is seen below.

### ***Multilateral Relations***

In contrast to the heyday of the Czech bilateral relations with the East Asian partners, the multilateral level policy has been usually much less acknowledged in Prague. Sig-

nificantly, in the 7<sup>th</sup> ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) Summit in Beijing in 2008, the ČR was represented just by the deputy premier for European affairs Alexander Vondra, whereas other states delegated their heads of state or at least their foreign ministers. The Czech Republic's lack of a multilateral vision, as well as its limited capacity of a small state, has been eventually challenged by the EU presiding agenda, which was accepted by the Czech political elites and mostly realised by a professional diplomatic apparatus. Thus in spite of the ČR having no special ambitions and the large analytical background of Czech political elites, the Czech Presidency in the Council of EU brought the Czech role to a new and important international level. The EU made Prague boost its multilateral viewpoint.

The EU presidency caused Prague to have a more significant international standing in relation to all of the Asian countries than it had previously, and it elevated the ČR to the role of an organiser of EU-China, EU-Korean Republic, and EU-Japan summits. As the presidency of the Czech Republic followed that of France, Prague could hardly have been expected to play a greater role, yet the three Asian summits under Czech guidance were fairly continually and professionally conducted. As the themes of all the summits exceeded the scope of the Czech domestic political level, and as President Klaus abstained from more actively participating in debates about climate changes, all of the summits progressed towards the signing of already worked out multilateral economic agreements, and in the case of the EU-China agenda, they contributed to alleviating the Sino-European tension caused by the disputes related to trade, intellectual property rights, human rights and foreign policy of previous summits (Helsinki 2006, Beijing 2007).<sup>13</sup>

Three EU-Asian summits also vitalised the Czech bilateral agenda with Japan (EU-Japan summit, May 4<sup>th</sup>) and China (May 20<sup>th</sup>) when the summit delegations led by Prime Ministers were staying in Prague. Both of the state visits endorsed growing investments as well as technology cooperation (see below). The Czech cold minded attitude towards the multilateral dimension of EU-Asian relations seems to ignore the EU mainstream, whereas the Czech Republic's assertive dealing with China brought about an unexpected diplomatic failure on the part of the ČR during the Czech candidature for a non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council. This diplomatic setback resulted from the Chinese lobbying of developing countries to go against the Czech bid, as was confirmed by the Czech media's citation of Deputy Premier Martin Buršík, who was present during the UN vote.<sup>14</sup>

### ***Economic Relations***

East Asia has been viewed as a great opportunity for Czech exporters, especially since China has a potential consumer market of 1.3 billion people. However, Czech exports to China still remain much lower than expected. The share of Czech exports to China remains around 0,5 percent of the total Czech exports in 2007–2009. Czech exports to Japan (0.3%–0.4%), Korean Republic (0.2%), Vietnam (0.0–0.1%), and Taiwan (0.0–0.1%) remain similarly low.<sup>15</sup> Unbalanced trade with growing deficits, especially with China, results from the limited trade network and poor marketing on the part of the Czech Republic in East Asia, and also from the tough East Asian trade protectionism

that is typical for all the countries mentioned here. The recently booming trade deficit with China – 6,576 billion €, currently the biggest one in the total state trade balance,<sup>16</sup> – is becoming an issue analogically with the EU's trade deficit with China, yet in the Czech case, the share of exports is lower. An exceptionally successful investment and trade project in this respect is the Czech-German joint venture Škoda-Volkswagen, car producer, which has been successfully increasing its production in Shanghai. In 2009 the sales of Škoda-Volkswagen models' sale in China doubled, causing China to become the current number one market for Škoda Auto.<sup>17</sup>

In order to support the so far unsuccessful exporters, the Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade established the CzechTrade office network, which provides basic promotional and expert services for Czech companies, in China namely in Shanghai and Chengdu (Sichuan province). While the trade diplomacy in Japan, both Korean states, China, Mongolia and Vietnam reached the standard bilateral level in the joint Chambers of Commerce, Joint Industry and Trade Commissions, the East Asian region still belongs to the difficult destinations of the world, and a backing on the EU level may bring about meaningful help in international arbitration procedures on dumping and intellectual rights protection. Conducting such international disputes would be impossible on a limited single state national basis.

In spite of the fact that a deluge of Chinese imports entered the Czech market without significant obstacles and had a negative impact on domestic textile, shoe and leatherwear producers, the Czech trade policy still remained basically liberal. Prague did not support the increasing protectionist voices within EU and did not join in the support for trade restrictions aimed against China. Weak trade unions, insufficient political support, and liberally oriented business elites brought about no call for trade restrictions, even though the Asian partners, most typically China, became the rising competitors in the so far traditionally strong Czech industrial production and export categories.

By contrast to the poor Czech exports, the economic impact of East Asian countries brought a much better effect in the field of foreign investments. The ČR gained the image of an attractive receiver of foreign direct investments (FDI) with a favourable geographic location in central Europe, a developed industrial tradition, an acceptable level of production costs, and a membership in both the EU and the Schengen Area. The ČR's increasing international image of investments attractive country has also been substantially supported by the state-owned CzechInvest Agency as well as state tax benefits. Japan has ranked as the biggest East Asian investor in ČR since the 1990s (296 mil. € in 2007) and as the second biggest investor in ČR out of all the countries in the world (Germany being the first).<sup>18</sup> The second biggest East Asian investor in ČR used to be Taiwan, but the Korean Republic took this position in 2007 (269 mil. €) by launching the construction of Hyundai plant in Nošovice.<sup>19</sup> In 2009 the main Asian investors in ČR remained (1.) South Korea, (2.) Japan, and (3.) China, yet during the time of the global recession, these were much less relevant than the Euro zone 13 (EU-13).<sup>20</sup>

The East Asian investments were aimed mostly at the car industry (Toyota, KIA, Hyundai) and the electronics industry (Panasonic, Hitachi, Matsushita, Daikin, Fox-



conn). Even though the 2008–2009 slowdowns resulted in a remarkable decrease of the Asian nominal investments during these years, the FDI flow still did not cease, and it resulted in a corporate fusion, or temporary suspension of production, without closing already existing plants.

The Czech-Japanese and Czech-Korean bilateral meetings in 2009 focused on bio-technology and technology development projects. They have been opening a new trend of moving from production oriented investments towards deeper and intensive joint cooperation in science and technology, especially in the field of environmental protection and nanotechnologies.

### **THE FAR EAST IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: IDENTIFICATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF KEY ACTORS**

Even though East Asia lies far beyond the concerns of Czech foreign policy, and ČR perceives this region mostly as an economic theme, the existence of non-democratic regimes in China, North Korea and Vietnam still paradoxically appears as a rising domestic political issue. China is the main focus of criticism of the Czech political right, which uses this topic to morally condemn the political left. It is true that Social Democrats regarding China as potential economic partner might have looked overestimated, when in 2005 former premier Paroubek declared his hope to *'make ČR and EU an economic gateway for China'*.<sup>21</sup> Yet such the attention to the PRC has had results, as was made evident by the increased share of Chinese investments within the last three years, the fact that the Czech exports slightly increased, and the fact that Czech investments got focused more towards financial service and real estate. The go-ahead diplomatic offensive of the ODS led government since 2006 confirmed that such effort towards upgrading relations with China had been more consensual and mainstream than expected despite the criticism of Social Democratic leader Jiří Paroubek, who thought that conservatives underestimated the relations with China too much.<sup>22</sup> Later, the ruling party ODS started to visit China frequently as an attempt to develop patronage-client style relations, which has brought no relevant reciprocal outcome but merely contributed to 'diplomacy inflation' – a problem that was previously experienced by the Social Democrats and the Communists.

Apart from party politics, and top governmental representative bodies (the President, the Government, the Parliament), which all maintain the official – the ceremonial – level that is traditionally so important for the Asian partners, as there has been no greater opportunity for a politicisation of the Asian agenda, Czech top governmental institutions avoided elevating domestic disputes to the international level.

Besides this, there is a professional state level of governmental institutions (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Education and Sport, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Interior, Provincial Representatives, the Czech Trade Chamber, Czech Embassies, and the state agencies CzechTrade and CzechInvest that all mainly remain committed to the international agenda, apart from temporary domestic level political discords,

and maintain the continuity without major media attention. The Tibetan flag controversy and the absence of high ranking politicians at the Olympic Games opening ceremony in Beijing could be regarded as exceptions to this pattern.

## CZECH FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE FAR EAST IN THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC SPACE

Besides the space of the Government and party politics, Czech NGOs established their parallel information network with a substantial impact on the media and public opinion. Through this network, the themes of human rights, China's authoritarian regime oppressing Tibet, and Taiwan being jeopardised overruled public discourse. Czech dissident circles remained the leading media voices of late Czech anti-communism media, as they identified China and North Korea as surviving totalitarian realms of evil. Former dissident and President Václav Havel continued to gain international support for Tibetan exiles and Chinese dissidents. Havel and Foreign Minister Schwarzenberg organised a group of intellectual and political celebrities (André Glucksman, Frederik de Klerk, Yohei Sasakawa, Hassan bin Talal, Karel Swarzenberg) which issued a petition calling for support of Tibet during the March 2008 unrest and raised the question of boycotting the Olympic Games in Beijing.<sup>23</sup> One week before the Olympic opening day, one more petition of seventeen signatories (among others, Václav Havel, Martin Bursík, Kateřina Jacques, Jana Hybášková, Wei Jingsheng, Desmond Tutu, André Glucksman, and Bernd Posselt) called upon China to respect human rights and free access to information.<sup>24</sup> The Prague based NGO *Olympic Watch*, which was founded by Czech politicians (Jan Ruml and Karel Swarzenberg) and activists, also joined in the public appeals to Beijing, calling for boycotting the Olympic Games and later using symbolic adoption for victims of oppression by communist China.

The *Flag for Tibet* annual campaign, which is organized by Czech NGOs (*Potala, Lungta, People in Need, Amnesty International, Olympic Watch*), has had growing popularity on the regional level. Every year on March 10<sup>th</sup> many local municipalities as well as schools, theatres, clubs, tea houses and galleries hang out Tibetan flags. The still increasing number of municipalities (up to four hundred in 2009)<sup>25</sup> reflects the remaining urgency and the efforts to spread awareness of human rights among the Czech public, which show the need of the Czech society to find ways to cope with the tragic experiences of the communist era.

In 2009, the Czech *One World* film festival, which is focused on human rights themes, invited a group of Chinese dissidents to attend its opening and receive the *Homo Homini* prize, which is annually awarded to human rights activists. That time the prize was offered to *Liu Xiaobo*, a Chinese activist who was detained in 2008 and later, in December 2009, sentenced to 13 years in prison on charges of state subversion. Liu Xiaobo is the leading co-author of the document *Charter 88*, which called for political reforms in China and respect for human rights. The Czech activists recommended Liu for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010. The support from the Czech dissi-

dents received international media coverage because the Czech *Charter 77* dissidents and their new Chinese followers faced similar circumstances.<sup>26</sup>

Meanwhile, in Czech domestic affairs there appeared a new issue – that of the fast growing Vietnamese immigrant community. It is one of the EU's biggest and the biggest Asian community in the Czech Republic (60,000 with official long-term residence permits).<sup>27</sup> Many Vietnamese immigrants have been attracted to the ČR by the Czech economic boom. Some Vietnamese immigrants by-passed the Czech Consular Office in Hanoi, as their visa agenda was fully arranged by private agencies that offered package support including a visa, transportation, and employment arrangements, usually for an excessive fee ranging from 5,000–20,000 USD.<sup>28</sup> The amount of Vietnamese people living in the ČR peaked in 2008, but at the same time, the community was struck by a rising wave of unemployment, which left thousands of indebted Vietnamese people without a basic livelihood. The domestic social problem received surprisingly appropriate media coverage that revealed the confusion and corruption in the Czech visa and alien police offices.

The Vietnamese community proved itself to be a growingly communicative and assertive one, and obtained substantial support from NGOs (*La Strada, the Association of Vietnamese in CR, the Czech-Vietnam Society, Club Hanoi, Poradna pro uprchlíky, Nesehnutí, Slovo 21, Člověk v tísni, Centrum pro integraci cizinců, Multikulturní centrum Praha* – it also received support from the Ministry For Human Rights and the Ombudsman). In comparison, the Chinese and Mongolian minorities in the ČR are substantially less numerous and socially active.

## CONCLUSION

In spite of the existing consensus about the mainstream Czech policy in East Asia, the Czech political elite's behaviour towards it shows signs of poor knowledge of it as well as of a lack of a conceptual approach. Fortunately, however, the Czech EU membership, the routine inertia of Czech state institutions, and the efforts of the Asian partners were keeping the mutual progress alive. The ČR has been luckier than what could have been expected. Besides the allure of historical Prague for tourists in terms of sightseeing and the ČR's favourable geographic location, the flow of the Asian investment boom, which is not discouraged by the global economic slowdown, provides the ČR with substantial support. The economic perspectives thus proved to be the core reason for the Czech-East Asian cooperation, whereas the failure to reach the goal of conquering Asian markets has not been a specifically Czech failure, as the cases of most EU member countries show.

Compared to the smooth and mutually cordial relations with Japan, the Korean Republic, and Taiwan, and the accelerating economic ties with Vietnam, the Czech perception of China remains ideologised and spoiled by the Czech Republic's insensitive self-affirmation in its new democratic identity and, on the other side, by the cold and reserved Chinese reaction. The lack of any direct impact of the Czech criticism of Chinese human rights violations on the two countries' economic relations could be

explained by the lack of leverage of Chinese governmental institutions towards the business sphere, while the CR's strengthening international importance rises from its EU membership.

The other bright side of the Czech-East Asian relations is their coming decentralisation and decreasing dependency on the governmental and political spheres. The Czech failure in exporting is compensated by the structurally positive, growing, modern and technology oriented cooperation with Japan and South Korea.

And finally, the Czech Republic's trendy *Old Europe sightseeing* tourism and its relaxed life-style are just now being appreciated to a greater extent in the avant-garde modern East Asian societies of Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. As such, the trend seems transferable to mainland China, which usually follows in the footsteps of its Asian neighbours. The Czech perspectives for using more active cultural diplomacy with East Asia remain open.

## Endnotes

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## Chapter 14

# Sub-Saharan Africa in the Czech Foreign Policy

*Ondřej Horký*

The gap between the relevance of Sub-Saharan Africa in the Czech foreign policy and its relevance in EU external relations is larger than that of any other region of the world.<sup>1</sup> Sub-Saharan Africa (here also abbreviated to ‘Africa’ if not specified otherwise) maintains tight political, military and economic relations with its former colonizers among the ‘old’ member states of the European Union, and it remains the primary target of the EU development policy. In contrast to that, its relative importance in the bilateral relations with the Czech Republic, including the number of diplomatic missions and priority countries of development cooperation, has been steadily decreasing.

National economic interests and the preservation of good bilateral relations with selected African countries still play a determining role in shaping the Czech policy towards Africa, but the most important events, agenda and strategic choices during the actual period originated at the EU level. This is attested by the Czech ‘boycott’ of the Lisbon EU-Africa Summit as a protest against the human rights violations by the Zimbabwean government in 2007, the approval of the first strategy document towards Africa by the Governmental Committee for the EU in 2008, and the successful Czech presidency in the Council of the EU in the first half of 2009, the most intense year in reciprocal relations ever.

This rather positive account of the influence of the EU on the domestic policy is balanced, however, by the Czech Republic’s strong orientation toward and specialization in the former Eastern bloc. The country remains passive in its involvement in the global and security agenda related to Africa at the EU and the multilateral level, which leads to further marginalization of the continent at the domestic level. This division of labour between the Czech Republic and the EU could be seen as a positive outcome of Europeanization, but the preference of public opinion to favour Sub-Saharan Africa, especially in the development agenda, points out the general absence of the region at the political level.

The period of Czechoslovakia’s intense, ideologically-laden relations with the African countries ‘on the way to socialism’ before 1989 is over.<sup>2</sup> The ‘Made in Czecho-

slovakia' trademark and much of the Czech know-how and diplomatic networks have been lost during the subsequent transition period, which was characterized by a concentration on the country's internal problems and the so-called catching up with Europe and the West. The repeatedly closed and re-opened Sub-Saharan Africa Department seems to have eventually found its due place at the MFA with the main focus being on the political and economic interests fuelled by the growing Czech exports to Africa.

The rest of the agenda will probably not depart from the level of a more or less passive participation of the Czech Republic in the EU and global policies: Africa is not a 'priority' but an 'agenda' of the Czech foreign policy. In spite of that, the Czech Republic remains one of the most active and experienced countries among the 'new' EU member states.

## **THE AFRICAN DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT**

### ***Background***

Until 2008 the *Conceptual Basis of the Foreign Policy of the Czech Republic for the 2003–2006 Period* had remained the only strategy paper that explicitly mentioned Africa, even if this mention of Africa was still vague. The Czech Republic was supposed to focus on the 'stable regional powers', promote new and maintain traditional economic relations, and adequately help in solving conflicts in the region.<sup>3</sup> Given the generally missing or outdated formulation of the Czech foreign policy strategy, it was only seemingly paradoxical that Africa deserved the approval of the document *The Preparation [sic] of the Strategic Debate on the Approach of the Czech Republic to Africa* at the Governmental Committee for the EU in June 2008.<sup>4</sup> Drafted by the MFA, the document was originally required by the Office of the Government in relation to the upcoming EU presidency, and hence it was drawn up because of an external incentive, without internal political disagreements. Rather than a 'preparation', the document contains a very detailed strategy proposal, but the 'debate' mentioned in its title never took place since the document was never published.

The main difference from the 2002 general strategy paper consists in the addition of the multilateral and the EU level, and the criticism of the 'stagnation of the traditional bilateral approach'.<sup>5</sup> The motivations of the Czech involvement in Africa have remained pragmatic, but they reflect the changing geopolitical context and the rising activity of emerging powers on the continent. The Horn of Africa was selected as the priority subregion due to its proximity to the Middle East. The paper suggested selecting two priority countries of the Czech development cooperation in Africa and adding Zimbabwe to the priority countries of the transition policy. Attention was also paid to the increased visibility of the Czech Republic through small development projects and cultural events, partly to get African support at multilateral fora. In its multilateral dimension, the paper promotes the African Union in building the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and a limited participation of the Czech experts in UN

peace missions and ESDP civil missions. Recommendations at EU level concerned the presidency in the Council of the EU, which is analysed further in this chapter.

### ***Political Context***

In contrast to the global and European politics, and to a lesser extent to the Czech media, public opinion and the civil society, Africa is almost absent from the domestic political space. This is partly related to the entirely missing political debate on the role of the Czech Republic in the world. Political parties do not refer to Africa either. In this generally indifferent ambiance, individual preferences of actors at diverse political positions in the government, and the MFA in particular, may hence influence the policy. The most notable initiatives were initiated by Karel Schwarzenberg, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, between January 2007 and May 2009, at least in comparison with his predecessors and his successor Jan Kohout. Schwarzenberg even claimed that the Czech Republic wanted to play ‘an important role on the African stage’, approved the rebirth of a separate Sub-Saharan Africa Department at the MFA, and became personally interested in the situation in Zimbabwe.<sup>6</sup> Apart from this rare exception, the Czech policy to Africa is most frequently designed at the expert level within the corresponding department at the Czech MFA, or new developments in it occur as reactions to events that trickle down from the EU level. In consequence, the African policy has to compete with the strong preference for the Eastern dimension in the hierarchy of the ministry, which leads to the generally low relevance of the policy for the policy-makers.

## **THE AFRICAN DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: AGENDA AND EVENTS**

### ***Bilateral Relations***

The focus on the regional powers and traditional partners is reflected in the schedule of state visits to Sub-Saharan Africa. After the visits to Asia and Latin America, the trip to Africa by President Václav Havel at the end of his second term had to be cancelled due to his poor health. The first Czech President to visit Sub-Saharan Africa, namely Nigeria and South Africa, was Václav Klaus in December 2006. With business on the top of the agenda, the official visit included a short stop in Angola, a priority country of the Czech development cooperation, which was seen then as a prospective market. To put the Czech foreign policy in perspective, Klaus was the first head of state in Central Europe to visit South Africa after the fall of apartheid, which attests the relatively high attention paid to the continent by the Czech Republic in comparison with other post-communist countries. The MFA assessed the visit to South Africa as successful and in May 2008, the Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka came on a working visit to Prague.<sup>7</sup> In addition to trade, technology and tourism, the agenda with South Africa includes higher education since South African students are involved in three programmes at Czech universities financed by South Africa.<sup>8</sup> The Nigerian visit has not been reciprocated so far.



The planned visit of Prime Minister Topolánek to the former Soviet allies Yemen and Ethiopia in July 2007 was cancelled for personal reasons. Eventually, only the visit to Ethiopia took place, and this time, it was led by the Deputy Prime Minister, and the delegation included the Ministers of Defence and Human Rights. Excellent relations were thus restored after an alleged minor diplomatic incident that had resulted in the non-inclusion of Ethiopia on the list of priority countries of development cooperation in the early 2000s. In April 2009, the Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs received his Ethiopian homologue Seyoum Mesfin, with trade (including arms), investment and development cooperation on the agenda. Ethiopia is to become one of the five programme countries of the Czech development cooperation again.<sup>9</sup>

Another working visit to Prague, which took place in May 2008, concerned Kabinga Pande, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Zambia. The third priority country of the Czech development cooperation in Africa.<sup>10</sup> However, the development programmes with Angola and Zambia gave mixed results and both countries are not to be kept on the list. In the same month, the Czech Prime Minister Topolánek visited two countries on his way to the EU-Latin America Summit: Cape Verde, a special partner of the EU, and Mali, an important market for Czech goods. In the last case, the Czech Republic attempted to sell its superfluous L-159 air fighters, which was a recurrent topic in the talks with other African countries as well. Finally, the Czech President and Prime Minister received Jean Ping, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, during his working visit to Prague in April 2009. The review of all bilateral visits identified trade, arms export, historical ties from the communist era, development cooperation and the EU agenda as the major motivations for the bilateral contacts with Africa. In November 2009, a celebration of 50 years of diplomatic relations with Ghana took place in Prague.

### ***Security and Human Rights***

The bilateral endeavours of the Czech Republic in the field of African security and human rights are very limited. In the case of conflicts, they are almost reduced to humanitarian assistance. The country has only sent a couple of military, civil and election observers to UN and/or EU missions, especially those in Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). They include two officers at the French headquarters of the EU mission to the Central African Republic and Chad (EUFOR). The Czech financial participation corresponds to one per cent of the costs of the EUFOR mission.<sup>11</sup> The common Czech and Slovak ESDP battlegroup was not deployed in the second half of 2009. The MFA has repeatedly claimed that Africa does not make up a part of its priorities and that the Czech army is unprepared to intervene in the tropics.<sup>12</sup> It also did not respond to the call of the UN Secretary General to provide six helicopters to the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) and troops to the Mission in DRC (MONUC).<sup>13</sup>

In the agenda of human rights, the Czech Republic has been active solely towards Zimbabwe – at the bilateral, EU and UN levels. It provided about 20,000 € to independent media as a part of the transition policy in 2008, and it also organized a ‘symposium on EU-Africa relations’ for new Zimbabwean diplomats in 2009. With the crisis-related reduction of budgets, the inclusion of Zimbabwe on the list of the priority

countries of the Czech transition policy is unlikely, but it would strengthen the credibility of the policy, which is currently focused on Belarus, Burma and Cuba. The most important event of 2007, the Lisbon EU-Africa Summit, was not a bilateral event, but it was the domestic sensitivity to human rights violations by the Zimbabwean government that led to the downgraded Czech representation by Minister Schwarzenberg instead of the originally planned representation by Prime Minister Topolánek as a way of protesting against the presence of President Robert Mugabe at the Summit. Alongside Britain and, later, some other ‘new’ EU member states, the Czech Republic did not consider the planned critique of Mugabe at the margin of the event as sufficient. This was the only time during the 2007–2009 period that an African agenda has led to a collective decision by the government without being widely discussed, however.<sup>14</sup> It should also be acknowledged that the Prime Minister’s absence was facilitated by a planned family event. The perceived critical stance of the Czech Republic has changed since then and the MFA does not consider having a different approach to Zimbabwe than other EU countries anymore. The Czech Republic has been recently criticized by international non-governmental organizations for exporting ‘tools of torture’ to Senegal in 2007 and Cameroon in 2008.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Reduction of the Czech Diplomatic Missions in Sub-Saharan Africa***

The ‘boycott’ of the Lisbon Summit was a less controversial issue than the reduction of the diplomatic missions in Africa. A network of embassies in the region remains a precondition not only for efficient bilateral relations, but also for the participation on the EU and multilateral agendas. As of 2008, the Czech Republic had eight embassies in Sub-Saharan Africa (Abuja, Accra, Addis Ababa, Harare, Luanda, Kinshasa, Nairobi and Pretoria). This was one less than Poland, the same number as Romania and Greece, one more than Bulgaria, and two more than Austria. The Czech Republic had already left the francophone West Africa by closing the Embassies in Abidjan and Dakar in 2005 under the Foreign Minister Cyril Svoboda, which has been recognized as an error since then. In summer 2007, the media informed about the MFA’s intent to close the Embassies in Harare and Kinshasa (the latter closing was announced already in 2006) while continuing to reinforce the Missions in the ex-Soviet Union and Asia.

The announcement was criticized by the Foreign Committee of the Chamber of Deputies with the argument that the Parliament was not consulted on the decision, but without criticizing the choice of Africa.<sup>16</sup> In reality, as underlined by the media, the intent to leave the DRC and Zimbabwe in times of democratic transition would rather meet misunderstanding from other EU member states and could be interpreted as a sign of mistrust. Eventually, only the Consulate General in Cape Town was closed down, and in October 2009, the caretaker government decided to close the Embassy in Luanda by the end of March 2010, and also to close the one in Harare upon further reconsideration (i.e. probably by the new government set up after the May 2010 elections).<sup>17</sup> The Foreign Minister justified the choice of Angola by the high costs (1.3 million € per year) and the failure of development and commercial projects.<sup>18</sup> In the times of crisis, the idea of reopening a Mission in francophone West Africa has stalled, but the plan for a ‘Visegrád House’ in Cape Town seems to be more realistic. Overall, the

process of reducing the diplomatic network was rather random and did not foresee the possible consequences in the medium and long term.

### ***Economic Relations***

The reduction of the diplomatic networks in Sub-Saharan Africa would be understandable as its part in the Czech foreign trade has been steadily decreasing to reach only 0.36% in 2009. No African country makes up a part of the *Export Strategy of the Czech Republic (2006–2010)*, but there are four Latin American countries in it, and they are included on the basis of a double total volume of trade.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, after a long stagnation in the early 2000s, the volume of trade with Sub-Saharan Africa has more than doubled since 2003, in spite of the setback of the financial and economic crisis, which attests the huge economic potential of the region hampered by the crisis. From 2008 to 2009 the Czech exports have decreased by 9% to 370 million € and the imports by more than a quarter to 220 million €. <sup>20</sup> South Africa dominates both exports (two thirds) and imports (one half of the whole). Major importers of Czech goods include Mali, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Angola and Ghana.<sup>21</sup> The commodity structure is not as asymmetric as expected, and it concerns goods with higher added value on both sides. Many bilateral and regional Chambers of Commerce are active in the field, especially in the regions where diplomatic missions are missing.

### ***The EU Presidency***

*The Preparation of the Strategic Debate on the Approach of the Czech Republic to Africa* has drawn a roadmap for the Czech Presidency in the Council of the EU. The Sub-Saharan Africa Department, the Permanent Representation to the EU in Brussels and the Embassies shared the agendas in the working groups for Africa (COAFR) and the African, Caribbean and Pacific states (ACP). The foremost task for the Czech Republic was to ensure progress in the partnerships of the Action Plan of the *Joint EU-Africa Strategy*. The presidency's other priority concerned the revitalization of the dialogue with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which was related to the national priority given to the Horn of Africa. The presidency had also planned to facilitate the progress on the negotiation of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) within the Cotonou Agreement, but the Czech liberal stance met preliminary resistance already in 2008.<sup>22</sup>

According to the itinerary, the Czech Republic got involved in four implementation teams of the Action Plan: it was active in those on democratic governance and human rights through the MFA, and in those on trade and regional integration through the Ministry of Industry and Trade. It was less active in the teams concerned with peace and security, and energy. As the Czech Republic does not have vested interests in Africa, it was well placed to reach an agreement in the Council. These were often drawn between the former colonial powers and the rest of the EU members, as was the case with the coup in Madagascar, the constitutional tensions in Niger, and the judicial misuses in Zimbabwe. It succeeded in organizing both troikas with the Czech Republic's main partners, South Africa and Nigeria, and with IGAD, its subregional priority. As unofficially intended, the EU presidency has benefited the Czech bilat-

eral relations. It also organized troikas with the African Union, Cape Verde and Zimbabwe. Where applicable, the presidency tried to mainstream its general priority in the area of energy security.

The Czech presidency was generally praised for its experience and its respect for the unwritten rules in the Council in comparison to the preceding presidencies. The presidency gave an opportunity to a number of high level politicians and diplomats to get in contact with the African agenda. However, when a parallel event was planned in relation to the Eastern dimension of the EU external relations, another main priority of the Czech presidency, they preferred the East to Africa.

## **THE SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: IDENTIFICATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE KEY ACTORS**

### ***The Government***

As a typical regional policy, the Czech foreign policy towards Africa is determined hierarchically on the line from the government to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Deputy Minister for Bilateral Relations, the Section for Non-European Countries and Development Cooperation and the Sub-Saharan Africa Department. With the low priority given to the region and the rare occasions in which it has appeared at the top political level (i.e. the Lisbon Summit and the Africa strategy paper), an informal network of officials outside this hierarchy, often former Ambassadors or Africanists, promote Africa from other positions within the MFA and the government at large. This situation is not perceived as unusual. The informal network probably stood at the origin of the initiative of the Office of the Government to prepare the first strategy paper for Africa as well. On a personal level, Prime Minister Topolánek publicly praised the development efforts of the Czechoslovak citizens kidnapped in 1983 in Angola.<sup>23</sup> He also expressed his interest in visiting Africa after the EU presidency, but his government fell before its end. In the anticipation of the elections, the caretaker government headed by Jan Fischer did not undertake any initiative towards Africa.

### ***The Ministry of Foreign Affairs***

After the long period of the reduction of African capacities in Prague and at the missions abroad, the current capacities seem to have stabilized. The number of personnel working on the Sub-Saharan African agenda in the capital decreased with the split of Czechoslovakia from 19 in 1992 to 4 in 1994, and it increased to 6 in 2008. Moreover, the agenda alternatively made up a part of the Sub-Saharan Africa Unit of the Middle East and Africa Department, and of the separate Sub-Saharan Africa Department. The latter was refounded only in January 2008 under the direction of Bronislava Tomášová, who was replaced by Blanka Fajkusová after the end of the Czech EU presidency. As of the end of 2009, the Department was formed by five officers focused on the West, the South, the East, the African Horn, and the Great Lakes with the ACP respectively. Secondments from Denmark and the European Commission and in-

terns have supported the Department during the EU presidency. More generally, the MFA career rules are not always enforced, and many diplomats are not interested in the positions at the missions in Africa.

### ***The Parliament***

The role of the Parliament in shaping the Czech foreign policy is predominantly *ad hoc*. In 2007 the Committee on EU Affairs of the Senate approved the draft of the joint EU-Africa strategy without further recommendations.<sup>24</sup> In 2008 the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Chamber of Deputies discussed the draft of the *Preparation of the Strategic Debate on the Approach of the Czech Republic to Africa* and recommended the MFA to respect the choice of Angola and Zambia as priority countries of the Czech development cooperation.<sup>25</sup> The one rare occasion when Africa was mentioned during the plenary sessions was the ratification of the revised Cotonou Agreement, but it was only considered as a part of the *acquis*. While the Parliamentary Friendship Group with Sub-Saharan African states has only three members as it has not been active at all, the group with South Africa has nine members, which shows the particular position of the regional power. Committees of both chambers quite regularly organize visits to Africa. However, the Chamber of Deputies had to cancel one of them after the media accused it of wasting public money in the times of crisis.

### ***The President***

In accordance with his ultraliberal economic opinions, President Klaus has been critical of trade barriers and development aid to Africa.<sup>26</sup> After his 2006 state visit, he returned to Nigeria on an invitation of the Osigwe Anyiam-Osigwe Foundation in 2007.<sup>27</sup> Since then, he did not publicly show any interest in Africa.<sup>28</sup>

### ***Non-Governmental Organizations***

The Society of the Friends of Africa is the most important NGO interested in the continent. In October 2007 it co-organized a large conference called *The Czech Republic and Africa* in the seat of the MFA. Other NGOs have intensified cultural exchanges with Africa during the last years. More importantly, Africa remains the darling of private humanitarian and development activities of the civil society such as ‘adoptions at a distance’, building of schools, etc. Some of these grassroots organizations have sporadically protested against human rights violations in the countries of their activity.

## **CZECH FOREIGN POLICY TO AFRICA IN THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC SPACE**

Like in other countries of the North, the media image of Africa in the Czech Republic is generally negative and hampered by stereotypes. The continent is represented either as backward and troubled or as exotic. At the same time, Africa is given more media attention than other regions of the South, which contrasts with the priorities of the Czech foreign policy. For example, the Czech citizens see Africa as the primary

target by far of the Czech development cooperation, which sharply contrasts with reality.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, with the rising income of the Czech population, the growing opportunities for travel, and the increasing African diasporas, people to people contacts are more intense than ever, which presents an opportunity to narrow the false image of the continent.

## CONCLUSION

Due to its traditionally low priority in the Czech foreign policy, Sub-Saharan Africa does not even come close to becoming a subject of fierce and audible debates that would divide the political scene, or even the society at large. Hence, it appears as a seemingly uninteresting agenda, characterized by weak economic and low-profile political relations with sporadic and non-controversial meetings at the high level. However, the attitude of the MFA towards Africa is a remarkable but somehow paradoxical example of Europeanization. Even though the longstanding preference of the EU for the region has incited the Czech Republic to stabilize its African policy both strategically and institutionally over the 2007–2009 period, its influence has also led to a certain division of labour and the prioritization of the Eastern dimension to the detriment of Africa in various areas, including economic diplomacy and development cooperation.

In contrast to its political insignificance, the societal support for Africa is higher, though mainly in the framework of charity. Sub-Saharan Africa appeared only exceptionally on the government agenda, and it is possible that this was largely because of the intervention of pro-African individuals within the official structures of the MFA and the government at large, as is true for other regions as well. The Czech-African relations have suffered from the geopolitical changes after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Even though the Czech Republic acceded both EU and NATO, the perception of the former USSR as a threat remains one of the cornerstones of the Czech foreign policy, which leads to the mobilization of resources and political will on the Eastern agenda. The perception of Africa as the Third World, or the ‘Rest’ to the West, has not changed, and the region is seldom seen as a relevant *partner* for the Czech Republic, or even for Czech businesses.

The geopolitical shift to a multipolar world with the emerging powers more active in Africa has been acknowledged by the recent strategy paper, but a general awareness of the new opportunities in Africa may probably arise only with more intense people-to-people contacts through visits and migration. The MFA may pretend to specialize in the East and leave Africa to the policy of the EU and multilateral organizations, but the reduction of official bilateral political ties by closing the embassies and the reduction of development cooperation by reducing the number of priority countries on the poorest continent will probably lead to further undermining of the potential in the relations with Africa that may be sighted by the civil society organizations and businesses. However, the relatively important national contribution to the European Development Fund from 2011 may soon be an important factor in changing the lukewarm attitude of the government.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> I am grateful to the following people for interviews, written communications, and/or comments on the preceding versions of the paper that were realized in 2007–2009: Blanka Fajkusová; Michal Jeřábek; Jakub Karfík; Petr Kopřiva; Jan Látal; Viktor Lorenc; Jaroslav Olša; Václav Prášil; Bronislava Tomášová from the Czech MFA; Václav Exner; Jaromír Štětina and Přemysl Rabas, members of the Czech Parliament; Celia-Sanda Botha, Ambassador of South Africa to the Czech Republic; and Mohammed Nurudeen Ismaila, Minister-Counsellor of the Embassy of Ghana in Prague. The responsibility for the final version is mine.
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## Chapter 15

# The Latin American Dimension of the Czech Foreign Policy<sup>1</sup>

*Ondřej Slačálek*

### THE LATIN AMERICAN DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

From the point of view of the Czech Foreign Policy (CFP), Latin America is considered as a region of rather marginal importance. Although there is a certain consensus on Latin America's political significance and the opportunity for export, since 1989 the region has not been a priority of the Czech Republic's foreign policy relations. This view of the Czech diplomacy is connected with the absence of conceptual documents. In fact, only few issues have seriously provoked political discords: namely Cuba and Venezuela (the latter mainly in the last few years). Both countries have been targets of criticism by influential Czech human right NGOs and the Czech diplomacy for a long time. On the other hand, a part of the Czech left still has the tendency to idealize left-wing governments in Latin America or to express some sympathy with them. These discords evoke the Cold War rhetoric on both sides (criticism in the light of human rights issues by the Czech right and also some left wing parties vs. advocacy of the regimes against U.S. interference on the part of the left). These disputes have referred not only to political issues of Latin America or Cuba, but to the role of identity and the historical experience of the participants or the comparative similarity of dictatorial regimes as well.

The foreign policy relations were most significantly influenced by the Czech Republic's presidency of the EU Council during the described period. Discussions focused on the presidency also contributed to issues connected with the conception of CFP towards Latin America. Above all, the Czech Presidency (together with other interactions) brought some softening of the accent on the Czech position towards Cuba. The economic crisis and the closing of some Czech embassies also contributed to opening the debates about the proper shape of bilateral activities towards Latin American countries.

## THE LATIN AMERICAN DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: AGENDA AND EVENTS

### *Bilateral Relations before the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU*

The context of the Czech bilateral relations with Latin American countries lay between de-politicization and over-politicization. Apart from commercial issues, ČR did not articulate its specific interests towards most of Latin America. In conclusion, common contacts were based on perspectives of economic consolidation and cultural collaboration rather than on common political issues. Considering Cuba (and, to a lesser extent, Venezuela), the Czech Republic articulated a relatively sharp position that was not shared by most of the Latin American states (and neither by the majority of European states). Nevertheless, this position ceased to have such importance (see the part on *Security and human rights*).

Records of visits of political representatives are also important records of the fragmented interest in the Latin American region before the Czech presidency of the EU Council. These visits were based on maintaining or developing contacts. In 2008, two contacts on the highest level were considered to be the most important. One of them was the visit of the Brazilian President Ignazio Lula de Silva on 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> April 2008. The Brazilian President and his Czech counterpart Václav Klaus signed the actualization of the agreement on economic collaboration (the first version was signed in 1994). The other contact was the participation of the Czech Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek in the summit of EU-LAC in Lima on 15<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> May 2008 (two days before the summit, Topolánek visited Colombia and met President Alvaro Uribe). These contacts on the highest level were supplemented by visits of ministers, their deputies and delegations of MPs. The most important contacts were those with Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Peru and Mexico.

### *The Czech Republic's Presidency of the Council of the EU*

The Latin American agenda was not one of the political priorities during the Czech presidency of the Council of the EU; other issues overshadowed it. The Czech presidency continued in developing the strategic partnership of the EU with the group of Latin American and Caribbean countries (LAC) and tried to utilize its position of relative disinterestedness and distance from the colonial past and the majority of the discussed issues.

The strategic partnership between both regions (which had already been developing for ten years) has continued during the Presidency. Among substantial outputs we can find the launching of the human rights dialogues with Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Argentina and Colombia, which should contribute to the exchange of opinions as well as to the approximation of the countries' positions in regard to global issues connected with human rights (the International Criminal Court was also consulted).<sup>2</sup> Probably the most important advance in the relationship between the EU and LAC was the opening of a structured dialogue about migration on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2009.<sup>3</sup> The most important event during the Czech presidency was the meeting of European ministers of foreign affairs and the group of Latin America and Caribbean countries (RIO) that took

place in Prague on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> May 2009. The importance of this meeting was prevalently formal and symbolic because of the fact that discussions about real cooperation between the EU and Latin American countries took place rather on the platform of LAC (summits of LAC have been organized biannually; the last one took place in 2008 in Lima). Rather than an occasion to influence the bi-regional collaboration between the EU and Latin America, it was an occasion to present the Czech Republic in front of Latin American diplomats. Nevertheless, the meeting was influenced by an absence of some important ministers of foreign affairs (those of Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina and Brazil).<sup>4</sup>

Neither on the level of the Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade (MIT) was Latin America considered as a priority. In accord with the EU agenda, CFP promoted trends towards liberalization. Nonetheless, in some cases it interfered with interests of other European states in the Latin American region. The most striking case was the dispute over the membership of Venezuela in the special incentive arrangement for sustainable development and good governance (GSP+). The Czech Republic promoted withdrawing Venezuela from the GSP+ because this country did not fulfill the proper terms, namely its own commitment to the ratification of the UN Convention against corruption. Although exclusion of any state from the arrangement should be automatic in such a case, some EU states did not agree. The dispute was finally settled by the decision of the European Commission. As a consequence, Venezuela had to be crossed off.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Bilateral the relations after the Czech Presidency of the EU Council***

The Czech Republic gained new foreign contacts, and the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU contributed to the improvement of the dynamics of the bilateral relations.<sup>6</sup> There were also interesting impacts on the relations with Cuba. The meeting of EU and the RIO countries was the first in which Cuba participated; there was also the ministerial troika with Cuba that took place on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2009. Further softening of the Czech-Cuban relations came later. At the end of September, Czech and Cuban ministers of foreign affairs met during a session of the United Nations General Assembly. A Czech minister informed his Cuban counterpart about the possibility for curing the ailing relations between the two countries (but without compromising on human rights). Beside this, there was a marked shift to other issues: the Czech Republic offered development aid for Cuba (the Czech government had proposed this a few times before, but the offers were not accepted by the Cuban government). The discussion also opened up the problem of the Cuban debt.<sup>7</sup>

On 15<sup>th</sup> October 2009 the government's decision to close six Czech embassies and consulates was published.<sup>8</sup> Two were in Latin America, namely the embassy in Colombia and the consulate in Sao Paulo. The decision to close the embassy in Colombia was probably caused by an application of the principle of reciprocity. However, much more criticism was addressed to CFP by representatives of Czech exporters because of the closing down of the consulate in Sao Paulo.<sup>9</sup> The Foreign Department of the Czech Parliament was engaged in this issue as well. Above all, MPs protested against the fact that the government did not consult its steps. The closing of embas-

sies and consulates was criticized by Czech MPs en bloc without any accent on the two offices in Latin America.

Between 18<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> November the state visit of the Czech Republic's President Václav Klaus in Peru and Brazil took place. The Czech President met his Peruvian and Brazilian counterparts; the main issue of their debates was trade. Klaus sharply criticized the closing of the consulate in Sao Paulo with reference to Brazil's economic significance and the declining importance of embassies and consulates in the framework of the European Union.<sup>10</sup> Probably because of this critique, Czech authorities started to revise the previous decision.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Economic and Cultural Relations***

The most important part of the CFP towards Latin America is the economic relationship. In many cases, these relations are built on the good reputation of the former Czechoslovak export to Latin America, even though in recent times, different commodities are involved. The most significant participant is the MIT, which has supported the Czech export to selected Latin American states for several years. After reducing the number of prioritized countries on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2009, Argentina and Chile were crossed off the list of prioritized countries, and now there are only two key actors: Mexico and Brazil. These two states are the biggest regional partners of the Czech Republic, but the extent of foreign trade still remains low.

In 2009, the trade balance in relation to Brazil was almost neutral. The Czech Republic exported goods for 5.178 billion CZK and imported goods that cost 5.143 billion CZK. This change (in comparison with the passive trade balance in 2008) was not caused by an increase of Czech exports (there was even small decrease from 5.36 billion CZK in exports in 2008, but in 2007, exports were only 4.583 billion CZK), but by a decrease of Brazilian imports. Though Brazil is the most significant trade partner of the Czech Republic in Latin America, Czech exports to Brazil composed only 0.2% of the total Czech exports in 2009.<sup>12</sup>

An unusual but important stimulus for the development of economic relations with Brazil is the status of the market economy, which was acknowledged to the Czech Republic (together with seven new members of the European Union) on the summit EU-Brazil on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2008. Brazil even acknowledged Ukraine and China for their market economies sooner than those EU countries, apparently because it considered its hesitation as politically advantageous.<sup>13</sup>

In the case of Mexico, there is even a lesser amount of trade exchange (in 2009 the share of Czech exports was 3.619 billion CZK and the share of Czech imports was 3.611 billion CZK; in the years 2007 and 2008, the Czech exports were 3.892 and 3.835 billion CZK respectively).<sup>14</sup> What is also important in this respect are contacts with Czech communities, namely those in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay that have been maintained by Czech embassies (e.g. providing programs for learning Czech), and also the popularity of Latin American culture in the Czech society.

### ***Security and Human Rights***

The issue of human rights is one of the main topics of the Czech diplomacy. In Latin

America, the country of priority interest concerning this issue is Cuba. However, in spite of the Czech interest in human rights and the support of Cuban dissent, its base and other potentially oppositional groups (as well as in undermining of the Cuban regime), Cuba did not cease to be an important issue for the Czech diplomacy. In comparison with the first half of the decade, though, we can conclude that this interest gradually lost its central importance for the CFP.

In the years 1999–2001, the Czech Republic entered the debates on Cuba as a significant advocate of resolutions of human rights issues in the framework of the Commission of the UN for Human Rights, but later it became a co-formulator of the European position towards Cuba.<sup>15</sup> During the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there was a shift in the Czech attitude towards Cuba from its ‘Americanization’ to its ‘Europeization’ – at least on the level of rhetoric. The Czech Republic exchanged its own clear voice for the possibility of creating a stronger and more unified position for the European Union.

The Czech Republic also supported Cuban dissent, its base and potentially oppositional groups through financing various projects through the MFA, particularly the Human Rights and Transition Policy department (founded on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2007 through the integration of two independent departments while the Czech democratization assistance program called the Transition Promotion Program was launched in 2004.). Together with Burma/Myanmar, Belarus and seven other states, Cuba has been one of the priority countries concerning democratic transformation. This attitude was expressed by the financial support of Cuban dissent, which was distributed mainly (approximately 85%) through grants for Czech NGOs. These grants were awarded in an atmosphere of less publicity than that generated by grants for transformative collaboration with other countries.

In 2008, the key discussion concerning Czech human rights policy was the dispute about the continuation of the June Measures, through which the EU had reacted to the persecutions of Cuban dissidents in 2003. The Czech Republic was one of the countries that promoted the continuation of the June Measures; Czech representatives accentuated their demonstrative support for the Cuban opposition: Mirek Topolánek met with Cuban emigrants in the National Endowment of Democracy, Karel Schwarzenberg met with Cuban dissidents, and the Czech ambassador in the U.S. attended a conference on Cuban migration. As a consequence of these efforts, the Cuban daily *Granma* labeled the Czech ambassador as an agent of the CIA.

Cuban dissidents and the U.S. government called the EU not to cancel the June measures. Nonetheless, the position of Spain (and other countries supporting the canceling of the measures) prevailed. The Czech Republic accepted the final result and admitted the fact that diplomatic sanctions did not work (or more precisely that EU countries did not really practice them). Thus, the Czech Republic stated that it would be therefore better to shift towards common EU pressure on the improvement of the situation in Cuban prisons.<sup>16</sup> The Czech Republic’s acceptance of the EU’s position when it opted to compromise and the fact that the Czech diplomacy did not resort to a political blockade were the proof of the ‘Europeization’ of the Czech attitude towards Cuba in contrast to its former ‘Americanization’. In spite of this develop-

ment, some strong gestures of solidarity with the US were demonstrated by the accord concerning Cuba between Topolánek and U.S. Secretary of Trade C. Gutiérrez.<sup>17</sup>

In 2009, the Czech rhetoric on human rights weakened because of the Czech Presidency of the EU Council. The Czech Republic could not defend its position so actively at this point (while Sweden accepted the role of the main critic of the Cuban regime). The minor accent on human rights in Latin America on the Czech agenda corresponded with the change of the Cuban position in the Latin American region and prevalently with the political changes in the U.S. This change was perceived by the Czech diplomacy as an important shift towards the transformation of its own human rights effort because a part of the Czech human rights activities consists in the Czech Republic's alliance and cooperation with the U.S.<sup>18</sup>

During the Czech presidency, the first evaluation of the political dialogue between the EU and Cuba after the suspended June Measures took place. Though a part of the Czech right anticipated some hardening of the European position towards Cuba, the situation was actually quite different – the dialogue was prolonged for another year. The Czech diplomacy accepted this output (which was far from ideal from its point of view) because an alternative one could have contributed to a disintegration of the EU's unified position as well as liberating the space for states that wanted to develop an unconditional collaboration with Cuba. In the framework of the EU's consensual position, the accent on human rights has still endured.<sup>19</sup>

There was also the human right dimension of the CFP towards Venezuela – the Czech Republic participated in the EU's critical position towards Venezuela. On 15<sup>th</sup> April 2009, the Czech Minister for Human Rights and Minorities Michael Kocáb criticized the violation of human rights in Venezuela (however, without coordination with the MFA). This step was supported by some Czech critics of this country (e.g. Jan Ruml). In his statement from 15<sup>th</sup> April 2009, Kocáb addressed the international community to condemn the imprisonment and illegal confinement of oppositional activists in Venezuela. This appeal did not have an international echo (apart from the protests of the Venezuelan ambassador); its importance remained proportional to the importance of the Czech Minister for Human Rights and Minorities. It is also not probable that Venezuela or any other Latin American state could become a priority country for the Czech human rights and transformation policy – even in the case of available resources, the target countries of this policy would be mainly territories which are geographically closer.

Although the security element of the CFP towards Latin America has been reflected, its influence was not significant. Reflections of eventual problems with the migration from Latin America remained on the level of hypothesis.

In contrast, some factual outputs have been presented in the case of discussions on security collaboration and mutual exchange of police and military forces. In 2008, a team of military chemists was sent to Lima by the Czech army. The delegating of the Czech chemists raised political controversy because the government did not consult the parliament. The reason the government gave for this step was that the chemists were only in the role of security advisors.<sup>20</sup> In 2009, one policeman from the Czech National Antidrug Centre stayed in Mexico in the framework of a common program

of the European Union, U.S. and Mexico (*Mérida*).<sup>21</sup> There has also been the negotiation on military collaboration with Brazil, as Brazil offered to train Czech soldiers for fighting in jungles.<sup>22</sup>

### THE LATIN AMERICAN DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: IDENTIFICATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE KEY ACTORS

A piece of evidence for the rather low importance of Latin America in the CFP is the level on which policy towards this region has been created. The main actor has been the Department of American States of the MFA, which is decidedly not the key factor of the CFP towards the U.S. Though the CFP towards the U.S. has been created on a higher level, this department is the main actor of the CFP in the case of the Latin American region.<sup>23</sup>

On the level of the MIT, the relations between the Czech Republic and Latin America have been maintained by the Department of European Affairs and the Department of Trade. The MIT also maintains the Czech Council for Trade and Investment as a forum for articulating the private exporters' interests. Therefore, the absence of a conception was partly filled by the MIT and its segmental priorities.

The most important actor on the parliamentary level is the foreign department of the Chamber of Deputies. Its members have criticized the omission of the department by the executive power and also referred to the absence of a conception. However, these criticisms were made in the described period mainly by resolutions formulated on the issue of Czech foreign policy in general and without any particular focus on Latin America. Consequently, they were rather corrective and negative feedback than a setting of a specific agenda. The parliament is also the space for articulations of critical positions and demonstrations of interest in Latin America in some cases. The creation of the parliamentary group Czech Republic-Venezuela in October 2009 probably falls into this category. This group is composed of MPs from the Social Democratic and the Communist Party.

The President of the Czech Republic has an important role as well – not only as the external representative of the state, but also as a mentor of Czech society who underlined the importance of the region in relation to his own visit in Peru and Brazil, the visit of the Brazilian President Lula de Silva in the Czech Republic, and the discussions about closing Czech embassies and consulates.

Concerning the influence of Czech politicians and civil society, it is necessary to emphasize that the spectrum of relevant actors is limited. Therefore, the relative significance of each actor is higher.<sup>24</sup> Actors are motivated and differentiated prevalently on issues such as those concerning human rights, spreading of western democracy/capitalism or the position towards leftist regimes and governments in Latin America.

The first group is represented by NGOs, namely *Člověk v tísni* (*People in Need Foundation*) and *Respekt Institute*. The *People in Need Foundation* is an NGO that combines human rights and democracy-promoting agenda; its influence is well-documented by the fact that the director of this organization in the years 1997–2005

(Tomáš Pojar) became the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs as a representative of the right-wing Civic Democratic Party (ODS) in 2005–2010. Cuba is one of the key countries (together with, e.g., Belarus) for the human rights and democracy-promotion agenda of this organization. The *People in Need Foundation* connects an overall refusal of the Cuban regime with support of dissidents and argumentation against their imprisonment.

In 2008 the Czech NGO *Respekt Institute* created the internationally based right-wing analytically-lobbyist think tank *Center of Analytical Studies for Latin America*. The most important issue of this center has been the mobilization against left-wing governments in all Latin America countries. Thus, this think tank has had a higher political profile than the *People in Need Foundation*.

Activities of this stream of civil society were supported by the former President of the ČR Václav Havel and former minister of foreign affairs Cyril Svoboda (currently the chairman of the Christian Democratic Party), mainly during the Czech Republic's presidency of the EU Council. Another active figure in the *Center of Analytical Studies for Latin America* has been Jan Ruml, a former Czech Minister of Interior. These politicians have connected contemporary politics of Latin America with their own experience as dissidents (in the case of Havel and Ruml) and politicians (Svoboda). But we have to mention that Latin America is not the most important tilt yard for the struggle about the sense and importance of this experience (much more significant were the disputes about the U.S. radar base on Czech territory).

The second group is represented by the part of the Czech left that feels sympathy or at least empathy for the leftist governments in Latin America. These trends have been expressed mainly within circles close to the Czech Communist Party. The best-known active participant in this respect is the *Society of Czech-Cuban Friendship*. The *Society* has built its activities on the experiences of collaboration between Czechoslovakia and Cuba before 1989. Another actor of this sort is the *Society of Czech-Venezuelan Friendship*, which is more practical and depoliticized. Its role consists in supporting the heightened trade exchange with Venezuela.

## THE LATIN AMERICAN DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC SPACE

Attention to the Czech relations with Latin American countries and political involvement in the public space was concentrated on Cuba and (to a lesser extent) on Venezuela. Other issues were frequently blinked or subordinated to simplifying patterns.

The trend of continuing marginalization was visible mainly during the visit of Brazilian President Lula de Silva as no daily newspaper published information about the visit on the day after. This fact was sharply criticized by Czech President Václav Klaus.<sup>25</sup> Thus, when Klaus visited Peru and Brazil in 2009, he wrote a series of articles about the journey for a Czech daily (*Právo*) to popularize the importance of Latin America.<sup>26</sup>



Stereotypes and simplifying patterns were mostly employed in some descriptions of the Latin American left. An example of this attitude could be a front page headline of the respected right wing daily *Lidové noviny* as it described Evo Morales and his government as ‘Bolivian communists’.<sup>27</sup>

However, the key issues for public engagement and discussions were Cuba and (though less important) Venezuela. Concerning Cuba, the Czech NGO *People in Need* was very active there. In the years 2007 and 2008 *People in Need* organized the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> public manifestations drawing attention to the detention of dissidents in Cuba. Many people (including some celebrities) expressed their solidarity by their symbolical presence in a simulated prison cell for one hour. This event had public acceptance; at the same time it was also an occasion for the criticism of some Czech human rights activists (because of the fact that the American prison in Guantánamo was not on the agenda for this NGO).

*People in Need* also tried to politicize the growing tourist traffic with Cuba: initially it promoted the boycott of tourist traffic; later it started to advise people to connect their trip with distribution of medical drugs, literature and other materials for Cuban dissidents. This effort was not very successful; only a few Czech tourists have been active in these kinds of activities.

Former politicians have been agile in their criticism of Cuba as well. Since 2003, Václav Havel has helped with his authority to popularize the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba (Havel also participated in founding this committee). Former Minister of Foreign Affairs (and since May 2009 the chairman of the Czech Christian Democrats) Cyril Svoboda has also been active in regard to this issue.

Both of them were agile during the Czech Presidency of the EU Council. Their goal was to maintain the continuity of the strong critical voice from Prague and to promote the idea that human rights issues should have always been superior to any other political or economical interests of the EU.

The visit of Cyril Svoboda in Cuba at the end of June 2009 was broadly hyped (a few days after its finish). In collaboration with *People in Need*, Svoboda visited Cuban dissidents and distributed medicaments among them. At the same time he tried to intervene in the internal structure of the Cuban opposition – by the advice declared during his meeting with Cuban dissidents in the Czech embassy that they should have united themselves under the guidance of ‘one leader’ – Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas.<sup>28</sup>

In his evaluation of the Czech presidency Cyril Svoboda said that we ‘*threw overboard the human rights activists in Cuba*’.<sup>29</sup> He criticized (though not fully realistically) the Czech presidency as unable to divide roles between politicians and other actors in such a way that it would be the Czech position that would be the most represented. Svoboda compared the decline of the human rights position with his own political role. Activities of the *Respekt Institute* and its *Centre for Analytical Studies of Latin America* addressed the Latin American left as well as the right. This organization tried to influence the Czech presidency by organizing the workshop ‘*Priorities of the Czech Republic towards Latin America during the presidency of the EU Council*’ in the building of the MFA on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2008. Nevertheless, the output of this workshop (in the form of recommendations) has not been influential in the frame-

work of CFP – probably because of its not fully realistic nature. The accent was put on finding a united position for the EU, which should have supported ‘western values’ against the contemporary left turn.<sup>30</sup> In the winter of 2009, Jan Ruml visited Venezuela and collaborated there with the local opposition.

The Communist Party took the symmetrically opposite attitude towards the human rights activism in relation to Cuba. The Communist Party tried to act as a negotiator and an assistant of the Cuban government and the domestic political forces that (namely during the time of the Czech Presidency) tried to improve the Czech-Cuban relations. In the party’s daily *Haló noviny* various articles with the aim to popularize Cuba have often been published. Concerning Venezuela, the member of the EU parliament and leading Czech communist intellectual Miloslav Ransdorf visited the country and supported Chavez in the campaign before the referendum in 2008.

Though the Czech Republic has relatively strong expert coverage of Latin America (namely in comparison with Africa), the voice of the Czech expert Ibero-Americanist community was not very loud. There are two Ibero-Americanist university departments in the Czech Republic (at the Charles University in Prague and at the University in Hradec Králové). It is important to mention that some Czech experts have considered Latin America as a wasted chance from the point of view of possibilities for export.

## CONCLUSION

The key issue for further development of the Czech-Latin American relations will be the debate over the conception of the CFP towards Latin America. The important issue for this conception is mainly the priorities of the partnership – whether it is inevitable to choose the most important countries of the region for a partnership, whether it is necessary to pay attention to the political conditions in particular countries, the scale of cooperation inside the EU, and the extent of collaboration with the U.S. (these issues would be fundamental for the CFP in the near future).

Another problem would be the influence of public discussion. We could remember that exporters and even the President entered the debates about the closing of the consulate in Sao Paulo. On both the right and the left, there have existed small (but, in some political circles, influential) groups with interests in the Latin American region. Thus, it is possible that there will be further demands from the Czech right for stronger pressure on Cuba and on left wing governments in Latin America in general. But even if the right won the elections, we could not expect an empowerment of the Latin American agenda in the framework of the CFP. To such an empowerment (which would probably be primarily on the level of rhetoric), only important changes of the international context (e.g. a shift in Latin American politics, changes in attitudes of the U.S. or the EU, or some escalation of the recent situation in Latin America) could contribute.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> I would like to thank the director of the Department of American States of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Kateřina Fialková, her deputy Veronika Bajgarová, the director of the Human Rights and Transition Policy Department Gabriela Dlouhá, and the informant from the Ministry of Industry and Trade for their interviews and consultations. My thanks also go to Jaroslav Fiala and Vendula Prokůpková for their inspiring comments.
- <sup>2</sup> For the example of Chile, see IV EU-Chile Association Council, Prague, 14 May, 2009, Joint Communiqué. On-line: ([www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/107743.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/107743.pdf)).
- <sup>3</sup> Joint Press Communiqué on the launch of the EU-LAC Structured Dialogue on Migration. On-line: ([www.eu2009.cz/en/news-and-documents/press-releases/joint-press-communicue-on-the-launch-of-the-eu-lac-structured-dialogue-on-migration-26644](http://www.eu2009.cz/en/news-and-documents/press-releases/joint-press-communicue-on-the-launch-of-the-eu-lac-structured-dialogue-on-migration-26644)).
- <sup>4</sup> Zasedání ministrů zahraničí EU v Praze. Zprávy ČT, 13. 5. 2009.
- <sup>5</sup> MPO: Publikováno rozhodnutí Komise o vyřazení Venezuely ze seznamu příjemců GSP+. On-line: ([www.mpo.cz/dokument61544.html](http://www.mpo.cz/dokument61544.html)).
- <sup>6</sup> Interview with Veronika Bajgarová.
- <sup>7</sup> *Kohout discussed the correction of bilateral relations with Cuba*. Radio Prague's News, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2009. Cuba is the biggest foreign debtor of the Czech Republic. On-line: ([www.mfcr.cz/cps/rde/xchg/mfcr/xsl/vf\\_agendaCKA\\_zahr\\_pohled\\_46967.html](http://www.mfcr.cz/cps/rde/xchg/mfcr/xsl/vf_agendaCKA_zahr_pohled_46967.html)).
- <sup>8</sup> *Usnesení vlády ČR ze dne 15. října 2009 č. 1296 o zrušení některých zastupitelských úřadů ČR v zahraničí*. On-line: ([kormoran.vlada.cz/usneseni/usneseni\\_webtest.nsf/WebGovRes/EF7FB88510626A94C125764F003BEFC9/\\$FILE/1296%20uv091015.1296.pdf](http://kormoran.vlada.cz/usneseni/usneseni_webtest.nsf/WebGovRes/EF7FB88510626A94C125764F003BEFC9/$FILE/1296%20uv091015.1296.pdf)).
- <sup>9</sup> *Vývozcí kritizují vládu za zrušení konzulátů v Sydney a Sao Paulu*. Zprávy Radia Praha, 26. 10. 2009; cf. MPO: 13. zasedání České rady pro obchod a investice. On-line: ([www.mpo.cz/dokument65574.html](http://www.mpo.cz/dokument65574.html)).
- <sup>10</sup> *Zápisky z Latinské Ameriky* č. 9. On-line: ([klaus.cz/klaus2/asp/clanek.asp?id=aeMqi7uiR9tk](http://klaus.cz/klaus2/asp/clanek.asp?id=aeMqi7uiR9tk)).
- <sup>11</sup> *Pozastavení postupného utlumování konzulární činnosti*. On-line: ([www.mzv.cz/saopaulo/cz/rozdeleni\\_pusobnosti/oznameni\\_o\\_rozhodnuti\\_uzavrit\\_generalni.html](http://www.mzv.cz/saopaulo/cz/rozdeleni_pusobnosti/oznameni_o_rozhodnuti_uzavrit_generalni.html)).
- <sup>12</sup> See Český statistický úřad: *Zahraniční obchod ČR v lednu až prosinci 2009*. Praha, 2010. On-line: ([www.czso.cz/csu/2009edicniplan.nsf/t/C40048403D/\\$File/w-60010912.pdf](http://www.czso.cz/csu/2009edicniplan.nsf/t/C40048403D/$File/w-60010912.pdf)).
- <sup>13</sup> Kvaček, Petr: *Brazílie přiznala statut tržní ekonomiky novým členům EU*. On-line: ([www.mpo.cz/dokument54525.html](http://www.mpo.cz/dokument54525.html)).
- <sup>14</sup> See Český statistický úřad: *Zahraniční obchod ČR v lednu až prosinci 2009*, op. cit.
- <sup>15</sup> Pšross, Tomáš (2004): *Problematika lidských práv v české zahraniční politice*. In: Pick, Otto–Handl, Vladimír (eds): *Zahraniční politika ČR 1993–2004. Úvahy, problémy a perspektivy*. Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, pp. 211–226.
- <sup>16</sup> *Děláte chybu, vzkazují unii USA*. Lidové noviny, 21. 6. 2008.
- <sup>17</sup> Úřad vlády (press conference): *Premiér M. Topolánek jednal s ministrem obchodu USA C. Gutierrezem o politické situaci na Kubě a protiraketové obraně*. Anopress, 3. 6. 2008.
- <sup>18</sup> Pšross, Tomáš (2004): *Problematika lidských práv v české zahraniční politice*, op. cit.
- <sup>19</sup> Interview with Kateřina Fialková.
- <sup>20</sup> *Armáda tajně vyslala chemiky do Peru*. Právo, 17. 5. 2008.
- <sup>21</sup> Information by Police Presidium spokesperson Dagmar Bednaršiková from 12. 1. 2010.
- <sup>22</sup> Information by Vladimír Lukovský, Press Service of the Ministry of Defense of the Czech Republic from 13. 1. 2010.
- <sup>23</sup> Interview with Kateřina Fialková.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid.

- <sup>25</sup> *Co Klaus tentokráte udělal, ale media to zamlčela*. Antidementi č. 30. On-line: ([www.klaus.cz/clanky/256](http://www.klaus.cz/clanky/256)).
- <sup>26</sup> *Právo, Klaus.cz*.
- <sup>27</sup> *Česko chce prodat L-159 bolivijským komunistům*. Lidové noviny, 23. 6. 2007.
- <sup>28</sup> *Evropa se bojí Kuby. Proč?* Lidové noviny, 17. 7. 2009.
- <sup>29</sup> Český rozhlas 6, 6. 9. 2009. *Názory a argumenty*.
- <sup>30</sup> Centrum analytických studií pro Latinskou Ameriku: Analýza workshopu ‘Priority České republiky vůči Latinské Americe po dobu předsednictví EU’. On-line: ([respektinstitut.cz/wp-content/uploads/prilohy/Analyza\\_LA-EU.pdf](http://respektinstitut.cz/wp-content/uploads/prilohy/Analyza_LA-EU.pdf)).



**PART IV:  
The Multilateral Dimension  
and Other Thematic Areas  
of the Czech Foreign Policy  
in 2007–2009**



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## Chapter 16

# The Multilateral Dimension of the Czech Foreign Policy

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### THE MULTILATERAL DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Taking into account its size, geographical position and historical experiences, it certainly comes as no surprise that the Czech Republic belongs among the proponents of multilateralism in its foreign policy. Yet, its taste for it is largely consumed by its membership in the European Union, the NATO and several international organizations of an economic nature (WTO, IMF, etc.). Other international fora, including the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the OSCE, remain somehow in the background, often overshadowed by the three main topics on the agenda. The same applies to the CR's relationship to international law. The Czech Republic generally supports respect for and further development of international law without turning it into a truly key topic on its agenda. Despite its attention being primarily oriented elsewhere, the Czech Republic has throughout 2007–2009 continued to take part in the activities of the UN, the Council of Europe, and the OSCE and in initiatives aimed at strengthening international law. Its accomplishments in all these spheres have been generally marked by two dominant trends: europeization and specialization.

The main written source influencing the Czech multilateral foreign policy in the time-frame of 2007–2009 was the *Conception of foreign policy of the Czech Republic for the years 2003–2006*, which has not been updated since its adoption in 2003. This document identifies ‘*the development of relations with other countries and international organizations on a bilateral and multilateral basis (...)*’ (point 3) as one of the priorities of the Czech foreign policy and ranks ‘*multilateral cooperation within integrated bodies and international organizations*’ (point 2.4) among the main instruments of this policy. Special attention is paid to the activities within the UN: the Czech Republic expresses its interest in all the main areas of the UN activities – the maintenance of international peace and security (with an emphasis on the peace-keeping operations), development and the protection of human rights. Moreover, it declares its support for initiatives leading to reforms inside the UN, especially reforms

of the UN Security Council. The Council of Europe is mentioned relatively briefly. The Czech Republic endorses reforms in the European Court of Human Rights and calls for strengthening the conventional system within the organization and for adding new instruments aimed at combating terrorism. At the occasion of the EU Presidency in 2009, the Czech Republic made use of several other documents, especially the *Sector priorities of the Presidency of the Czech Republic in the Council of the EU in the first half of 2009*<sup>1</sup>, the *18-month plan of the Presidency*<sup>2</sup> and the *Working Plan for the Czech Presidency*.<sup>3</sup>

In the longer term the Czech multilateral foreign policy is characterized by an effort to find a reasonable compromise between the principled loyalty to certain values, such as the promotion of human rights or respect for international law, on the one hand, and the need to maintain flexibility and to respond to international events on a case by case basis, taking into account other national interests and the positions of our closest allies, on the other. The clash between the principled and the pragmatic approach characterized the debates over the recognition of Kosovo, the conflict between Russia and Georgia, and the ratification of the Rome Statute of the ICC. Not only different political parties, but often different factions of the same party stood on different sides of the dividing line. Simplifying this situation to some extent, it is possible to say that in 2007–2009, the Parliament usually had the tendency to stress principles, the President favoured the pragmatic view, and the Government, together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, sought to find the golden mean. These internal tensions, however, only rarely marked the international performance of the Czech Republic, in which the Government had the last word.

## THE MULTILATERAL DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: AGENDA AND EVENTS

The Czech multilateral foreign policy agenda in the 2007–2009 period encompassed the Czech activities in the UN, the Czech activities in the Council of Europe and the OSCE, and the Czech contribution to the respect and further development of international law. It is useful to stress that the political dynamic in all these three spheres changed in the first half of 2009, when the country, for the first time in its history, assumed the Presidency of the Council of the EU. This position brought it the opportunity to participate, on behalf of the EU, in the activities of various UN, CoE or OSCE organs and made its voice more audible and more respected in these organs.

### *Activities in the UN*

In 2007, the Czech Republic devoted all its energies to gain the seat of a *non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for 2008–2009*. The campaign, which started shortly after the candidature was announced in 2003, staked on the Czech experiences in the UN (the Czech membership in the Security Council in 1994–1995, the Czech Presidency during the 59<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly in 2004, and the Czech Presidency in the UN Economic and Social Council in 1998), the Czech con-



tribution to various UN activities (peace-keeping operations, development, humanitarian assistance) and the Czech Republic's reputation, which was based on its successful process of social and economic transformation and the peaceful division of Czechoslovakia in 1993.<sup>4</sup> The country competed for the Eastern European seat in the SC with Croatia and, originally, with Georgia, which later on withdrew its candidature. The Czech chances seemed to be relatively high<sup>5</sup> but in the end, Croatia scored better in the UN General Assembly by getting 95 : 91 votes in the first and 106 : 81 votes in the second round of votes. In reaction to this development, the Czech Republic withdrew its candidature and Croatia got elected.<sup>6</sup> The main reasons given to explain the Czech defeat include miscalculations in the campaign and underestimation of the competitor.

The Czech Republic was, however, more successful in *other UN organs*. In 2006 it got elected to the Organizational Board of the newly established UN Peace-Building Commission, which takes care of post-conflict reconstruction in countries devastated by war and other man-made disasters. Throughout the monitored years, the Czech Republic was also a member of several subsidiary bodies of the UN, e.g. the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, the UN Commission for Social Development, or the UNCITRAL. Finally, Czech representatives were elected to the governing bodies of various UN programmes and special agencies, such as the Executive Office of the UNEP (UN Environment Programme), the Executive Board of the World Food Programme, the Council of the ITU (International Telecommunication Union) and the Operative Board of the UN-Habitat.<sup>7</sup>

The Czech Republic has always belonged among active supporters of the *UN reform*. In 2007–2009, this was reflected in several speeches of its representatives, especially the president Václav Klaus, the permanent representative of the Czech Republic to the UN in New York Martin Palouš and the deputy permanent representative Petr Kaiser.<sup>8</sup> The Czech Republic has been the most actively involved in the discussion about the reform of the UN Security Council. It supports the increase of the membership in this body to 25 seats, which means adding six new permanent seats (two for Africa and Asia and one for GRULAC and WEOG) and four new non-permanent seats (including one for EEG). The enlargement should enhance the representativeness and legitimacy of the Council while at the same time maintaining its effectiveness and efficiency. The Czech Republic also consistently supported other reform initiatives aimed at the enhancement of the cooperation and coordination among various UN bodies, stabilizing the financing of development, the establishing of new organs (UN Human Rights Council and UN Peace Building Commission), etc.<sup>9</sup>

In the first half of 2009, the Czech Republic assumed the *Presidency in the Council of the EU*. This situation changed its position in the UN in the sense that it made the Czech presence more visible. During the six months from January to June 2009, the Czech Republic coordinated the viewpoints of all 27 of the EU member states and presented common EU positions. This gave it an unprecedented chance to take part in the discussions of even those organs in which it had no representatives at the moment, such as the UN Security Council or the ECOSOC. The country presented many statements on behalf of the EU in these organs. The most important were those pronounced

in the Security Council, which included statements dealing with the situation in concrete, mostly African and Middle Eastern, countries; statements concerning the protection of civilians and children in armed conflicts; and speeches on other topics such as the UN peace-keeping operations, the peaceful settlement of disputes, the global financial crisis and the UN counter-terrorist sanctions. During the Presidency, the Czech Republic also had the opportunity to represent the EU in conferences (for instance the conference on the global economic and financial crisis held in New York in May 2009) and to participate in the preparation of important events (for instance the revision conference of the NPT or the summit on the Millennium Development Goals).

The Czech performance at the UN in 2007–2009 was considerably marked by the statements made at the general debate of the *UN General Assembly* in September of each year. In 2007, the statement was pronounced by the Czech president Václav Klaus. It followed his controversial speech at the High-Level Event on Climate Change, in which he questioned the process of global warming and especially the role of the human factor in this process.<sup>10</sup> His statement at the General Assembly was more conventional.<sup>11</sup> There the president described the UN as ‘*an extremely important and in fact irreplaceable platform*’ for which ‘*there is no substitute /.../ in the current world*’ and expressed the hope that the organization would not turn into a tool of global totalitarian governance but would remain ‘*a unique platform /.../ based on the plurality of views /.../ and on our mutual respect towards their sometimes differing positions*’. In 2008 the Czech Republic was represented at the UN General Assembly by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg,<sup>12</sup> who used his speech to stress the importance of effective multilateralism. He also tackled the questions of the Russian-Georgian conflict, the legal status of Kosovo, disarmament, and the achievements of the UN Human Rights Council. He concluded by endorsing the emerging concept of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). In 2009, the relay went back to the president, who, again, accentuated ‘*the role the United Nations has been playing in strengthening security, stability and prosperity in the world*’.<sup>13</sup> Passing on to the problem of the global financial crises, the president warned against the tendencies to ‘*impair economic freedom in favor of state or supra-state regulation just now*’ and urged the international community to lend support to the mechanisms of free competition and an unregulated market.

### ***Activities in the Council of Europe and the OSCE***

Compared to its relatively active engagement in the UN, the activities of the Czech Republic in the Council of Europe and the OSCE remain quite limited and almost invisible at both the domestic and the international scene. The Czech Republic monitors the agenda within the two institutions, but its special contribution to this agenda is usually scarce. In 2007–2009, the Czech Republic supported the idea of reforming the European Court of Human Rights and further strengthening the conventional system of the Council of Europe. The country also got involved in the debates on the legal status of Kosovo, the problems of EU black lists of persons and entities suspect of supporting terrorism, illegal adoption of children in Europe, and trafficking in women and children. Similar topics dominated the Czech agenda in the OSCE.

A more proactive stance in the two organizations was adopted by the Czech Republic during its exercise of the EU Presidency in the first half of 2009. In the Council of Europe, the country got involved, on behalf of the EU, in the discussions over the status of the separated Georgian provinces of Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia. Furthermore, the Czech Republic commented on the elections held in several CoE member states (Moldova, Macedonia, etc.), the controversial lawsuits in Turkey and the lustration law adopted in Albania. Yet, the presidency function did not spare the Czech Republic from criticism by the Council of Europe relating primarily to the delays in the ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC)<sup>14</sup> and the discrimination against the Roma minority.<sup>15</sup> In the OSCE, the Czech Republic presented the EU views on the situation in Georgia, human rights violations in Russia and several central Asian states, the persecution of the political opposition in Belarus, elections in Moldova and Macedonia, and capital punishment in the USA. The second half of 2009 has brought a ‘normalization’ of the Czech participation in the two organizations.

### ***Promotion of International Law***

The Czech Republic promotes respect for and development of international law. In 2007–2009, the main discussions in this area concerned the ratification of the Rome Statute of the ICC, the recognition of Kosovo, and the conflict between Russia and Georgia. The Czech Republic was one of the 120 states that voted in Rome for the adoption of the Statute of the *International Criminal Court* (ICC). It signed the instrument in April 1999, but the process of ratification got blocked for many years by political and legal controversies. These controversies concerned the compatibility of the Statute with the Czech Constitution and the Bill of Fundamental Rights and the posture of P-5 countries towards the ICC. In 2008, the Czech position started to be untenable: the country remained the only EU member outside the ICC system and, at the same time, it was about to assume the Presidency of the Council of the EU. The Presidency is supposed to promote the EU priorities, one of them being the support for the ICC. In reaction to this situation, the Government decided in January 2008 to express its approval of the ratification process and to hand over the Statute to the Parliament. The two chambers of the Parliament granted their consent to the ratification during summer and autumn of 2008.<sup>16</sup>

Subsequently, the Statute was sent to President Klaus, who refused to add his signature, raising again the issue of the alleged incompatibility of the Statute with the Czech constitutional order. Despite intensive communication between the President and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Czech Republic did not manage to conclude the ratification process before its Presidency period. Rather, it did so rightly eight days after it passed the function to Sweden, on 8 July 2009, when the President, somewhat unexpectedly, signed the Statute. The ratification instrument was sent to the depositary, the UN Secretary General, on 21 July, and the Statute entered into force for the Czech Republic on 1 October 2009. Since that date, the Czech Republic has all the obligations stemming from the Statute and its citizens, if they commit one of the serious crimes falling within the jurisdiction of the court, can be prosecuted by the ICC, provided the Czech Republic shows itself to be unwilling or unable to prosecute them.

The *recognition of Kosovo* was one of the few foreign policy questions that raised interests and hot debates not only among politicians but also, at least to a certain degree, among the general public. The former Serbian province of Kosovo, administered since the 1999 NATO aggression by the UN, declared its independence in February 2008. After three months of hesitation, in May 2008, the Czech government recognized Kosovo as an independent state and entered into diplomatic relations with it.<sup>17</sup> The most interesting initiative relating to the recognition was two draft laws presented by an active opponent of the Kosovo independence, the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia. The first draft law, on *Respecting binding norms of international law*,<sup>18</sup> declares that ‘*the Czech Republic does not recognize the independence of Kosovo*’, which is ‘*a violation of binding norms of international law*’ (par. 1). The second draft law, on *The recognition of new states by the Czech Republic*,<sup>19</sup> proposed to introduce a uniform procedure for the recognition of new states. The decision would be taken, on the proposal of the Government, by the Parliament, which would need to take into account whether the new state was created in accordance with international law and whether it has become a member of the UN. Both of the drafts were discussed in the Government and the Parliament and rejected by a large majority of voices.

The conflict *between the Russian Federation and Georgia* in summer 2008 became yet another controversial event dividing the Czech political scene. On one hand, the Government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs held Russia responsible for the conflict and made parallels with the 1968 invasion to Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact. On the other hand, the President and some members of the Parliament blamed the conflict on Georgia, arguing that Russia had legitimate reasons to use force in the region. This internal tension did not leak to the international arena, where the position of the Government was presented. Thus, after the recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia by Russia, the MFA issued a statement condemning this act as ‘*an attack to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia*’.<sup>20</sup>

The respect for and promotion of international law got high prominence during the period of the Czech *Presidency* in the Council of the EU. One of the most innovative Czech initiatives related to the *EU Guidelines on promoting compliance with international humanitarian law* (2005),<sup>21</sup> which previewed closer monitoring of the respect for international humanitarian law both inside and outside Europe. The Czech Republic sought to revitalize this instrument, which was somewhat forgotten after 2005, by bringing it to the COJUR and by organizing, in cooperation with the ICRC, several discussions about its content and potential future implementation in practice. This initiative was generally welcomed and later on it was taken over by the Swedish Presidency.

## THE MULTILATERAL DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: IDENTIFICATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF KEY ACTORS

The main actor in the process of the formation and realization of the Czech multilateral foreign policy during the period 2007–2009 was constantly the *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, which is responsible for the relations of the Czech Republic with inter-

national organizations pursuant to a domestic law.<sup>22</sup> Inside the MFA, the UN agenda is dealt with by a specialized UN Department. This department, together with the Departments of Human Rights and Transformation Policy, of Security Policy, of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy, and of Security, forms part of the Security and Multilateral Section. Important tasks in the realization of the Czech multilateral foreign policy are assumed by the Permanent Missions in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Strasbourg, which ensure long-term contacts with the UN and the Council of Europe, and by the Permanent Representation in Brussels, which participates in the formation of common EU positions relating to foreign policy issues.

The primary actor of the Czech multilateral foreign policy, the MFA, is seconded by other organs of the executive branch, such as the Ministry of Defence, which is active in the security area; the Government, which is responsible for the adoption of key foreign policy decisions; and the President, who has limited competences in the Czech Republic but regularly takes part in public debates over foreign policy questions. The two-chamber Parliament, composed of the 200-member Chamber of Deputies and the 81-member Senate, contributes to the formation and realization of the Czech multilateral foreign policy by giving floor to political discussions among the representatives of various parties. The judiciary branch has a role in monitoring the respect of international law by the Czech Republic. In the 2007–2009 period, several topics (e.g. the recognition of Kosovo, the ratification of the Rome Statute of the ICC) divided the Czech political scene but the lack of consensus over some of them was more visible in the country than in the external relations, which were largely dominated by the executive and its views.

The involvement of the civil society and other non-state actors in the formation and realization of the multilateral foreign policy is very limited in the Czech Republic. This situation starkly and surprisingly contrasts with the emphasis the country itself places on the promotion of the role of NGOs in international affairs. Events relating to the multilateral foreign policy were rather sporadically held by the Czech Association for the UN, the Czech Society for International Law or the Association for International Affairs. Academic and research institutions, including the Institute of International Relations, the Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University and the Faculty of Social Studies of Masaryk University, had a more substantive participation in matters related to the multilateral foreign policy by, among other activities, producing expert studies for the MFA or contributing to the public debate. Yet, here, like elsewhere, multilateralism was often seen through the narrow lenses of the Czech participation in the EU, NATO and economic organizations.

## **THE MULTILATERAL DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC SPACE**

The multilateral dimension of the Czech foreign policy provokes only limited interest from the media, the academic community and the general public of the Czech Republic. In 2007 attention was almost exclusively paid to the controversial statement

pronounced by President Klaus at the High-Level Event on Climate Change in New York and to the unsuccessful candidature of the Czech Republic to the UN Security Council.<sup>23</sup> In 2008, the media fastened upon the recognition of Kosovo and the armed conflict between Russia and Georgia, monitoring not so much the concrete steps of the Czech foreign policy but rather the exchange of views between the Government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the President and the Parliament. In 2009, the Czech performances at the UN, the Council of Europe and the OSCE as well as in the area of international law were more closely followed by the media as they were connected with the Czech Presidency in the Council of the EU.

The academic community in the Czech Republic is primarily oriented on research of European integration and security issues. The Czech multilateral foreign policy, unless it falls under one of the two rubrics, is not studied in a systematic and sufficiently pluralistic way. One of the few issues which gained the attention of the political and legal experts in 2007–2009 was the ratification of the Rome Statute of the ICC. The main controversies pertained to whether the President had the right under the Constitution to refuse to sign a treaty previously approved by the Parliament and whether the international treaties adopted under Article 10a of the Constitution<sup>24</sup> prevail over constitutional provisions.

Throughout the whole period of 2007–2009, the general public showed only little interest in the Czech multilateral foreign policy. One major exception, though, was the recognition of Kosovo, which polarized not only the political scene but also (parts of) the Czech society. The opponents of the Czech recognition drafted a *Petition against the illegal recognition of Kosovo and in support of the recall of the minister Karel Schwarzenberg*.<sup>25</sup> The petition was signed by several thousand people and submitted to the Petition committee of the Chamber of Deputies but no further actions were taken in connection with it. The lack of interest of the Czech public in the multilateral foreign policy contrasts at first sight with the public opinion surveys which show that the UN constantly enjoys a higher trust among the Czech inhabitants than the EU or the NATO and that the Czechs are more satisfied with the Czech participation in the UN than in the other two organizations.<sup>26</sup> These results should not, however, be overestimated. Though the Czechs do probably have a certain penchant for multilateralism, it is quite probable that the high scores of the UN reflect the low level of knowledge about this organization and the feeling that the UN is more distant and therefore less dangerous than the EU or the NATO rather than a true pro-UN posture.

## CONCLUSION

Over the long run, the Czech multilateral foreign policy is largely dominated by the country's membership in the EU, the NATO and economic international organizations. The Czech Republic's presence in the UN, the Council of Europe and the OSCE, as well as the Czech contribution to the respect for and development of international law, are constantly viewed as less important. This tendency finds its expression in all the strategic documents the Czech foreign policy is based on. These documents mention

the UN, the Council of Europe and the OSCE only sporadically. References to international law are also relatively scarce. The limited interest in this dimension is also reflected in that the formation and realization of multilateral foreign policy remains a domain monopolized by several influential actors, especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Czech multilateral foreign policy exhibits two main trends: europeization and specialization. *Europeization* is a gradual process that marks the whole body of the Czech foreign policy. It has been going on since the period in which the Czech Republic decided to apply for the membership in the EU, but europeization has been particularly intensive since its admission to the EU in 2004. This process entails that the Czech Republic does not act in the international fora as a completely independent actor but as a member of a larger and much more powerful entity. On the one hand, this gives the Czech Republic new opportunities. If its priorities and initiatives are backed by the other EU states, it is much easier to push them through at the international level. On the other hand, europeization forces the EU countries to compromise, often at the price of ending up with the lowest common denominator. The 2007–2009 period confirmed that the common EU positions or, in their absence, the positions of other countries within the EU have an important influence upon the Czech foreign policy. They served, for instance, as a powerful tool of pressure in the process of the ratification of the Rome Statute of the ICC and were among the main factors taken into account in the decision-making on whether to recognize the independence of Kosovo.

*Specialization* allows the Czech Republic to place the primary focus of its foreign policy on several key topics and/or a few priority countries. For the Czech Republic, the key topics constantly involve the promotion of human rights, spreading of democracy, the UN reform (including the reform of the UN Security Council and of peace-keeping operations) or the financing of development aid. Priority countries are selected in various ways, depending on the area of activities: in the area of human rights, it is Burma, Belarus and Cuba; in the area of the transformation policy, it is Barma, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cuba, Georgia, Iraq, Moldova, Serbia, Ukraine and, since 2008, Kosovo; and in the area of development aid, it is Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Yemen, Moldova, Mongolia, Serbia, Vietnam, Zambia, etc. Taking into account the size and the economic potential of the Czech Republic, specialization seems to be a logical option for it. Nonetheless, in the course of its realization, the country should not lose sight of a more general context and underestimate traditional strategies and instruments of multilateral diplomacy. The failed campaign to the UN Security Council in 2008 showed clearly that such behavior could harm the interests of the Czech Republic.

In 2007 and 2008, the two trends showed an increasing tendency and were quite balanced. In the first half of 2009, however, the Czech Presidency in the EU shifted the scale toward europeization, temporarily pushing specialization to the background. As a president of the EU, the Czech Republic had to actively work for uneasy compromises that were often paid for by an almost total abandonment of its own goals and priorities. In the second half of 2009, the scale went back to the previous position, and it is highly probable that the two trends will develop from now on in a more bal-

anced way. In general, the activities in the UN, the Council of Europe and the OSCE and the promotion of the respect for and development of international law could be characterized as a regular and stable though somehow undervalued part of the Czech foreign policy. It is highly probable that this situation will remain unchanged in the nearest future, with the trends of europeization and specialization enhancing rather than decreasing its likeliness.

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## Chapter 17

# The Economic Dimension of the Czech Foreign Policy

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The external economic relations of a state may be understood in two different ways – as a part of foreign policy or as an integral part of domestic economic policy. In the following text we focus on the first aspect – the economic dimension of the Czech foreign policy from 2007 till 2009. There is no doubt that this dimension of foreign policy or of external economic relations encouragement, sometimes also called economic diplomacy, plays an important role in the field of the external relations of the Czech Republic. Looking back at the last three years, we cannot say that there was any revolution in understanding, explanations or even administration performance in this area. But we can say that there was an important evolution in understanding what economic diplomacy is, which actors are involved in it and how important this area is for the whole state.

### **THE ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT**

After the elections the firm position of the ED in the Czech foreign policy was confirmed by the coalition agreement and the Programme Declaration of the new Topolánek government.<sup>1</sup> That there was an increase in the importance of the ED may also be concluded from its insertion to the first place in the foreign political section of the ODS election programme and the ODS Programme Declaration and from the fact that it was on the second place among the KDU-ČSL foreign policy goals after a symbolic section on ‘Understanding among nations’.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, substantial shifts in the attitudes of the centre-right and right parties have not helped to specify the content and the scope of the ED so far. The *Export Strategy of the Czech Republic for 2006–2010* (approved by the Paroubek centre-left coalition government in late 2005) defined only the field of export promotion. It was described as a set of activities ‘exclusively related to export processes’<sup>3</sup> that ‘must intend to contribute to the increase of competitiveness of local companies and promotion of commercial and economic

interests of the country abroad'.<sup>4</sup> The Programme Declaration of the Topolánek government emphasized the necessity to create an effective model of ED and to specify competences within the field of 'marketing and presentation of the Czech Republic with support for exports, investment and the tourist trade'.<sup>5</sup>

It has not been possible to conclude the precise definition of the Czech ED on the basis of political debate either. Debate has been almost absent within the political discourse between the right and the left.<sup>6</sup> Yet, as Hřích suggests<sup>7</sup> and a recent publication of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) confirms,<sup>8</sup> from the empirical point of view the Czech ED comprises primarily 'promotion activities in the fields of exports, investments and tourism' and to some extent also promotion of the Czech investment abroad.

The economic crisis of 2008 and 2009 confirmed the importance and the accuracy of the ED's development in many aspects. The crisis was transmitted to the Czech Republic primarily through trade, although the financial channel was also of some importance. The country seems to have been extremely vulnerable not only for its exceptional openness, with exports amounting to 75% of the GDP<sup>9</sup>, but also due to its above average share of vertical trade combined with its above average shares of manufacturing and goods.<sup>10</sup> The territorial concentration to a limited number of highly and medium developed European countries (which were almost sharply suffering because of the crisis as well) was the third important variable.

As the principal determinants of the Czech economic downturn were outside the country and beyond its control, the perspective of recovery derived especially from the developments on external markets. However, despite the initial reluctance of the weak Topolánek government to intervene directly into the Czech economy in order to moderate the impact of the global crisis, the renewal of export growth was supported by several incentives introduced already at the end of 2008. They included a provision of additional financial means to the Czech Export Bank (CEB) and the Export Guarantee and Insurance Corporation (EGAP).<sup>11</sup> According to the National Anti-Crisis Plan, prepared by an ad hoc expert group, the National Economic Council of the Government (NERV), the state guarantees for business credits provided by these financial institutions were to be directed especially to eastern markets such as Russia, China, Vietnam and the former USSR countries, which were expected to suffer less from the global crisis by that time.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, special emphasis was put on removing barriers worsening the position of and reducing access to dynamic, rapidly growing young external markets such as the Chinese, Brazilian and Indian ones during the Czech EU presidency. Better access to external markets was believed to promise new opportunities for the Czech producers selling their outputs abroad and for foreign direct investment inflows. It was also supposed to help reduce the high degree of dependence on the European market, where the vast majority of the Czech exports had been going so far (85.2% in 2008<sup>13</sup>), and on Germany as the most important trade partner with a share of more than 30.7% of the total exports.<sup>14</sup> However, any change in territorial orientation of the Czech foreign trade is a time-consuming process and its possible impacts will be remarkable first in the following years.

The interim Fischer government followed the line initiated by its predecessor and recognized the importance of the economic diplomacy already in its Programme Declaration, although with less emphasis, as the economic diplomacy was at one of the last places among the foreign policy goals (after, e.g., support to the effective work of international organizations, the fight against climate change, development co-operation, and human rights and democracy promotion).<sup>15</sup> Similarly to the former Topolánek government it supported a gradual increasing of financial means spent on export credits and guarantees, although the latest developments at the external markets caused certain doubts to arise about their effectiveness. As the NERV pointed out in its final report, many promising less developed trade partners witnessed deeper economic problems in their fragile markets than initially expected. For that reason the Czech financial support could have prevented the Czech exporters from being forced out of these markets and compensated a temporal deficit of commercial credit products, but it could hardly create any new opportunities.<sup>16</sup>

Till autumn 2008, economic diplomacy and its aspects were not really in the center of public or media debates, even if support of external economic relations was accepted as one of the Czech foreign policy priorities and as a priority of the domestic economic policy of the Czech government as well.<sup>17</sup> There were no conflicts of ideas between the government and the opposition parties concerning economic diplomacy. Parliamentary debates about the support of export activities were reflected, but not in a critical or even a hostile way.

The situation started to change radically around the time of October 2008 in connection to the coming economic crisis. Economic diplomacy was mentioned with increasing frequency, and its aspects came into the everyday political agenda. The increase of export promotion became one of the crucial points of the government anti-crisis plan that was presented by the Prime Minister in Parliament on December 2, 2008. The increase should have been foremost to strengthen the institutional capital of CEB and EGAP. The Prime Minister as well as members of his government repeatedly presented this intention in the media. The anti-crisis measures as a whole were often criticized by the opposition, but the promotion of exports was never challenged.

From the perspective of the Czech economic performance the years 2007–2009 could be divided into two distinct parts. 2007 closed the successful period with above average results and the annual growth being close to 6%.<sup>18</sup> Until late summer 2008 the real development and its short-term outlook seemed to be rather optimistic too. Warnings against incoming world market disturbances and the first symptoms of the global financial and economic crisis were not taken seriously enough. Not only the Czech governmental institutions but also, e.g., the European Commission expected that the domestic situation would deteriorate only to a limited extent during 2008. Unlike those of many other EU Member States (especially the western ones) the unemployment rate in the Czech Republic was predicted not to increase substantially, and the trade balance was expected to remain in surplus.<sup>19</sup> This changed rapidly in autumn 2008, when the Czech Republic witnessed a series of lay-offs and several bankruptcies in traditional industrial branches with a lower or medium technological level that had lost their sales areas.

The autumn wave of difficulties influenced the macroeconomic indicators immediately. The increase in GDP fell from the above mentioned 6% in 2007, when the economy passed a cyclical peak, to 3.1% in 2008 due to an imported crisis. The Czech exports decreased in the context of the world trade collapse, which was absolutely in contrast to their 15.6% growth in 2007.<sup>20</sup> The balance of payments turned to a deficit for the first time after a longer period of surplus. The pessimistic perspective of future development worsened further with an increase in unemployment and the declining number of vacant places offered by the registry offices.

In the first half of 2009, when the contraction continued, both the exports and the industrial production of the Czech Republic fell by 18%. The investment decreased by 7.2%.<sup>21</sup> According to a recent OECD Economic Survey the real GDP is projected to have fallen by 4.1% in 2009, despite moderate improvement by some 0.1%, which was driven by exports and by weak private consumption enhancement in the second half of that year.<sup>22</sup> The serious contraction in 2009 is supposed to be followed by a mild recovery with 2–3% GDP growth in 2010 and 2011.<sup>23</sup>

However, despite the contrasting economic performances in the two parts of the period in focus, the nature and record of the Czech economic diplomacy (ED) seemed to be stable, as before the legislative election in 2006, all major Czech political parties recognized its importance. In the 1990s and the first half of 2000 the ED was supported only by the left-wing parties. At that time the turn first became obvious in some statements by key representatives of the *Civic Democratic Party* (ODS).<sup>24</sup> Its further confirmation was brought by the program declarations of the ODS and the *Christian Democrats* (KDU-ČSL).

## **THE ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: AGENDA AND EVENTS**

With its joining of the EU in 2004, the Czech Republic lost the possibility of using classical external trade policy tools such as customs or bilateral trade agreements. This competence was transferred to the European Commission and the Council of the EU. However, the right to negotiate bilateral agreements within the framework of its foreign economic policy without the trade element was not limited by these rules. Thus, the Czech Republic could conclude several agreements on economic and industrial cooperation in the period of 2007–2009, e.g. an agreement on trade cooperation (except trade policy) with Albania or an agreement on economic and industrial co-operation with Brazil.

In addition, the Czech government continued in its reevaluation of agreements related to the support and mutual protection of investment that should keep it from future losses in international disputes. The complicated process comprised not only an alteration of provisions in existing instruments (Republic of Korea, Jordan, Macedonia and others) and some denouncements, but several new agreements were also concluded, e.g. those with Canada and Turkey.<sup>25</sup>

Since its accession to the EU, the Czech Republic has been represented by European institutions in multilateral trade organizations, such as the WTO.<sup>26</sup> In general, the liberal course of European external trade policy corresponds with the major interests of the Czech ED. During the economic crisis the Czech Republic welcomed the European struggle for prevention of protectionism that was evident, for example, at the level of G-20 or at the seventh WTO ministerial conference. However, there are some aspects where the Czech attitudes differ from those of the majority of the EU Member States. They include, inter alia, the reform of the *Common Agricultural Policy* (CAP) that has been deforming the world food markets. The Czech Republic belongs to the states preferring a radical reform of the CAP that would contribute to causing a substantial shift in the negotiation within the framework of the current WTO Doha liberalisation round.<sup>27</sup>

Usually the only way a member country could interfere in the above mentioned affairs is through its vote in the Council of the EU and its presence in the Committee of Representatives and the Council's expert committees and groups.<sup>28</sup> However, the EU Presidency in the first half of 2009 offered the Czech Republic an exceptional opportunity to shape European developments in favour of specific Czech needs.

The economic policies belong to those areas where the Czech Republic has been taking up a clear national position since its accession to the EU. Therefore the Czech government decided to focus primarily on those issues where the pursuance of national interests may be to the benefit of the whole EU.<sup>29</sup> These issues were found especially in liberalisation and the strengthening of the external competitiveness of the EU. In addition, the Czech Republic intended to support other measures facilitating free movement of goods, services and capital, simplifying trade with other Member Countries and extending EU's multilateral, regional and bilateral external economic relations and trade.<sup>30</sup> The intention to remove barriers that still hinder the full utilisation of the integration process (and the Single Market project is a key part of this) was emphasised in the whole economic agenda of the Czech Presidency. It was also expressed in the Czech Presidency's slogan 'Europe without barriers' (although this phrase also had other meanings that were outside the economic sphere) when it was approved by the Czech government in February 2007.<sup>31</sup>

However, due to the global crisis the Czech Presidency was expected to implement the initial European anti-crisis measures and to coordinate further steps towards recovery next to the ordinary presidency tasks. The Czech Republic met that challenge in many aspects. Paradoxically, the overall impression of the Czech Presidency in view of the economic priorities is definitely worse than the results obtained. To some extent, this can be ascribed to several events outside the economic sphere, such as the Czech governmental crisis and the euroscepticism of the Czech President Vaclav Klaus. In addition, the negative western media perception of these events, with few alternative interpretations that would be systematically promoted by the Czech Republic, and the criticism from the side of some large EU countries (mainly France) also played an important role. Last but not least, the presentation of the goals and objectives of the Czech Presidency was not always done in an appropriate, diplomatic and conceptual way (e.g. some statements made by Prime Minister Topolánek in the

European Parliament relating to the U.S. economic policy could not have been outweighed later by the distinguished style of the Prime Minister with a limited mandate (Jan Fischer). Thus, as far as the economic agenda of the Presidency is concerned, it must be concluded that unfortunately, the chance for the Czech Republic to promote itself abroad and to shape European agendas in accordance with its needs was wasted to a large extent.

As far as everyday work in the Czech Republic is concerned, in 2007–2009 the institutional changes envisaged in the election programme of the CDP were initiated. They included the geographical connection of the governmental agencies Czech Trade and CzechInvest, with the offices of one address functioning as contact points for the Czech economic subject applied on both the Czech centres of the agencies and their foreign branches. The Council for Trade and Investment was also created. However, despite its strong accent on the ED in its programme, the government only rarely dealt with this topic individually, but it was discussed repeatedly in the broader context of the anti-crisis measures.

In 2008 the Czech government approved a material evaluating the functioning of the Czech ED system and suggesting further improvements that was titled ‘The Creation of an Effective Model of the Economic Diplomacy as one of the Basic Tools of the Czech Foreign Policy’. Through its decision no. 265/08 it charged the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Trade and Industry with fulfilling the targets included in the material, especially the improvement of the institutional background of the ED and the development of the information systems for support of the Czech external economic relations. The first meeting of the Czech honorary consuls from the whole world in the MFA belonged among the important events of this period.

## **THE ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: IDENTIFICATION AND CHARACTERIZATION OF KEY ACTORS**

The policy of supporting external economic relations has many aspects, and it corresponds to the quite complicated and quite hierarchical structure of the varied institutions involved in this system.<sup>32</sup> Its structure was born in the nineties, after the relatively intricate phases of its evolution. But we cannot say that the structure differs very much from its counterparts in similar countries. The Czech Republic uses in its practice the so-called dual system of economic diplomacy.<sup>33</sup> It means that in reality, all competences are divided between the MFA<sup>34</sup> and the responsible economic ministry – the *Ministry of Industry and Trade*<sup>35</sup> (MIT). The legal background of this system is created by the Competences Act, a law that regulates and defines the activities and competencies of each ministry.<sup>36</sup> The two ministries together represent a top covering institution which formulates the content of economic diplomacy and its main goals. At the top political level, there are also other institutions which belong to the system, especially the *Ministry for Regional Development* (the central government authority for tourism, among other things) and the *Ministry of Agriculture* (the central state authority administrating agricultural trade policy and promoting agricultural products).

On its web page<sup>37</sup> the MFA also mentions the *Ministry of the Environment* and the *Ministry of Culture* as two other state central institutions partly involved in the system of economic diplomacy and promotion of export activities.

*Commercial and Economic Sections* at the embassies (CES) of the Czech Republic abroad create another, and let us say integral, part of this network. Nowadays, there are in total 95 economic diplomats at 82 Czech embassies and general consulates in 69 countries around the world.<sup>38</sup> In their activity they support Czech state administration subjects as well as non-state actors in cultivating their bilateral economic contacts and relations. They provide information (basic contacts, seeking of business opportunities, competitions and projects in their territory), assistance services and presentation services for Czech subjects. Due to the Competences Act between the MFA and the MIT, Commercial and Economic Sections have a quite<sup>39</sup> complicated system of management, where CES are an integral part of an embassy, but at the same time the MIT performs the expert management of these sections and economic diplomats. Such a system could create some problems in management and mutual responsibilities, but according to the existing experience and positive results of this system, they are not crucial, even if today's model can't be seen as ideal. In 2008 the MFA organized the historically first meeting of honorary consuls of the Czech Republic, whose role in economic diplomacy and promoting Czech export opportunities should increase rapidly in the near future.

Part-funded organizations of the Czech central institutions are the next very important component of the state administration system of economic diplomacy. Each of these institutions belongs to a relevant ministry and they are mostly specialized in an area of external economic relations and fulfillment of economic diplomacy goals. *CzechTrade*<sup>40</sup> (the National Trade Promotion Agency of the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic – CT) was established in May 1997 to promote foreign trade and cooperation between Czech and foreign subjects. This agency offers many services (information, consultation or assistance) to Czech exporters and foreign companies as well, with a special emphasis on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It has a broad network of foreign offices operating abroad to assist Czech exporters on the spot in their efforts to penetrate foreign markets and to engage in long term exporting. The development of this network was really massive: in 2000 it only had 16 offices for 15 countries, but today CzechTrade has 33 foreign offices with a sphere of activity in 36 countries. Their presence in key countries and regions enables immediate activity to help individual exporters – e.g. in seeking a reliable trade partner. The agency cooperates also with non-state actors such as the network of the Czech Chambers of Commerce.

*CzechInvest* is another agency belonging to the Ministry of Industry and Trade (the Investment and Business Development Agency – CI). CI was established in 1992 by the Ministry of Industry and Trade, but its contemporary form arose in 2004 by its unification with two other MIT agencies. Its mission is 'to support investment activities to the highest level of competence not only through [its] information service and consultancy but also by linkage with structural funds of the EU'.<sup>41</sup>

A specific role in economic diplomacy belongs to the *Czech Centres*, a part-funded organization<sup>42</sup> of the MFA. The Centres specialize in promotion of the Czech Republic



and in developing relations with foreign publics – mostly in the field of culture. They significantly contribute to the positive image of the Czech Republic abroad, which enables the Czech Republic to present itself not only as an economically advanced partner, but also as a country with a long and rich cultural tradition and a modern and progressive cultural scene.

*CzechTourism* is another component of the export assistance system in the Czech Republic. Its main task is to promote the Czech Republic as a unique tourism destination. The tourism industry, in that sense, is an essential element of the external balance of the Czech economy and a very important segment of the economic demand in the market. Also this agency has its foreign offices, which promote the country abroad. Currently, in 2010, CzechTourism has 26 offices in foreign countries.

Financial support of export activities, realized by CEB and EGAP, constitutes an important part of Czech economic diplomacy. State activities in this field should complement the activities of private subjects which are realized on a commercial basis. Both agencies have the status of joint-stock companies, but they are fully owned by the state. In their position as owners of the agencies, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Agriculture all co-operate with each other. The MFA and the MIT play the main roles, but all the parties involved should agree when making crucial decisions. The reason why a state is interested in activities in this area is its ambition to create for its own exporters conditions which are similar to those that apply to exporters from other countries. Compared to information and technical assistance, financial support of exports is a quite delicate area. That is why different restrictions, within the frame of the EU or OECD, are exercised.

From the geographical point of view the institutional structure of the economic dimension of the Czech foreign policy can be seen as a network with an umbrella created by the headquarters of all the institutions mentioned above and a set of foreign offices abroad. The central offices deal foremost with conceptual work, formulate concepts and main goals, directly execute relevant aspects of economic diplomacy in relation to domestic subjects, and manage their foreign offices. The offices abroad concentrate their efforts on direct support of Czech subjects in foreign markets as well as on fulfilling the Czech economic diplomacy goals together with Czech embassies and their economic and commercial sections.

This network was created gradually during the 1990s with some partial changes made later. For its further existence, the coordination, mutual communication and co-operation of all the related agencies, their foreign offices and all the institutions involved in the system are crucial. One of the above mentioned changes from the situation in 2007 was the creation of the *Czech Council for the Support of Trade and Investment*<sup>43</sup>, whose existence was anticipated in the *Export Strategy of the Czech Republic for 2006–2010*. The Council began its activity in June 2008.<sup>44</sup> The Council has several tasks: harmonization of business and political interests of the Czech Republic (visa policy, coordination of foreign trips of Czech official representatives); optimization of services provided by the state in areas of export and investments; and assistance in the creation of Czech positions for negotiations in EU bodies, where business

is touched upon. The Council could also help in the process of the selection of business diplomats and employees for the CzechTrade foreign offices. The Council has 19 members. Representatives of state administration (the MFA, the MIT and others) have 10 posts; the rest belong to the private sector. According to its status, the Council should serve as an advisory board of the Minister of Industry and Trade, which was not fully accepted by some representatives of other resorts.<sup>45</sup>

In late 2008 the Ministry of Industry and Trade prepared an interim report on the implementation of the Export Strategy of the Czech Republic for 2006–2010, presenting it at the beginning of 2009.<sup>46</sup> The then current results were evaluated almost positively. The document also came with a proposal to merge the activities of the headquarters of both CzechTrade and CzechInvest. The services of various foreign offices in various specific territories were merged in 2008. The desire to save money during the economic crisis was not the only reason for this. A greater reason was to improve the performance of the system.

Overall, the institutional structure of export promotion was stable in 2009. Neither the government nor other authorities have taken any steps to change the status. There were no proposals to limit the activities of the institution for savings of public finances. All government papers<sup>47</sup> stressed the importance of export and foreign trade for the Czech economy and the key role of its support in government policy. However, despite the overall stability of the system, there were some individual changes such as the partial restructuring of the CzechTrade agency's foreign offices network.

The Council for the Support of Trade and Investment was to operate in a very active way. Its members met eight times during the year. One outcome was the proposal to reduce the number of priority countries from 19 to 12.<sup>48</sup> At the same time all activities were to be deeply coordinated, and all available resources were to be concentrated on priority countries. That is why teams of experts were formed for each priority country. On its last meeting on November 5, 2009 the council discussed the preparation of the new export strategy for 2011–2015. In this context, we can expect lively discussions and exchanges of views in the future. The only restrictive measure was the government decision on the cancellation several embassies, which was planned for economical reasons for 2010. None of them are in a priority country, but the decision was not consulted with business associations, and the business community criticized this action.

## **THE ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC SPACE<sup>49</sup>**

Throughout 2009, the economic dimension of foreign policy and export promotion was mentioned in the media mainly in connection with the economic crisis. These state activities are especially understood as two of the key anti-crisis measures, but there is no constant and deep discussion about this topic and its essence. Promotion of external economic relations is also a part of the political debates. Even if Topolánek's government was often criticized by the opposition for its – supposedly – not

very effective anti-crisis policy, he was never criticized, for example, for his intention to intensify the export promotion.<sup>50</sup>

The Fischer government, after the fall of Topolánek's government, has also taken the priority of economic diplomacy as an integral part of foreign policy. One of the themes of the public debate was the forthcoming Export Strategy for the Czech Republic for 2011–2015, which was mentioned several times, mainly by representatives of the business community. We can say that there is a consensus on this issue among different political parties, except for some differences in emphasis on the left and the right side of the political spectrum. In this situation, the conceptual debate about the system and its operation recedes into the background.

## CONCLUSION

When evaluating<sup>51</sup> the period of 2007–2009, it is possible to say that it was a period without any deep and fundamental systemic changes in the system of the Czech economic diplomacy. Even if before the 2006 elections, some intentions of radical changes of the system were discussed by one of the political parties, after the elections the new government opted for a gentle process of gradual changes.

An effective and multidimensional promotion of external economic relations that does not remain only in the creation of framework conditions but goes further to encourage exporters to export to foreign markets was recognized as a part of modern economic and foreign policy. Also, in 2008 the operation of the system was stable. The efforts toward its gradual improvement went on, with the exception of the end of the year, when the first signs of crisis were experienced.

In late 2008 and 2009, the export promotion was mentioned among the possible measures with which to counter the emerging crisis. The system of promotion of external economic relations tried to react, e.g., by expanding supply and improving the conditions for exports and foreign investments. After previous concerns had been confirmed and the year 2009 had become, without a doubt, a period of global economic crisis, the economic diplomacy offered important tools with which to mitigate the impact of the economic crisis on the Czech subjects affected by the downturn in external demand. It cannot affect external demand, but it may help to diversify its flow geographically. Financial instruments can also contribute to increased export competitiveness. The results of the Czech foreign trade in 2009 indicate then that the support of external economic relations was not a failure.

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## Chapter 18

# Human Rights in the Czech Foreign Policy

*Veronika Bílková, Šárka Matějková*

Since its creation in 1993, the Czech Republic has always ranked the promotion of human rights and spreading of democratic values among the priorities of its foreign policy. The period 2007–2009 was no exception in this regard. The country demonstrated its interest in human rights and democracy by fulfilling its obligations from international treaties, participating in the activities of international human rights bodies, struggling to reach its own thematic and territorial priorities, and realizing projects of the transition policy. Moreover, during the period of its Presidency in the Council of the EU in the first half of 2009, the Czech Republic sought to promote its own human rights priorities at the EU level and to gain the support of the other 26 EU states for them. Yet, the amount of political tasks, coupled with the necessity to look for compromises and the accumulation of serious domestic problems, prevented the country from reaching this goal to its full satisfaction. Despite that, the period of the Presidency has brought valuable experiences, which, together with the change at the domestic political level, induced the country in the second half of 2009 to partly reassess the strategies and methods used in this area of foreign policy.

### **HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT**

All strategic documents that serve as a basis for the Czech foreign policy pay attention to the role of human rights and democracy in international relations. However, they differ in how they treat the matter. *The Conception of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy for the Years 2002–2006*, which has been relevant also for the years 2007–2009, refers to human rights and democracy repeatedly. It is characterized by two features. First, it promotes the idea of mainstreaming human rights. Human rights should not be viewed as a separate component of foreign policy, but, rather, they should permeate all its spheres, operating as its ideological basis. Secondly, the document is very general and does not contain a specification of the concrete goals

that should be achieved and the means that should be used to fulfill these goals. Another document, the *Government Program Declaration* (2007), opts for a more offensive approach, putting particular emphasis on the promotion of democracy and its spreading to other countries.

In addition to these general documents, the Czech Republic also made use of several thematic or target-specific instruments in 2007–2009. Those instruments include especially the *Conception of Transition Policy*, which was adopted in 2005 as proof of the country's growing interest in the promotion of democracy abroad, and two MFA internal documents of 2008: the *Thematic priorities of the Czech foreign policy in the area of human rights* and the *Manual for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Human Rights*. In the first half of 2009, during the period of the Czech Presidency in the Council of the EU, the Czech Republic also used a series of documents prepared specifically for the period of the Czech presidency. These documents encompassed the *Sector priorities of the presidency of the Czech Republic in the Council of the EU in the first half of 2009*<sup>1,2</sup>, the *18-month plan of the Council*<sup>3</sup> and the *Working plan of the Czech Presidency*<sup>4</sup>.

The Czech Republic does not have a general conceptual document in the files of its human rights foreign policy. The only time it had such a document was the early 2000s – the *Conception of Czech foreign policy in the area of human rights for the time-period 2000–2002*. It defined the main human rights principles that the Czech Republic wanted to uphold at the international scene, specified the concrete goals and means it would resort to in this context, and analyzed the role of the human rights dimension in multilateral diplomacy. The original idea to revise and update the document every two years has never materialised – most likely due to its somewhat critical tone. Plans to draft a new general conception have been on the table since the mid-2000s but the sheer amount of everyday work and the frequent changes of the MFA political leadership have so far prevented their realisation.

## **THE HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: AGENDA AND EVENTS**

In 2007–2009 the agenda of the Czech foreign policy in the area of human rights included: a) fulfillment of the obligations stemming from international treaties; b) participation in the activities of international human rights bodies; c) activities aimed at reaching the thematic and territorial priorities; and d) realisation of the projects of the transition policy. Moreover the Presidency of the Council of the EU in the first half of 2009 placed the Czech Republic into an unprecedented situation which deserves particular attention in view of its impact on the human rights sphere.

### ***Fulfillment of Obligations Stemming From International Human Rights Treaties***

The Czech Republic is a party to most important human rights treaties that have been adopted in the UN, the Council of Europe and other platforms. These treaties create for it the obligation to submit on a regular basis periodic *reports* on the stage of im-

plementation of the treaty provisions to treaty monitoring bodies. In 2007, two such reports were discussed in the UN, one by the UN Human Rights Committee<sup>5</sup> and one by the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.<sup>6</sup> Both treaty-based bodies appreciated the progress that the Czech Republic had shown with regard to civil and political rights, but at the same time they raised some critical remarks which were mainly related to the positions of the Roma minority and various types of discrimination in the CR.<sup>7</sup> In 2009 the Czech Republic submitted a combined fourth and fifth periodic report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women<sup>8</sup> and drafted a *Core Document* containing basic information on the Czech Republic and the human rights system on its territory, which should form a part of all reports submitted in the future to UN Geneva-based treaty mechanisms.<sup>9</sup>

In 2008, the Czech Republic was one of the first countries in the world to undertake the new *Universal Periodic Review* of the human rights situation on its territory. The mechanism was established in 2006 and is carried out by the UN Human Rights Council. It applies to all countries of the world, each of them being subject to it every four years. For the purpose of the UPR, three documents were prepared, namely the national report presented by the Czech Government<sup>10</sup> and two documents presented by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, one summarising information from the UN human rights bodies,<sup>11</sup> and the other one reflecting the views of non-governmental organisations.<sup>12</sup> The review itself took place on 16 April 2008 in Geneva and was assisted by a so-called *troika* (three) of states, which included France, Nicaragua and South Africa. Furthermore, about 20 other states took part in the debate on the human right situation in the Czech Republic. The OHCHR subsequently drafted an outcome document,<sup>13</sup> which was, after some clarifications from the Czech side, finally adopted by the UN Human Rights Council.<sup>14</sup>

From the substantive perspective, the UPR did not bring much to the Czech Republic. The OHCHR reports, the comments by other states and the final outcome document all drew attention to the same issues the country has been criticised for by the UN Geneva-based human rights bodies for some time already. Those include the position of the Roma minority, the use of so-called ‘cage beds’ in psychiatric hospitals and in social care homes for people with mental disabilities, the forced sterilisation of Roma women, police brutality and inequality between men and women. In spite of its standard course, the UPR became an important event for the Czech foreign policy. On the one hand, it allowed the ČR to see its own internal human rights situation in a comprehensive manner, which is certainly a very useful starting point for predicting what the potential criticism from other states would be. On the other hand, it provoked an active cooperation between various state organs and also an active cooperation between the state sector and NGOs, which is still not that common in the Czech Republic. All in all, the UPR confirmed that human rights are a multidimensional issue that concerns (or should concern) many segments of the society.

In 2007–2009, the Czech Republic faced several individual complaints in the UN Human Rights Committee in Geneva and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. Cases submitted under the ICCPR mainly concerned restitution claims, out of which claims presented by Sudeten Germans trying to reopen the question of



the validity of the so-called Beneš decrees got the most prominence. Cases submitted under the European Convention were more diverse, albeit most of them dealt with the right to liberty and security, the right to a fair trial, the right to private and family life and/or the right to property.

### ***Participation in the Activities of International Human Rights Bodies***

In the long term, the Czech Republic actively participates in various activities of international human rights bodies, primarily those in the UN, the EU and the Council of Europe. Since June 2006 till June 2007, the Czech Republic was a member of the *UN Human Rights Council*. During its meetings, it got involved in discussions on Darfur, Burma, Belarus and Cuba and on the protection of freedom of speech and freedom of religion. Since July 2007, the Czech Republic was not formally a member of the Council any more, but it still closely followed the activities of the organ and sought to influence its functioning through common activities of the EU. This was particularly the case in the first half of 2009, when the Czech Republic assumed the Presidency in the Council of the EU.

In 2008, the Czech Republic was considering presenting its candidature to the Council for the 2009–2011 period, but its unsuccessful candidature to the Security Council diverted it from doing it. Though a supporter of the new organ, the Czech Republic was not uncritical toward its performance. For instance, in its statement at the debate of the UN General Assembly in September 2008, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg expressed ‘*his deep regret that the Human Rights Council has been unable to tackle, timely and properly, several serious human rights situations*’<sup>15</sup> and stressed that ‘*the political imbalance of its agenda and the attempts to weaken the role of special procedures and non-governmental organizations further diminish the reform expectations*’. Since these objections towards the Council are quite wide-spread at the international scene, the minister’s statement did not give rise to any unexpected reactions.

At the *regional level*, the Czech Republic cooperated with the EU and Council of Europe institutions, such as the *EU Agency for Fundamental Rights* (FRA) or the *European Committee for the Prevention of Torture* (CPT). The FRA is a Vienna-based agency established in 2007 which is tasked with advising policy makers across the EU in the human rights sphere. The Czech Republic took a cautious approach during the creation of the FRA, fearing competency overlaps with Council of Europe organs, but later on it assumed the position of observer. The CPT monitors the implementation of and respect for the 1987 *European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*. In 2008, the Czech Republic received a delegation of the CPT which focused particularly on the problem of castration of sexual patients in psychiatric hospitals.

### ***Definition and Realisation of Thematic and Territorial Priorities***

In 2007, the Czech Republic defined the *thematic priorities* of its human rights foreign policy in an internal document of the MFA entitled *Thematic priorities of the Czech foreign policy in the area of human rights*. The priorities are divided into three

categories of different levels of importance. *Category A* encompasses the civil society, including human rights defenders and NGOs, freedom of speech and expression, free press, the relations of those freedoms to religious intolerance, and cooperation with mechanisms for human rights protection. *Category B* focuses on the prohibition of torture and the respect for human rights in the fight against terrorism. *Category C* includes other topics such as capital punishment, the rights of children or migration. This selection partially reflects the thematic priorities of the EU and partially results from the long-term practice of the Czech Republic. The document shows flexibility in that the categorisation is not absolute and may be adjusted to the needs of concrete situations.

Throughout the 2007–2009 period, the Czech Republic sought to promote its thematic priorities on both bilateral and multilateral levels. For instance, in 2008, the Czech Republic got actively involved in the discussions about a draft resolution on combating defamation of religions that was presented in the UN General Assembly by Belarus, Venezuela, and Uganda (acting on behalf of the OIC). The broad and vague wording of the document made the Czech Republic fear that it could collide with freedom of speech, which belongs among the Category A priorities. In spite of these objections, which were largely shared by other EU states, the resolution was adopted in the end (86 : 53 : 42). The Czech Republic, together with the rest of the EU, Canada and the USA, voted against it.<sup>16</sup>

In contrast to thematic priorities, the *territorial priorities* of the Czech Republic have never been explicitly defined, but they result from customs and traditions which put three countries at the centre of the Czech interest: Belarus, Burma, and Cuba. These states also belong among the priority countries for the transformation politics. The selection reflects the deeply embedded belief that in view of its communist past and its experience with a peaceful transition to democracy, the Czech Republic has a special knowledge of and a special capacity to face totalitarian, especially communist, regimes. It even considers itself to be indebted towards the inhabitants of totalitarian countries and wants to help them the way that the Western states once helped the Czech people. An interesting turn came in 2009, as the Czech Republic started to consider abandoning its narrow orientation on only three countries in order to focus instead on those countries with the most catastrophic human rights record in each given year.

*Belarus* was on the agenda mainly in 2008 – following the anti-regime demonstrations and a series of lawsuits against their participants,<sup>17</sup> and then in connection with the local parliamentary elections. The EU was considering lifting the economic sanctions on the Minsk regime,<sup>18</sup> but the Czech Republic adopted a careful stance and did not support such initiatives. In the second half of 2008 and in 2009 the situation in Belarus was gradually improving, as testified by several NGO reports. This led the Czech Republic to moderate its position toward Belarus and to start, on behalf of the EU, a human rights dialogue with that country.<sup>19</sup>

*Burma* rose to prominence in May 2008 after the cyclone Nagris caused a serious humanitarian crisis in the region and the military junta refused entry to external humanitarian workers. The Czech Republic, together with other states, strongly con-

demned the situation. In 2007–2009, the Czech Republic also repeatedly criticised the persecution of local dissidents and other human rights violations in the country.<sup>20</sup> In 2008, the Czech government adopted the conception of the National Resettlement Programme,<sup>21</sup> which previewed the resettlement of several dozens of Burmese families from refugee camps in Malaysia to the Czech Republic. The first Burmese arrived in October 2008, and they were granted asylum with the hope that they would be integrated into the Czech society. Burma seems to be of high concern also for individual politicians and many NGOs. In June 2008, a group of deputies from several political parties established a *Parliamentary Group for Democracy in Burma*, which has been active in monitoring the development in Burma. Moreover in 2009, a Czech NGO, Burma Center, organised in Prague a conference of Burmese pro-democratic forces in Europe, which received MFA support.<sup>22</sup>

*Cuba* has long been a true red rag for the Czech Republic. This results from both the intensive cooperation between the two countries during the Cold War that the Czech Republic feels the need to somehow retrieve and the animosity toward Cuba demonstrated by one of its closest allies, the USA. The Czech animosity towards Cuba demonstrates itself in the EU, where the Czech Republic has traditionally belonged among the hawks pushing for a hard line, and in various multilateral fora. For instance in 2008, the Czech Republic unsuccessfully sought to prevent the abolishment of the Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Cuba. In the same year, it opposed the lifting of the EU sanctions on Cuba, yet, in the end, it decided not to block it. The resignation of Fidel Castro in 2008 and the exercise of the EU Presidency in 2009 evoked a certain moderation of the Czech position,<sup>23</sup> which continued after the fall of government in spring 2009. The pragmatic stance taken by the new government seems to be favourable to at least a partial normalisation of the relations between the two countries.

### ***Transformation Policy***

In addition to the promotion of human rights, the Czech Republic places in its foreign policy a strong emphasis on the so-called transition policy or transition cooperation, which ‘*consists of the promotion of democracy and human rights protection,... focuses on building and strengthening of democratic institutions, legal system of state, civil society and principles of just public administration*’.<sup>24</sup> Transition promotion policy is seen as interrelated with development aid and humanitarian assistance, although the three areas should formally keep their independency. The Czech Republic currently focuses on ten countries in this respect (it focused on nine before 2008): three totalitarian regimes (Belarus, Burma and Cuba) and seven countries in transition (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iraq, Moldova, Serbia, Ukraine, and Kosovo).

The transition policy is realised in two main forms. The first consists of grants provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to finance bilateral projects between Czech NGOs and NGOs from one of the priority countries aimed at democracy-building, the development of civil society, the protection of human rights, the promotion of rule of law and good governance. The projects are selected in a public tender organised each year by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 2007–2008, the tenders were dominated by several bigger Czech NGOs, such as the People in Need Foundation. The 2009

tender brought an increase of participation of small and younger NGOs and a diversification of the grant recipients group. The second form of the transition policy consists of activities realised directly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or other public organs. These include, for instance, monitoring elections in priority countries<sup>25</sup> or releasing comments on the undemocratic steps of particular governments.<sup>26</sup>

In 2008, eleven NGOs<sup>27</sup> involved and/or interested in the projects of the transition policy met to establish a common platform called DEMAS (Association for Democracy Assistance and Human Rights). The platform is aimed at facilitating communication and cooperation in the civil society as well as between NGOs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which has actively supported the initiative since its inception. In the first half of 2009, the area of the transition policy did not evade the impact of the Presidency in the Council of the EU. Its most visible manifestation became the conference *Building Consensus about EU Policies on Democracy Support*. The conference, held in March 2009 in Prague, was attended by representatives of both the state and the non-state sector. It resulted in the idea of formulating a European consensus on democracy, which would reflect EU priorities in the area of transition policy.

### ***The Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU***

In 2007 the Czech Republic started its preparations for its upcoming Presidency in the Council of the EU, which was to include tasks from the human rights area such as monitoring the human rights situation in the world, leading a human rights dialogue with third countries or presenting common EU positions on human rights topics in international fora. The protection and promotion of human rights and the transition policy belonged among the declared priorities of the Czech presidency. The Czech Republic sought to comply with this priority by criticising, in bilateral talks as well as in multilateral organs, violations of human rights in various countries. While some other countries were also criticised, China, Iran, the Russian Federation, the USA and the countries of Central Asia became the most frequent objects of the Czech criticism, usually in connection with their exercise of the death penalty, torture, violence against human rights defenders or violations of the freedom of expression and the freedom of religion.

The Czech Republic also tried to come up with some positive initiatives. For instance, in the debates at the UN General Assembly, it sought to promote the new concepts of human security and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). At the EU level, it supported the *Shelter City* project, whose intent was to create a network of cities and regions in Europe which would provide temporary refuge (shelter) to human rights defenders persecuted in their country of origin. During the first half of 2009, the Czech Republic, on behalf of the EU, led the so-called *human rights dialogues* with third countries. Out of these, the dialogues with China and Israel got particularly controversial. The dialogue with China started already in 1995. The meeting in Prague in May 2009 was already the 18<sup>th</sup> meeting in its course. The dialogue focused on the freedom of expression, the prohibition of torture and the protection of human rights defenders. China, on its turn, drew attention to the growing racism and discrimination in Europe. Several NGOs criticised the Czech approach for being too mild on China and

leaving aside some of the sensitive issues, including the question of Tibet. The dialogue with Israel caused emotions to arise in connection with the conflict in Gaza in 2008/2009 and the Israeli plan to construct new settlements in the West Bank. While some EU states believed that the EU should condemn these actions as violations of human rights, the Czech Republic, in the declaration released on behalf of the whole EU, took a cautious stance and avoided any qualification of the situation. This position was criticised as one-sided and pro-Israeli.

One of the most important events in the period of the 2009 Czech presidency was the UN World Conference Against Racism, the so-called *Durban-II*, which took place in Geneva in April 2009. It linked up with the first conference of this type held in 2001 in Durban, which ended in a serious division between, on the one hand, the USA, Israel and some other Western states and, on the other hand, some states of the Third World. The main controversies concerned the position of Israel and the legacy of colonialism. A similar division was feared to occur during the Durban-II conference, with Muslim countries trying to persuade the states to condemn Israel, declaring Zionism as a form of racism, and to reject any form of defamation of religions. The Czech Republic, together with other Western states, opposed both of these points and sought to define a unified EU position and to convince the EU states to act in a uniform manner. This, however, turned out to be impossible, with different European countries preferring to adopt different strategies. In the end, four EU countries decided to boycott the conference, while the other 23 sent their representatives there. The disunity was further increased still when, after the provocative statement by the Iranian president Ahmanidejad, the Czech delegation decided to abandon the conference, leaving the other 22 EU states there without the president country. This step was criticised both inside and outside the EU.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: IDENTIFICATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF KEY ACTORS**

The main actor in the process of the formation and realisation of the Czech foreign policy in the human rights sphere during the period 2007–2009 was the *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, especially its Department of Human Rights and Transition Policy (LPTP). This department was created in August 2007 by the fusion of two separate departments – the one on *Human Rights* and the one on *Transformation Policy*. This fusion, together with the transfer of the department from a legal to a political section of the Ministry, reflected both the interconnectedness of the two areas and the politicisation of this agenda in the Czech Republic. The LPTP is seconded by other MFA departments, mainly the *Common Foreign and Security Policy Department*, the *International Law Department*, the *UN Department* and several territorial departments. Important tasks are performed by the Permanent Missions in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Strasburg, the Permanent Representation in Brussels and the Embassies in various countries.

Outside the MFA, some important human rights tasks are performed by the *Ministry of Justice* (representation of the Czech Republic in the European Court of Hu-

man Rights) and the *Ministry of Interior* (refugees and asylum seekers). Relatively (even surprisingly) limited are the roles of the *Minister for Human Rights and National Minorities* and the *Government Council for Human Rights and National Minorities*. Those two organs focus primarily on the implementation of and respect for human rights inside the Czech Republic. The *President* and his office also remain traditionally inactive, which reflects not only the office's limited competences in this area but also the longer-term preferences of the current president Václav Klaus for other topics – mainly those related to ecology and economy. The other branches of the state power, namely the *Parliament* and the *Judiciary*, get involved in the process of ratification of international human rights treaties and in the adjudication of cases based on these treaties.

Unlike other areas of the Czech foreign policy, the human rights sphere manifests a rather significant involvement of the *non-state sector*. This sector takes part in the definition of Czech human rights priorities as well as in the realisation of these priorities in practice. This is possible due to the relatively small size of the country and the unusually strong personal interconnection between state and non-state spheres. The non-state sector encompasses both influential personalities and classical non-governmental organizations.

Among the personalities, the former president of the Czech Republic Václav Havel could be considered as the most important. In 2007–2009 Havel regularly criticised human rights violations in some states (Cuba, Burma, the Russian Federation) and called for an increased support for dissident movements in the world. He also initiated the organisation of an annual conference called Forum 2000, which, since 1997, brings together politicians, human rights defenders and the general public to discuss urgent human rights issues or more general ethical, philosophical or political questions linked to them. The Czech human rights NGO sector is now relatively diversified and pluralistic. Despite that, a special role is played by the People in Need Foundation, which runs various projects for social integration, humanitarian and development assistance, education, and the promotion of democracy and organises the annual international human rights documentary festival *One World*.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC SPACE**

In the long term, the human rights dimension of the Czech foreign policy does not attract significant attention from the media, the academic community and the general public. This fact could be linked to a rather broad consensus inside the Czech society on the orientation of the human rights diplomacy, or it could also stem from the low level of knowledge about this area in the society (most probably it is a mix of both). In principle, the media tend to monitor only those events which have direct consequences for the domestic situation in the Czech Republic (the restitution affairs in the European Court of Human Rights) and those in which the Czech Republic performs either very well or very badly (Durban II). Moreover, in view of the lack of interest

in foreign policy issues, the Czech media are usually not able to present a competent analysis and thus remain rather descriptive. There is also a limited number of critical sources of information. The Czech Presidency in 2009 somehow broke this circle and made the human rights dimension of the Czech foreign policy a bit more visible for the Czech public.

The academic community got involved in the research of the human rights dimension of the Czech foreign policy in a scarce way. Its production consists of several analytical yearbooks<sup>28</sup> and a special issue of the journal *International Politics* (No. 12 of 2008). It did, moreover, organise a few events on relevant issues, most of them in the period of the Czech Presidency. Examples of such events include the presentation on *Terrorism and Human Rights* (Law Faculty, Prague, 16. 6.), the workshop *Darfur: Displaced Conflict?* (UN Information Centre, Prague, 8. 9.) or the conference *50 Years of the European Court for Human Rights* (Faculty of Social Science MU, Brno). The general public showed only a limited interest in foreign policy in general, including its human right dimension. There were several public manifestations (e.g. against human rights violations in Burma or China), but the attendance usually did not exceed several dozen people. The only event to attract more attention was the international human rights documentary film festival *One World*, whose public performances were regularly visited by tens of thousands of people.

## CONCLUSION

In the years 2007–2009, the promotion of human rights and of democratic values ranked among the highest priorities of the Czech foreign policy. This is well reflected in all the strategic foreign policy documents but it contrasts with the fact that with the exception of the 2000–2002 period, the Czech Republic has never had a conceptual material on human rights diplomacy. The absence of such a material has been compensated throughout the years by the adoption of several single-issue or time-limited documents, such as the *Conception of the Transition Policy* (2005), but it is still felt as a handicap especially at the MFA and causes difficulties in the communication and coordination of activities among various state organs.

On a positive note, it is possible to say that the Czech Republic managed in 2007–2009 to meet all the regular tasks which were on its agenda. More concretely, it fulfilled its obligations stemming from international treaties, participated in the activities of international human rights bodies, struggled to reach its thematic and territorial priorities, and realised projects of the transition policy. Moreover, in the first half of 2009, it assumed the Presidency in the Council of the EU, which allowed it to bring some of its human rights topics (human rights defenders, promotion of democracy, etc.) to the European level and to get experience from the high human rights diplomacy.

On a less positive note, the Czech foreign policy in the human rights sphere suffered in 2007–2009 from a certain long-term inconsistency which manifested itself in three main areas. First, there was quite a rigorous separation of the domestic and

the international human rights realm and different standards were applied to each of them. Thus, for instance, while the Czech Republic fought for increasing awareness of human rights issues abroad, it did not carry out any educational or information campaign related to the same content on its own territory. Secondly, the Czech Republic professed the idea of human rights mainstreaming but in reality it stuck to the sector-specific orientation of its foreign policy. This brought about a certain clash between idealistic rhetoric and pragmatic actions. Thirdly, the Czech Republic claims the importance of non-selectivity in its approach to human rights but it itself behaved in quite a selective way. For example, it actively criticised violations of human rights in Cuba but remained silent in regard to the events in the US military base of Guantánamo Bay.

From the institutional perspective, the Czech foreign policy in the area of human rights revealed a high level of centralisation. Most of the activities were both planned and realised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or, more specifically, by its Department of Human Rights and Transition Policy. The involvement of other public organs remained rather limited. The cooperation with the non-state sector, on the contrary, worked relatively well, with several personalities (e.g. Václav Havel) and NGOs (e.g. the People in Need Foundation) having direct influence on setting the human rights agenda. This situation contradicts somehow the emphasis placed on mainstreaming human rights, which was highlighted in the conceptual documents.

In terms of its approach to human rights diplomacy, the Czech political scene could be divided into three main ideological currents: the so-called *activist internationalists*, the *moderate internationalists* and the *autonomists*. The activist internationalists declare that the promotion of human rights is the key vocation of foreign policy and that it can never be sacrificed to any other values or interests. They profess the universality of human rights and oppose any relativisation thereof. In practice, however, they are not always consistent: referring to the Czech historical experience, they tend to focus on only a few countries' violations of human rights while generously ignoring and even justifying violations of human rights by other countries. The moderate internationalists recognise the importance of human rights but are ready to compromise on them if they believe that this is necessary for reaching other important goals. They have problems in trying to find a balance between pragmatism and complete unprincipledness. Finally, the autonomists defend the values of state sovereignty and non-intervention and remain cautious in regard to any external interference in what they think belongs among the internal affairs of a state.

The borders between the three currents pass not only among political parties but also through most of them, though there is a tendency for the main pro-system parties (the Czech Social Democratic Party and the Civic Democratic Party) to be rather moderate, for the smaller pro-system parties (the Christian-Democratic Party and the Green Party) to be rather activist and for the non-system parties (the Communist Party) to be autonomist. In 2007–2009 the foreign policy in the human rights sphere mostly reflected a balance between activists and moderates, with the latter getting atop since the first half of 2009 in result of the experiences gained during the Czech Presidency in the Council of the EU and the replacement of the political government by a bureaucratic one. It will be interesting to see in the next few years whether the



‘moderation’ of the Czech human rights diplomacy is a constant trend or just a temporary phenomenon.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> *Sektorové priority českého předsednictví EU 2009*. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs, July, 2008.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>3</sup> *18-měsíční program předsednictví*. On-line: ([www.mzv.cz/public/dc/89/7e/75946\\_14945\\_\\_18m\\_prog\\_CZ\\_korigendum.pdf](http://www.mzv.cz/public/dc/89/7e/75946_14945__18m_prog_CZ_korigendum.pdf)).
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- <sup>5</sup> UN Doc. CCPR/C/CZE/2, 29. 11. 2006.
- <sup>6</sup> UN Doc. CERD/CZE/7, 11. 1. 2001 (including the sixth and seventh periodic report).
- <sup>7</sup> UN Doc. CCPR/C/SR.2480, 25. 7. 2005.
- <sup>8</sup> UN Doc. CEDAW/C/CZ/5, *Fourth and Fifth Periodic Report on the Fulfilment of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women for the period from 1 January 2004 to 31 July 2008*, 22. 5. 2009.
- <sup>9</sup> UN Doc. HRI/CORE/CZE/2009, *Core Document Forming Part of the Reports of States Parties, Czech Republic*, 9. 6. 2009.
- <sup>10</sup> UN Doc. A/HRC/WG.6/1/CZE/1, *National Report Submitted in Accordance with Paragraph 15 (a) of the Annex to HRC Resolution 5/1, Czech Republic*, 6. 3. 2008.
- <sup>11</sup> UN Doc. A/HRC/WG.6/1/CZE/2, *Compilation Prepared by the OHCHR, in Accordance with Paragraph 15 (b) of the Annex to HRC Resolution 5/1, Czech Republic*, 1. 4. 2008.
- <sup>12</sup> UN Doc. A/HRC/WG.6/1/CZE/3, *Summary Prepared by the OHCHR, in Accordance with Paragraph 15 (c) of the Annex to HRC Resolution 5/1, Czech Republic*, 6. 3. 2008.
- <sup>13</sup> UN Doc. A/HRC/8/33/Add. 1, *Universal Periodic Review, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Czech Republic, Addendum*, 13. 8. 2008.
- <sup>14</sup> HRC, *Decision 8/115, Outcome of the universal periodic review: Czech Republic*, 11. 6. 2008.
- <sup>15</sup> *Statement at the General Debate of the 63<sup>rd</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly by H. E. Karel Schwarzenberg, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic* (20. 11. 2008). Czech Permanent Mission at the UN. On-line: ([www.mzv.cz/www/default.asp?id=61060&ido=22030&idj=2&amb=112&ParentIDO=](http://www.mzv.cz/www/default.asp?id=61060&ido=22030&idj=2&amb=112&ParentIDO=)).
- <sup>16</sup> *Viz. UN Docs. A/C.3/63/L.22*, 30 October 2008; a A/RES/63/171, 18. 12. 2008.
- <sup>17</sup> *Prohlášení MZV ČR k zásahu běloruského režimu proti opozičním demonstrantům*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26. 3. 2008; *Prohlášení MZV ČR k politickým procesům s běloruskými politickými aktivisty*. 24. 4. 2008, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- <sup>18</sup> *EU po volbách zváží, zda nezmírní sankce vůči Bělorusku*. Czech News Agency, 15. 9. 2008.
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- <sup>20</sup> *Barmská vláda odpírá lékařskou péči politickým vězňům*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 24. 4. 2008; *Barmská junta prodloužila disidence Su Ťij domácí vězení*. Czech News Agency, 27. 5. 2008.
- <sup>21</sup> See on-line: ([www.unhcr.cz/dokumenty/koncepce-narodniho-presidlovaciho-programu.pdf](http://www.unhcr.cz/dokumenty/koncepce-narodniho-presidlovaciho-programu.pdf)).
- <sup>22</sup> *V Praze dnes skončila konference barmských aktivistů*. Czech News Agency, 16. 9. 2009.
- <sup>23</sup> *EU sice kritizuje Kubu, ale politická jednání s ní nepřeruší*. Czech News Agency, 15. 6. 2009.
- <sup>24</sup> *Conception of the Transformation Policy*, 2005, point 2.
- <sup>25</sup> *Prohlášení MZV ČR k 'parlamentním volbám' v Abcházii*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 12. 3. 2007.
- <sup>26</sup> *Prohlášení MZV ČR k represím vůči představitelům běloruských občanských iniciativ*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26. 3. 2007.

- <sup>27</sup> These are AMO, People in Need, Europeum, Association for Civic Belarus, Policy Association for an Open Society (PASOS), Transitions Online (TOL), Foundation Forum 2000, Centre for Study of Democracy and Culture (CDK), Yes for Europe, CE Agora and the Respect institute.
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## Chapter 19

# Development Cooperation in the Czech Foreign Policy

*Ondřej Horký*

To date there has been no academic yearbook on the Czech development cooperation, and this chapter on the ‘development dimension’ makes up a part of a book on the Czech foreign policy.<sup>1</sup> Both of these facts are symptomatic of the relevance and characteristics of the ‘Foreign Development Cooperation’ of the Czech Republic. Firstly, the policy is considered as of little importance in the political and public spaces despite a substantial budget, compared to the other dimensions of foreign policy covered by this book. Secondly, the territorial and sectoral priorities of bilateral cooperation and the subsequent implementation by the Czech companies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) make it a policy that is led rather by the domestic security and economic interests than by serious efforts to reduce poverty in the South.

The period from 2007 to 2009 corresponds roughly to the preparation of and the major part of the institutional ‘transformation’ of the Czech development cooperation. This denomination might suggest a movement from a less effective to a more effective system as the ‘re-emerging donor’ is expected to comply with the global and EU commitments on poverty reduction in the South and to align itself to the best practices of more experienced donors. However, the ongoing centralization of decision-making at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the project implementation at the Czech Development Agency (CzDA) have strengthened the subjection of development cooperation to the short-term foreign policy priorities and they did not substantially weaken its dependence on the economic interests of the Czech exporters.

This instrumentalization of development cooperation should not hide, however, the achievements in terms of legislative and institutional transformation, as well as the successful Czech presidency of the Council of the EU in the first half of 2009. By the end of 2009 at the domestic level, the Chamber of Deputies approved an Act on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance that facilitates financial transfers abroad, and after years of institutional transformation, a new draft of the strategy was being commented by the members of the Council on Foreign Development Cooperation. This new advisory body to the MFA, founded together with the CzDA in

2008, associates other ministries and the platforms of private companies and NGOs, and it is officially supposed to ensure policy coherence for development.

At first sight, it appears that the Czech Republic will soon have a development cooperation framework similar to those of the experienced donors. But many practices in implementation, such as the *de facto* tied bilateral aid, have remained the same. The use of reshaped institutions and the implementation of new norms hence depend on the commitment to global development shared by the government and top political elites. The forthcoming failure in achieving a 0.17% share of the Official Development Assistance (ODA) on the gross national income (GNI) in 2010, the aid quantity target agreed at EU level, is only a symptom of the government's lack of interest. Problems with aid quality, due especially to its fragmentation, missing evaluations, and policy incoherence, are much less visible but sharper. The low commitment of the government to the development agenda is counter-balanced by the rising advocacy activities of the NGOs, facilitated by EU funding, the growing support of the citizens for development cooperation despite the economic downturn, and the worse performances of other 'new' EU states as well as the bad performances of some 'old' EU member states.

## DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

### *Background*

While the development dimension of the EU is frequently labelled as a 'development policy', the term 'development cooperation' is currently relevant for the Czech Republic. The term 'development policy' appeared only once and randomly in an official document, but in reality and in spite of the legal and institutional changes, there is no such thing as a broad, holistic and coherent government policy towards the South. Moreover, the development-related policy that was officially restarted on the basis of a government decision in 1995 bore the name 'Foreign Development Aid' until 2004. Then its name was changed to the current title 'Foreign Development Cooperation', in accordance to the more egalitarian language on development in the donor discourse, and the name remained the same in the government proposal of the Act on Foreign Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Provided Abroad. In this chapter, all three terms are used interchangeably.

From its very beginnings, the Czech development cooperation was institutionally grounded in exceptional and regular government decisions proposed by the MFA. The most important documents were the 1995 and 2004 'Principles'. The first document institutionally defined the broad goals and criteria for allocating Czech development aid. The policy was coordinated by the MFA, but it was independently managed by almost all of the other ministries, and this without any common rules until 2005.<sup>2</sup> The 2004 update has strengthened the policy as an 'integral part of the Czech foreign policy' and reacted to the Czech Republic's accession to the EU, but it did not challenge the fragmentation of the Czech aid. It reduced the number of programme countries to

ten, including Afghanistan and Iraq, but the sectoral priorities still corresponded to the actual scope of almost all of the other ministries.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, a 2002 ‘Conceptual document’ envisaged the foundation of a development agency, but the government only took note of the plan without approving it.<sup>4</sup> Even though the 2004 ‘Principles’ have officially remained valid by the end of 2009, three major documents have emerged during the 2007–2009 period.

Firstly, the government approved the long-awaited ‘Transformation of the System of Foreign Cooperation of the Czech Republic’.<sup>5</sup> This document proposed a roadmap for the institutional and budgetary concentration of aid implementation from the nine line ministries to the CzDA during the 2008–2010 period. The agency would not be founded on a greenfield as was the case of most of the ‘new’ EU member states, but it would arise from the Development Centre, an advisory body of the MFA issued by a UNDP project. The document assigned policy decisions solely to the MFA, but in order to replace the key role of the other ministries, an advisory Council for Foreign Development Cooperation was designed to replace the former Inter-ministerial Working Group. Its statute was equally approved by the government and its role is to coordinate development cooperation and to ensure that policy coherence for development is promoted.<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, the transformed system of providing bilateral aid was institutionalized in a law proposal for the first time. Even though the very first proposal was submitted for approval at the MFA level as early as in 2006, it became the subject of many comments and arguments by the many actors involved in the policy, resulting in the government submitting the Act on Foreign Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Provided Abroad to the Chamber of Deputies only in July 2009. By the end of the year it was submitted for comments to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, with an outlook of further unproblematic acceptance by the Chamber of Deputies. After the vote in the Senate and the President’s signature, new ‘Principles’ will be presented by the MFA to the government for approval to make up for the many issues that have been excluded from the initial proposal. While for the first time the Members of Parliament and the President will have to deal officially with development cooperation, which may raise their awareness of the issue, the law is rather technical in its nature. It allows the MFA to send grants abroad without *ad hoc* approval by the government as a whole, and it gives the CzDA the right to run calls for grants to the Czech NGOs instead of running tenders for supplies. It opens the way for an untied, deconcentrated, and more flexible bilateral cooperation but without a guarantee that the new tools will be used for the sake of its greater effectiveness.

Finally, three years after the end of the validity of the preceding conceptual document and one year of delays to the transformation plan, the MFA has initiated a draft of a new strategy for the period 2010–2017. The process included the members of the Council for Foreign Development Cooperation, but it was kept closed to the actors outside the Council and its *ad hoc* working group. Nobody, including the NGO platform, organized any public debate on the subject. The draft document is characterized by a double and sometimes contradictory understanding of development cooperation as a tool of foreign policy and as a way of honouring development commitments and

reducing global poverty. The number of programme countries was reduced by half to four: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ethiopia, Moldova and Mongolia. Finally the inclusion of a Least Developed Country in Africa was initially justified only by public and external acceptability. The remaining ‘project’ countries are mostly of interest to the Czech Republic because of security concerns. The number of sectors has been reduced to four as well, but they have been redefined so vaguely and broadly that they may include almost any activity. The proposal is more detailed in the areas of policy coherence for development, gender and new tools related to the private sector. Nevertheless, most of the commitments on the quantity, quality, coordination and complementarity of aid are not translated to the national level.

### ***Political Context***

Even though the amount of ODA of the Czech Republic corresponds to roughly two thirds of the total MFA budget, its presence in the political space (as well as in the public space and the media) is relatively marginal. It is considered as a ‘technical’ agenda and since development cooperation is implemented abroad and most of the domestic actors heavily depend on government funding, it is not prone to be widely discussed or criticized. Nevertheless, transformations that entail a substantial shift in power between the ministries have required political consensus at government level, and they have exceptionally reflected the preferences of political parties as well.

The 2006 general elections programme of the winning Civic Democratic Party (ODS) promised a reform of the system, but the foundation of a development agency, as stated in the government programme, was eventually taken over from the election programme of the Greens, one of the coalition partners. After four years of opposition to the centralization, the other ministries finally agreed to gradually give up the management of development aid in their competence, which was sometimes influenced by nepotistic relations, and transfer it to the MFA with the CzDA. The the Greens has also managed to push for a statement on policy coherence for development with trade and agricultural policies in the government programme, but it remained without consequence until the fall of the Topolánek government in early 2009. The Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg, though nominated by the Greens, did not visibly favour development cooperation either.

With the exception of the now dissolved neo-Nazi Worker Party and neoconservative-libertarian think-tanks, such as the Centre for Economics and Politics (CEP) affiliated to President Klaus, who opposed development cooperation, there seems to be a silent consensus on the current levels and open use of development cooperation for foreign policy priorities, which is common among post-communist countries and some ‘old’ member states, and the differences between political parties in regard to this issue are not discernible. Aside from the support of the Greens, the pro-poor focus and effectiveness of development cooperation is defended mostly by the NGOs and academia, but their weak voices do not reach mainstream political debates, which results in the fact that the non-respect of international and EU commitments is not perceived as a relevant problem in the Czech polity. Overall, the debate on development cooperation takes place at the MFA, the Council for Foreign Development Cooper-

ation, the foreign committees of the Parliament, and the NGOs, but its character remains technical rather than political.

The generally weak presence of the development agenda on the political arena and the low willingness of the Ministry of Finance to honour commitments on aid quantity have been from time to time breached by the easy *ad hoc* government decisions to provide extraordinary and non-systematic development aid as a reaction to political events. In 2007 and 2008, the government decided to provide special development (and not merely humanitarian) aid to Afghanistan, Georgia and Palestine, but these decisions were conditioned more by perceived security threats and commitments to military allies than development concerns. Aid to the Palestine Authority was also intended to strengthen the Czech position during the EU presidency. Not only these decisions contributed to further fragmentation of Czech aid, but they confirm that the main drivers of the Czech development cooperation do not find their sources in global poverty, but in the political events at international and EU level.

## **DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: AGENDA AND EVENTS**

The general understanding of what is considered as an event makes the *a priori* long-term oriented development agenda seemingly eventless, as it is differentiated from a foreign policy marked by diplomatic scoops. However, the high number of projects of bilateral cooperation that were implemented could hardly be condensed in this chapter. The Official Development Assistance also accounts for policies which are not in the sole competence of the MFA such as scholarships for students from the developing countries. On top of it, the development agenda is strongly Europeanized and internationalized. On the other hand, the striking absence of project evaluations since 2007, a handful of published project evaluations from the preceding period, three unpublished mid-term programme evaluations for Angola, Moldova and Vietnam and unpublished monitoring reports do not allow us to assess the implementation of Czech aid. The subchapter hence draws on official statistics in terms of financial inputs and explores the development agenda by the main issues of aid quantity and forms, its quality and territorial and sectoral distribution. It also overviews the EU and multilateral dimension of the Czech development cooperation, with emphasis on the presidency of the Council of the EU. Examples of typical projects in 2007 may be found in an official publication of the MFA.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Quantity and Forms of Aid***

The development cooperation budget is approved by the government on a yearly basis with a non-binding mid-term outlook, but the projects are multiannual in contrast to 'new' EU member states. With the high part of the contributions to the EU budget for the total ODA, the oscillating exchange rate between the Euro and the Czech Crown, and the varying growth of GNI, Czech multilateral aid disbursements are badly predictable. Three-year indicative bilateral budget plans are approved annually by the

government, but they are not always respected. The already approved budgets for 2009 and the planned budgets for 2010 were cut by around 5% and 15% respectively with the alleged justification being the financial and economic crisis. It is very clear now that the Czech Republic will not reach the ODA/GNI ratio of 0.17%, as approved by the Council of the EU in 2005.<sup>8</sup> This failure is less random than structural since this 2010 target has been interpreted by the Ministry of Finance as a mere ‘recommendation’. The MFA has always accepted the objections of the Ministry of Finance against raising the development budget, so the financial commitments were discussed only within the inter-ministerial mechanism of reviewing proposals, and the MFA has never openly challenged the position of the Ministry of Finance in the cabinet.

In the period 2007–2009 the ODI/GNI ratio was raised by one point to 0.12%, but in absolute numbers it saw its peak in 2008 with 4.6 billion CZK, and it stopped at 4.2 billion CZK a year later, mostly due to the reductions in the budget for bilateral projects. These numbers seem to be quite substantial, but in 2009, bilateral ODA accounted for only 41%, the compulsory contribution to the EU budget accounted for 53%, and other multilateral and regional organizations accounted for 5% of the total ODA. Moreover, bilateral cooperation includes large parts of the so-called inflated aid. In 2008, it included an unpublished part of the military and civil missions in Afghanistan (420 million CZK), arbitrarily selected and improbably high administrative costs amounting to 7% of bilateral aid (150 million CZK) and the assistance to refugees at home (300 million CZK). In addition to that, the scholarships for students from developing countries, which in most cases support brain drain, cost about 150 million CZK a year. Not counting humanitarian aid and transition policy, the final budget for bilateral projects corresponded to only about 610 million CZK (25 million EUR).

The prospects for the following years are not good either, not only because of the crisis-related budgetary cuts. The opportunities for bilateral debt relief are near their end, and they can only be replaced by the already negotiated payment to the 10<sup>th</sup> European Development Fund (EDF), which will start in 2011. The chances of doubling the ODI to reach the pledged ODA/GDI ratio of 0.33% in 2015 are bleak, as this would mean multiplying the ‘real’ bilateral budget several times. Until now, development cooperation had the same cuts applied to it as other expenses, and it does not seem that it would benefit from any special treatment by the government in the positive or negative sense.

### ***Quality of Aid and its Territorial Distribution***

Preceding the transformation of the development cooperation that was initiated in late 2007, there was a common understanding between the MFA, the Development Centre and the NGOs that bilateral aid is fragmented and hence ineffective. This view was supported by the ‘special review’ of the OECD Development Assistance Committee and the recommendations of the World Bank that have underlined the commercial motivations of the Czech aid, its territorial and sectoral fragmentation, and its poor focus on results.<sup>9</sup> These arguments were widely used by the mentioned domestic actors as an argument for centralization of decision-making at the MFA and the founda-



tion of a single implementing agency, but since the plans got approved, the concerns for effectiveness have been weakening. The internal coherence of the Czech development cooperation is but a part of the aid effectiveness agenda, and the institutional transformation did not translate into a substantial change in the habits of the actors.

The Czech development cooperation remains donor-driven and *de facto* tied to the provision of Czech goods and services. Even though the Czech development agency has required the provision of common deliveries such as furniture by the local producers in the South, the tenders are still run in the Czech Republic. The Czech development agency does not have branches in the priority countries and therefore it is extremely difficult to gather relevant information without the intermediary of the interested companies and NGOs. Even though the number of priority countries and sectors is being slightly reduced, Czech aid remains overly fragmented. The efforts involved in taking cross-cutting issues such as gender and environment into account, and in promoting aid coordination, complementarity and policy coherence for development were mostly initiated by the NGOs or the European Commission, and their effect remains negligible. There is a very weak identification with communitarian aid and a resistance to delegating aid implementation to another donor, or even to using instruments such as general budget support. On the other hand, the Czech Republic has been quite active in promoting trilateral cooperation, formerly with bilateral donors such as Luxembourg, Canada and Austria, but more recently with the European Commission. But given that the reference framework for assessing Czech aid is the extent of promoting national interests, these concerns are not considered as relevant by the majority of actors.

The territorial distribution of the Czech bilateral cooperation is quite stable. The shallow defragmentation of aid leads rather to the retirement from the Least Developed Countries and Africa. In 2008 the eight priority countries (Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Mongolia, Serbia, Vietnam, Yemen and Zambia) shared two thirds of the budget earmarked for bilateral projects, and no projects were initiated outside the priority countries – with the exception of the so-called ‘small local projects’ affiliated to embassies. Europe accounted for 39%, Asia for 34% and Africa for 15% of the bilateral ODA. The Czech development cooperation is focused mostly on middle income countries in the Czech Republic’s Eastern Neighbourhood and the Balkans. The 2007 mid-term programme evaluations revealed that it was in Moldova and Vietnam that the Czech involvement was the least effective and coordinated. For example, the Czech Republic was active in six sectors in Moldova: these were largely defined to please the line ministries, and thus they accommodated almost any project. In 2010 the transition period will see the Czech Development Agency active in ten countries, with Mongolia, Georgia and Angola corresponding to two thirds of its budget and environment as the most prominent sector.

### ***The Czech EU Presidency and Development Aid***

The Czech presidency of the Council of the EU in the first half of 2009 not only affected the communitarian level during the strictly delimited period of six months, but

it played an important role at the domestic level already in 2008. It particularly exhausted the capacities of the Czech development actors appointed for domestic tasks, but for a while, it gave the development agenda a higher level of importance at the EU level. The impact was the most visible within the MFA and the Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the European Union in Brussels, which has been directly involved in presiding over CODEV, the working group on development of the Council. However, the biggest contribution to the rising relevance of development in the Czech Republic may consist in the other ministries' understanding of the priority the EU gave to the agenda. Even though it is too early to assess the costs and benefits of the intense EU experience, it has the potential to draw a larger amount of government attention to development issues in the long term. The presidency's contribution to the NGOs is more evident: it has facilitated their funding from diverse EU sources, boosted advocacy activities, and improved the visibility of development cooperation in the public space.

The national priorities of the presidency represent only a small part of its day-to-day activities, but they are symptomatic of its overall approach to development policy. The original Czech proposal included good governance, aid effectiveness, the Eastern dimension, and policy coherence for development in the area of environment as priorities. These were later modified and reduced to three priorities: access to sustainable sources of energy at the local level, support of democratic governance, and the Eastern dimension as a cross-cutting issue. The success of the third priority was mitigated as the working group and the Directorate General on Development are traditionally oriented toward Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific countries, but it helped to raise awareness of the territorial priorities of the Czech Republic and other post-communist countries. The first two priorities, as well as the unforeseen priority imposed by the circumstances to mitigate the impacts of the global financial and economic crisis, were successfully coined by the Council Conclusions. The informal meeting of development ministers took place in Prague on 29 and 30 January 2009. The main role of the presidency – to moderate the debate and search for consensus – has been assessed as successful by the peer member states and the Council.

The way in which the Czech positions toward the EU and global development policy are adjusted outside the presidency is also quite revealing of the low relevance of the agenda at the domestic level. The MFA did not interfere in the mandate to be issued by its Ministerial Coordination Group, as it is entirely drafted by the Department for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid and there are no external actors involved. As far as the current positions are concerned, the Czech Republic is overtly sceptical towards the endorsed commitments of the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action. The new strategy paper openly discards uses of budget support and delegated cooperation on the grounds of the desired involvement of the the Czech companies and NGOs in the projects of the Czech development cooperation.

## DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: IDENTIFICATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE KEY ACTORS

No other dimension of the Czech foreign policy is characterized by such a high number of state and non-state actors. Even the centralization of the system has confirmed the important role of other state actors in the inter-ministerial council and at the same time, the transformation of the system did not cause aid to be less tied to the products and services provided by the Czech NGOs and companies. According to 2005 estimates, 40 employees were active in the public sector, 110 in the non-profit sector and 250–300 in the private sector.<sup>10</sup> Hence, the bilateral development cooperation is quite an important employer. The relations between the actors are hierarchical. The government approves the policy and the budget outlined by the MFA. In turn, the MFA coordinated the other ministries, which are phasing out of implementation, and, the CzDA, which runs new tenders and grant competitions. The NGOs and companies implementing projects try to influence the policy through their respective platforms and keep their acquired positions in implementing aid. Other specific relations are analysed in the following subsections.

### *The Government*

The already low priority of the development agenda within the foreign policy is reduced even further by the weak position of the MFA *vis-a-vis* other ministries. Since 1993 the MFA has been occupied mostly by the coalition partners of the winning right or left wing parties, and the foreign affairs constituency could not compete with the strong constituencies in the policy areas of finance, industry and agriculture. The references to development cooperation that were made by the Prime Ministers Mirek Topolánek and Jan Fischer always originated in other areas. In 2007, the former challenged the aid allocation to those countries that had not supported the Czech candidacy to the UN Security Council on the grounds that it was incompatible with the Czech ‘economic diplomacy’. He was criticized by the opposition for this.<sup>11</sup> In 2009, on the eve of the Copenhagen Summit, the latter claimed that the newness of the Czech part of the so-called Fast Start Financing for climate change adaptation and mitigation funding was a ‘secondary problem’.<sup>12</sup> These were the only appearances of development cooperation in their public statements.

### *Political Parties*

An analysis of election programmes for the cancelled elections to the Chamber of Deputies in October 2009 shows that only the Greens (SZ) dedicated more than one page of its programme to development cooperation and policy coherence for development. This dedication is due to the strong affiliation of the party with the civil society. The Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) and the Civil Democratic Party (ODS) both touch upon the two issues in only one sentence. The programmes of other parliamentary parties completely ignored these issues.

### ***The Parliament***

Lead by an opposition deputy, the Foreign Committee of the Chamber of Deputies has been the most active body of the Parliament. It has regularly complained of the low interest of the MFA to consult its policies, including development cooperation, with the Parliament. The Committee has repeatedly and symbolically attempted at raising the budget for development cooperation until 2008, and in March 2009 it has replaced one of the three subcommittees by a subcommittee on development cooperation. Though, the step foreseen by the chair since 2007 was motivated by a deposal of a turncoat deputy from the original committee. In July 2008, the Senate has voted, on the proposal of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, a decision that has asked the government to reconsider its stance towards aid volume and to inform Senate on its decision. However, this initiative did not have any impact on the government. Only a couple of members of the Parliament, disregarding their political appurtenance, are aware of the development agenda, which hampers any long-term influence on the government.

### ***Ministries***

Despite the transformation of the system, some ministries, such as the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Industry and Trade, have preserved their specific agendas accountable for ODA, such as scholarships for students from developing countries, projects on prevention of illegal migration and Aid for Trade. Even though the ministries are continually running out of projects that were initiated before the foundation of the CzDA, they still continue to play a role institutionally through their vote in the Advisory Council for Foreign Development Cooperation, or personally through the incoming staff to the agency socialized by them. This is particularly true for the Ministry of Environment. The position of a ministry on development issues varies naturally according to its constituency, and the Ministry of Industry and Trade, for example, still considers development cooperation as a form of export subsidy for the Czech companies. The Ministry of Finance plays a particular role by opposing respect for the financial commitments with the argument that public budgets are tight.

### ***The Ministry of Foreign Affairs***

Even though the MFA has occupied a central position in the Czech development cooperation from the beginning, its dominance as a coordinating body was continuously strengthening. The policy-making unit is now located in the relatively autonomous Department for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid, which was founded in 2003, shortly before the accession to the EU. Approximately thirteen diplomats were working there after the EU presidency in late 2009, one diplomat represented the Czech Republic in the corresponding working groups CODEV and COHAFA at the Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the European Union in Brussels, and a diplomat was *de facto* outsourced to the Regional Centre of the UN Programme on Development (UNDP) in Slovakia. Some diplomats were also appointed to the development cooperation agenda at the embassies in priority countries, but the career code of the foreign ministry does not fit the long-term side of the development agenda, and

the department and the embassies in the South suffer from a high turnover of personnel. The Ministry has traditionally defended development aid as a tool of the foreign policy, and in late 2009 the Minister Jan Kohout justified the government law proposal in the Chamber of Deputies by stating that it was ‘not primarily charity, but first of all investment, investment in our security, in the prosperity of our citizens’.

### ***The Czech Development Agency***

The development agency grew out of the Development Centre, which was officially affiliated to the Institute of International Relations while in reality being subordinated to the Department for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid of the MFA. Especially in its beginnings as a follow-up of a UNDP project, it had not only played an advisory role to the MFA, but many policy-making tasks were directly outsourced by the ministry to its advisory body. Due to its multilateral origin, the Development Centre used to defend a more pro-poor stance than the MFA, but with its transformation from a policy advisory body to an implementing body, and the personnel changes in its direction, it came to approach the more pragmatic stance of the MFA. As of the end of 2009, about sixteen experts were working at the CzDA, divided between the territorially-oriented identification department and the sectorally-based formulation and monitoring department. As the only agency of its kind from the ‘new’ EU member states, it is a member of the Practitioners’ Network for European Development Cooperation, but real cases of coordination with other donors are rare as the Czech aid is tied and the agency lacks offices in developing countries. Despite the foundation of the agency and its responsibility for designing a substantial part of the project cycle and running transparent tenders, the Czech development projects are still mainly donor-driven, and also, they at least partially respond to the commercial interests of Czech companies.

### ***The Council for Foreign Development Cooperation***

Before the transformation from the Inter-ministerial Working Group in January 2008, the Council for Foreign Development Cooperation served as a coordinating body for the managing of the ministries and it discussed predominantly technical matters on an irregular basis and at the level of heads of department. The inclusion of the NGO and private sector platforms with an advisory vote, but with an influential voice, and the centralization of policy-making and budgeting at the MFA have led to a pace of four to five meetings a year and frequent representation by deputy ministers. Nevertheless, there is a concern that after the completion of the transformation process the ministries will gradually lose their interest in the development agenda. This would be detrimental to the creation of a genuine development policy for the Czech Republic as policy coherence for development is the second objective of the Council after coordination. It is defined in its statute, but not implemented at all yet. In addition to the mentioned actors, the associations of towns and regions make up a part of the Council, but their role in the Czech development cooperation has been negligible so far as well. Generally speaking, the influence within the council is distributed according to the weight of the ministries in the government.

### ***Non-Governmental Organizations***

The NGOs are important actors in the Czech development cooperation even though their part of the aid implementation does not surpass one third of the projects and amounts to even less in financial terms. They are much more visible than private companies in the Czech Republic: there are special budget lines for them to raise public awareness, and they frequently use the state-funded projects for improving their own visibility and private fundraising. Overall, their relation with the MFA can be labelled as one of interdependence. At the same time the NGOs' poverty-focused projects may serve as a tool for sustaining the public support of the policy. On the other hand, with the extremely low private donations for development (but not humanitarian) projects, most of the NGOs existentially depend on government support. This dependence on the state determines the nature of advocacy activities run by the NGO platform FoRS – the Czech Forum on Development Cooperation. It gathers together about thirty organizations, a great majority of the active NGOs, and lobbying for easy NGO funding is its foremost task. In spite of that, and especially with the external funding from the EU, the NGOs have started their own policy activities that open and put pressure on the MFA to honour its commitments, not only in terms of aid quantity, but also in terms of aid effectiveness and policy coherence, as it appears in the last *Aid Watch* report.<sup>13</sup> Individual members of FoRS are affiliated to the national version of the Global Call to Action Against Poverty, but it has been largely unsuccessful in substantially raising public awareness. People in Need, Caritas and Adra are the most important development NGOs in the country.

### ***Private Companies***

The private companies are the main beneficiaries of the Czech development cooperation in financial terms. The costs of an energy infrastructure project managed by the Ministry of Industry and Trade in Palestine have surpassed 6 million EUR, for example. Formally unorganized before 2008, some of the companies united in the Platform of Entrepreneurs for Foreign Development Cooperation (PPZRS), which was initiated mostly by major Chambers of commerce. While the NGOs lobby for aid to Least Developed Countries, the private sectors naturally prefer the neighbouring middle-income countries with already established strong economic relations. In some cases, the individual companies were still influencing the policy by interfering in the project identification process, which is still partly in the hands of the commercial representatives of the Czech embassies abroad. The platform has also initiated activities that help Czech companies in participating in EDF tenders.

### ***Academia***

While the Czech academic research on development is limited and fragmented, development studies as a discipline taught at universities are more widespread. Palacký University in Olomouc has started a full Bachelor's and Master's study programme in this subject, two universities have partial study programmes in it, and some other universities teach territorial studies, which are related to the South. A more general problem consists in the uncritical acceptance of the global or national political discourse on development.

## DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC SPACE

The interest of the media in development issues has slightly risen during the 2007–2009 period, but it is still insufficient. According to a Eurobarometer survey, 43% of the Czech respondents judge that the media refer ‘too little’ about the development of poor countries.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, a part of the Czech media outputs result from awareness raising projects run by NGOs, and many articles written by professional journalists are heavily influenced by stereotypes. The media inform about the Czech development cooperation only exceptionally, or if they do inform about it, it usually has to do with cases of failures and alleged corruption. Apart from the tabloidization of the Czech media, the lack of interest is also due to the improved, but still insufficient transparency of the Czech development cooperation, which is due to its management by diplomats who usually do not take care of raising the public awareness of the foreign policy. So far, only half of the population is aware of aid provided by the government, and this result is mitigated by the frequent confusion between humanitarian and development aid.<sup>15</sup>

There is indeed a gap between the humanitarian and the development donorship. While the Czechs are strongly willing to contribute to the relief after natural disasters, the NGOs are dependent on government aid, and they can hardly be considered as a part of the civil society in its original meaning. Nevertheless, there are several grassroots organizations providing development aid that exist outside the official structures. Greater public awareness would probably translate into higher pressure on politicians to provide development aid as the Czech Republic is one of the few EU countries where the opinion that developing countries should be helped has strengthened between 2004 and 2009. It reached 87% in 2009, according to Eurobarometer. The most important reasons for the Czechs to support development cooperation are the assistance to people in need, the fight against poverty, and help for children, while security and economic interests as primary motivations rate very low (3.4% and 2% respectively). The combination of both EU and domestic surveys shows that while people are quite sceptical about the actual use of aid, they are idealistic and do not require it to be a pragmatic tool for serving the Czech interests. People are hence close to the position of NGOs, but there is a gap between them and the government position. Development policy puts hence a question mark on the democratic legitimacy of the preference formation in the Czech foreign policy.

## CONCLUSION

Despite some notable variations between donors, development cooperation in the European Union is often understood less as a political than as a technical part of foreign policy – unless it lies outside the influence of the foreign ministry as a government policy in its own right. The way forward to be followed by the bad performers in terms of aid volume and effectiveness is also seen as linear, as it entails heading toward greater commitments on poverty reduction, which most often means abandoning

the short-term national interests. The path undertaken by the Czech Republic, a medium-sized ‘new’ EU member state, shows that in the period from 2007 to 2009, it took a different direction and fostered the role of development cooperation as a tool of the foreign policy. Meanwhile, the development effectiveness of the Czech aid may have improved as a side effect of the policy, but the absence of project evaluations does not allow for assessing its impact on the partner countries. On the other hand, the legal, institutional and strategic settings have been improving over time, so it may be argued that the aid efficiency has risen in respect to the foreign policy priorities.

If, however, one accepts this particularity of the development cooperation of the Czech Republic – which is also present, among others, in many other post-communist states and is contrary to their international commitments – the efforts undertaken to centralize the bilateral cooperation system have been incomparable. Indeed, for a long period of time the Ministry of Foreign Affairs faced the resistance of the line ministries to efforts to limit their particular interests. In contrast to the ‘new’ member states that have started to provide greenfield development aid only with their approaching accession to the EU, the Czech Republic had lost much time and energy on rebuilding the system on a brownfield. Still, it has remained the leader among the post-communist states: by the end of 2010, the Czech Republic has a law and a detailed strategy paper in preparation; the tasks are clearly divided between the MFA as a policy-maker and the Czech Development Agency as an aid implementer; other assets include multi-annual financing, country programmes, skilled and experienced staff, a functioning inter-ministerial council, etc. If the offices of the agency were dispatched to partner countries and the aid was consequently untied, the development cooperation framework of the Czech Republic would be almost ready to honour the current international commitments on development effectiveness.

The central challenge to the Czech development cooperation is located in the political space. The inclusion of development on the domestic political agenda is necessary to close the gap between the government and private companies that see development aid as a tool of foreign policy, and the citizens and civil society that prefer a poverty-focused cooperation. The crucial problems of the ‘new’ EU member states in terms of development policy are often seen as the lack of capacities and the lack of political will. The Czech case is quite different. Given the low aid disbursements, the capacities are relatively sufficient at this stage, but the main problem consists in the presence of a certain type of political will that often goes against the development commitments and the opinion of the civil society and the population. Rather than a lack of expertise, the main problem of the Czech development cooperation has to do with the internal political processes, a problem that it shares with the Czech foreign policy as a whole.

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## Endnotes

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## Chapter 20

# The Cultural Dimension of the Czech Foreign Policy

*Jana Peterková*

### INTRODUCTION

From one point of view, foreign cultural policy<sup>1</sup> covers a cultural dimension of foreign policy on both bilateral and multilateral levels, and it belongs to the area of traditional diplomatic relations, thematically coming under the area of culture. The very visible means used in this dimension include mostly bilateral agreements on cultural cooperation. From another point of view, foreign cultural policy means cultural diplomacy, which can be seen as a part of public diplomacy and its practice. It is orientated mainly on a foreign public and wants to present the country's own culture to other states and their public while creating a positive image of the state abroad through cultural activities. Such an image can help to achieve other political priorities precisely via helping to create a positive image and good reputation for the given country on the international scene.

### THE CULTURAL DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

The parties involved in cultural diplomacy see it as a cultural component of the general presentation of the Czech Republic in foreign countries together with economic and touristic elements. Such a complex view of their presentation is characteristic especially for small states, whereas big powers, e.g. France, more often make quite strict distinctions among these features.

The cultural dimension is usually specified in basic or concept documents containing strategic priorities, key participants, aims, tasks and, of course, timetables. Therefore, the cultural dimension of Czech foreign policy also has its own concept documents. In 2007 there were two such documents. The first one was the conception of the foreign policy itself, i.e. *The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Czech Republic for 2003–2006*.<sup>2</sup> This document speaks of a single, unified presentation of the Czech

Republic abroad as one of its priorities. In 2005 the Czech Government approved *The Concept of a Unified Presentation of the Czech Republic*.<sup>3</sup> This document brought a thorough analysis of the situation at that time, key priorities, groups of target audiences, and aims for short-term, mid-term and long-term horizons. Both these documents continue to be applied despite some changes in the policy.

In 2008 other documents were added, such as *The State Cultural Policy for the Years 2009–2014*.<sup>4</sup> This document has its foreign dimension, and it aims to strengthen the role of culture in the policy of external relations.<sup>5</sup> The Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic (MC) presented a draft of it in September 2008, and the government accepted it in November of the same year. This strategic document contains all possible aspects of culture as a component of the development of society. There are four basic aims, which are later divided into particular tasks. Some of these tasks are in close relation to the role of culture in foreign relations. For example the Ministry of Culture had to create its Conception of Foreign Cultural Policy. This document laid emphasis on foreign students of Czech universities. These students are seen as an important means to build a positive image of the Czech Republic abroad in a long-term period. Because this concept was prepared during 2007 and accepted in 2008, and its implementation began in 2009, it is too early to see any trends or to evaluate the fulfillment of all the mentioned aims and tasks.

In the Czech practice, the cultural dimension includes relations with so-called foreign Czechs, i.e. compatriots living abroad for a long or a short period of time. Both Chambers of the Czech Parliament discussed an amendment to a law regulating voting procedures for foreign Czechs during an election. But there was no discussion on the political scene between different political parties concerning culture, its role in the society, and its importance for the country's image abroad. There are also particular documents about specific topics, such as the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU (*Summary<sup>6</sup> of the concept of communication and presentation of the Presidency of the Czech Republic in the Council of the EU*) and the Czech participation at the EXPO world exposition in Shanghai, China in 2010 (*Concept<sup>7</sup> of the Czech Republic's participation at the World EXPO 2010 in Shanghai*). We can see some attempts of the state administration to have a unified presentation of the nation in foreign countries. There are two general documents and several specific ones, but the lack of will to fulfill the content of these documents is evident, especially when it comes to the general concept. In some cases a debate started about the question of public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy as well, and about the image of the state abroad, but we cannot see any outcome and implementation in practice in regard to these topics.

In 2009 all the documents mentioned above were still valid and especially the Conception of the EXPO and the Czech Presidency were hot topics, but the cultural dimension of the Czech Foreign Policy definitely does not belong to the priorities of the political scene and of its discussions. There were several projects, workshops and conferences of experts (see the Media/Public Space), but only one political conference. Lack of political encouragement, with the exception of extraordinary projects, e.g. the EXPO or the EU Presidency, is one of the long-term problems of this area in the Czech Foreign Policy.

## THE CULTURAL DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: AGENDA AND EVENTS

This part of the chapter deals with the main anniversaries, principal projects, events and themes which seemed to be important in the years under discussion. We can identify some areas which are stable. Work on them has continued for many years, e.g. presentation of culture, cultural agreements, state cultural policy, relations with compatriots, or the Czech participation in UNESCO activities. On the other hand there are also some very specific and supposedly short-term topics, such as the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union or the Czech participation at the EXPO exhibition.

### *Cultural Agreements*

Mostly bilateral agreements enable cooperation between states in areas of culture or education, very often for a period of several years. Such agreements are a stable part of the cultural dimension of the Czech foreign policy. The choice of partners for such agreements<sup>8</sup> reflects the geographical priorities for cultural cooperation. There was continuation and no divergence in this area in the monitored period.

### *UNESCO*

UNESCO belongs to the important multilateral platforms in the area of culture. The Czech Republic joined the *UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* in 2007. In 2008 this Convention was discussed and later accepted by both Chambers of the Czech Parliament. On the other hand the *UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* was accepted by the Chamber of Deputies, but not by the Senate. A specific situation arose when this Convention was joined by the EU as a whole and also by the majority of its member states. Otherwise there are no big problems in this area and no divergences in Czech activity in UNESCO structures.

### *Presentation of Culture*

Presentation of culture is one of the strongest parts or themes of the cultural dimension of foreign policy. Every state wants to present the best from its culture to build a positive image for itself in foreign countries. This includes, among other things, celebrations of important dates from the country's history, which also support the values and attitudes of the country and its people. Czech culture is very famous abroad and it is not surprising that the Czech state uses it as much as possible. In the last three years we had several key topics to present that were related to Czech design, architecture and animated film. To these, we must also add our classics, such as our music, folk art, film or other arts. We also use many standard tools such as exhibitions, concerts, presentations, lectures, film projections, discussions and many others. Each year also had its noteworthy anniversaries: 2007 – 30 years of Charter 77; 2008 – a 'year of eights' like the important years 1918, 1938, 1948, and 1968; 2009 – 20 years after the Vel-

vet Revolution (1989) and, correspondingly, 20 years of democracy. All these topics give us a space for reminiscences and evaluation. And all of them are mainly political. This reflects the capability of culture to present political topics – not only purely cultural ones. And it also reflects the role of culture in the development of the society. What is quite new is the emphasis and support given to the participation of Czech institutions in international projects, which enables participants to address a much broader audience and to present the Czech Republic as sharing common values with other countries and supporting them. The Generation 89 Project<sup>9</sup>, for example, focused on European citizenship; the ‘One World’ human rights film festival, which was originally a Czech project, has become popular in other countries too, and ‘The Night of Literature’,<sup>10</sup> in which works of Czech literature are read in both the original Czech and translations, used to be a project that was limited to Czech Centres<sup>11</sup>, but now many of their partner cultural centers from the *European Union National Institutes for Culture* (EUNIC) network also take part in this project.

### ***Relations with Expatriates and Czech Language Education***

Expatriates are a focus of the cultural dimension of the foreign policy in relation to several matters. First, aid is provided to expatriates in their efforts to preserve their knowledge of the Czech language. These activities have a tradition and have been taking place for many years. Before 2009 there were only small, rather technical or financial changes in these activities. In 2009, though, the target group was modified a little bit to include the so-called ‘new migrants’, i.e. Czech people who work abroad and live there for only several years, and especially their small children. In September 2009 the Senate organized the seminar ‘Compatriots and the Czech Republic’, pointing to the possible future creation of a concept of relations between the Czech state and Czech minorities living abroad. This is very useful and innovative because the Czech Republic does not have such a concept yet. The second matter is a political one – that of the plans for expatriates to eventually be able to take part in Czech elections by mail, as this is still not possible. The last matter has the closest relation to presentation because it refers to the role of expatriates in building a positive image of the Czech Republic abroad. There have been no big changes in recent years in this area as the participating institutions did a lot of work (e.g. the MFA, the MC, and the MEYS). Only in 2009 could we see a need for a re-conception of the policy on this topic.

### ***The Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union***

This was a very specific long-term project that was closely connected to the reputation of the Czech Republic on the international scene. The Presidency had been prepared before and during 2007, implementation started during 2008 and the presidency itself took place from January to June 2009. Every Presidency is an excellent opportunity for the presiding country to present itself to the world, especially for small states. Perhaps this was the root of the strong political appeal for Czech political representatives and for the state administration. The Czech presidency touched upon culture

in two ways. The first way involved its program priorities: e.g. creativity, intellectual property, and the role of culture as a factor of the development of a society or its cultural heritage. Nevertheless, attention from the media or from political representatives, except for the attention from the department of culture, was not given to the cultural priorities. On the other hand, the presentation of the Czech Republic through accompanying cultural projects was broadly discussed. There were many projects reflecting famous Czech music, composers, and orchestras; exhibitions; film projections and other events presenting the Czech culture. This dimension of the presidency and the communication campaign were highly appreciated and praised.<sup>12</sup>

### **EXPO 2010**

Participation in an EXPO exhibition belongs among the favorite means of states to present themselves in the best way through their cultural richness and specifics. The Czech Republic also has a long tradition when it comes to EXPO and it had its share of big moments there – e.g. in Brussels in 1958 or in Montreal in 1967. The Czech presence at the EXPO in 2000 (Hannover) was more or less problematic, though, and Aichi (2005) did not bring anything special. The Czech Government in its resolution n. 601 from May 21 2008 accepted the *Concept<sup>13</sup> of the Czech Republic's participation at the World EXPO 2010 in Shanghai*. We have not heard about any problems with the preparation, its timetable is being followed, and priorities are being fulfilled just in time. The Czech Republic should be presented as a 'jewel of civilization', as an intersection of values, opinions or trends. For this reason the exposition is not oriented on only one aspect, but it presents the Czech Republic from various points of view. The Czech exposition<sup>14</sup> also uses modern technologies through an EXPO On-line project. In addition, the domestic public could participate in the organizational team through the 'Jewels of the Czech Republic' project, which enabled the public to nominate 5 subjects or themes which would be presented in Shanghai as the best from the Czech Republic.

## **THE CULTURAL DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: IDENTIFICATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF KEY ACTORS**

Czech foreign policy has its stable players, and its cultural dimension has a group of key participants as well. The *Ministry of Foreign Affairs* (MFA) and especially its *Department for Culture, Communication and Presentation* (OKKP) have the most important role. This Department specializes in the presentation of the Czech Republic, long-term communication of Czech priorities with an emphasis on culture, and also the territorial agenda and concrete presentation. The OKKP also represents the Czech Republic on the international scene in the Visegrad Group, in the Platform Culture – Central Europe, and through meetings on the EU level (directors of cultural departments). Among the many concrete projects of this department, there are the famous

so-called touring exhibitions, i.e. exhibitions on a huge number of themes sent to Czech missions abroad to represent the Czech culture. The *Plenipotentiary for Compatriots*, even if seen as a separate position, belongs very closely to this department. During the last years the department went through many organizational changes and it changed its name several times, but the topic is more or less almost the same.

The *Czech Centres* represent yet another important agent in this field. The *Czech Centres* are highly engaged in the presentation of Czech culture and the organization of cultural events. They cooperate with many Czech missions abroad and also with Czech non-state actors, and we cannot forget its foreign partners and networks, such as EUNIC. In addition, other Czech state agencies, like *CzechTourism*<sup>15</sup> (tourism) or *CzechTrade*<sup>16</sup> (export), representing economic diplomacy, another priority of CFP, can take part in the *Czech Centres*' activities.

The MC cooperates with the MFA especially in negotiating cultural agreements, and it also participates in the UNESCO program. The department took its part in the formation of the Czech state cultural policy during 2008 and was fulfilling its tasks in 2009. 2009 was a special period thanks to the Presidency, where the Ministry of Culture was responsible for cultural priorities and participated in cultural events. The *Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports* (MEYS) concentrates on teaching the Czech language and literature to expatriates, but not only to them. Moreover, they are responsible for cultural agreements in the area of education.

The Czech Parliament and both its Chambers belong to the political actors as well. The *Chamber of Deputies* has two subcommittees, one for expatriates and one for the presentation of the Czech Republic. The second one extended its activities to external economic relations in 2009. These subcommittees discuss relevant topics and monitor the activities of other participants. The *Standing Senate Commission for Compatriots Living Abroad*<sup>17</sup> belongs to the active bodies of the Parliament, with a new version of the election law that is more friendly to expatriates and its attempt to propose a new conception of the relation between the Czech state and Czech minorities abroad. A special position is reserved for the *Czech government*. This body has a mainly political role, and it can adopt special resolutions whenever required. Its role changed during the period of the Presidency of the Council of the EU and also during the period before it. The *Department for Communication of the Section for Presidency of the Unit of the Deputy Minister for European Affairs* has a crucial coordination task in the cooperation with all the related actors (the MFA, the Czech mission in Brussels, many other subjects). They were also responsible for the communication campaign.

Another distinctive group consists of non-state actors, including nongovernmental organizations such as *ProCulture*, the *Institute of Arts*, *Post Bellum* and others, and also private companies, including big exporters such as SKODA. *Czech Centres* cooperate on their projects with both categories of non-state actors very well. Their cooperation is getting better every year and no complaints have been raised. The group of specific actors includes paradiplomatic entities, i.e. regions and cities and their foreign activities. They have their own independent policy for external relations, but

from 2008 they discuss this topic with the MFA, and they will participate at the EXPO exhibition with their own presentations.

## **THE CULTURAL DIMENSION OF THE CZECH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC SPACE**

The cultural dimension of the foreign policy does not belong to the crucial themes or hot topics in the Czech media<sup>18</sup> and even the public scene. It never did. In 2007 a quite recently established Czech Centre in Prague represented the domestic dimension of public diplomacy, informing at home about many projects realized abroad. The media were interested in exceptional moments, such as the opening of the Czech House in Brussels. But it is symptomatic that the media cared foremost about the financial side of the whole project whereas the program of the Czech House was not so important for them.

All the main relevant actors also had their own ways of communicating with the public, mainly through a web page or printed publications, but it is necessary to also mention the radio station Český Rozhlas 7 – Radio Prague<sup>19</sup> which broadcasts not only domestically, but to other countries as well. But one relevant aspect of communication was missing – there was no thorough academic, expert or public debate concerning cultural policy or the cultural dimension of the foreign policy. This problem also involved the role of non-state actors in this area, especially non-governmental organizations.

Throughout years 2007 and 2008, culture was almost in the same position – i.e. that of a quite interesting topic, especially at certain moments, but not a primary theme. The opening of the Czech National Building in New York in October 2008 represented an exception. The departments and other agents involved published the respective information through their own means of communication, their own media. In this respect, the biggest space was reserved to the Czech Centres. The Presidency of the Council of the EU brought not only news about the preparation and the domestic campaign of the forthcoming presidency, but also rising interest of the academic sphere in culture, the image of the state, presentation and public diplomacy. For example, the Institute of International Relations organized a workshop about public diplomacy. The CEVRO Institute organized a conference called ‘Public Relations and Image of the Czech Republic’, and the MFA organized the discussion panel ‘Czech Brand’, which was devoted to the missing message of the Czech public diplomacy.<sup>20</sup>

When it comes to the Czech as well as the foreign media, 2009 was an exceptional year because of the Czech Presidency of the Council of EU, which was interesting for both. The communication campaign, concretely the web page of the Czech presidency, was one of the ten projects nominated for the ‘European eDemocracy Award’.<sup>21</sup> At the beginning of the year, the media aimed their attention on ‘Entropa’, a sculpture representing the Czech Republic in Brussels during the period of the Czech Presidency. What is very heartwarming is the appreciation that was shown towards the Czech Centres and their projects that were implemented within the EUNIC network – ‘Litera-



ture Night' was mentioned in EUNIC's newsletter,<sup>22</sup> and some representatives of the Czech Centres abroad have official positions in EUNIC's local networks. The project 'CzechIdea', which is concentrated on searching for an appropriate message for the Czech Republic, is still vivid. After the presidency, the EXPO in 2010 will probably be the next 'interesting exception' when it comes to the attention paid to the cultural dimension of the Czech foreign policy by the media.

## CONCLUSION

The first of the covered periods, 2007, was about searching. It was the phase of looking for the relations between culture and foreign policy, the cultural dimension of foreign policy, and the meaning of public diplomacy. All the relevant actors wanted to stay in contact with the modern trends of using communication and information technologies. The Czech Republic wanted to represent itself in all the related areas of cultural diplomacy – with smaller ambitions and greater geographical specialization than bigger powers. Even though presentation was mentioned among the priorities of CFP, it did not receive adequate attention or sufficient support. An attempt to coordinate the activities of relevant governmental departments was an impetus for reflection, but without any results. There were also some chronic problems, such as the lack of financial resources, the incommensurate harmonization of terminology, and the non-active Commission for Presentation of the Czech Republic.

One year later, presentation appeared among the MFA's priorities, raising hopes that presentation and public diplomacy could become an inseparable and constant part of the Czech foreign policy, but strategic documents were laid aside without any substantial progress. The relevant actors performed various activities and implemented many projects. But the problems mentioned above (the inconsistent terminology, the lack of resources, and the lack of political will, support and coordination) continued. What should be appreciated is the endeavor of the respective parties, especially the MFA and the Czech Centres, and also the potential and the will to cultivate its multi-lateral dimension, e.g. through activities in the Visegrad 4 and the Platform Culture – Central Europe, although this potential was not used fully. And unfortunately we can say the same about the chances and potential of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2009. It was highly appreciated for its communication and for the cultural diversity of the many presented projects, but the fall of the government in the middle of our presidency and also some other mistakes cast a dark light on all previous efforts. What we should also appreciate is the possibility of all the relevant actors cooperating and coordinating all their efforts. In addition, the Czech Presidency confirmed that there is an essential need for long-term concepts and strategies, sufficient financial resources and consensus of political representatives regarding the importance of and support for all efforts.

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## Conclusion

# Czech Foreign Policy: Ideologies, Prejudices and Co-ordination

*Petr Drulák*

The previous chapters provide detailed insights into key areas of the Czech foreign policy in the period 2007–2009.<sup>1</sup> This concluding chapter will analyse the most important foreign policy decisions and events with respect to some domestic factors of the Czech foreign policy making. Specifically, it will look into the most influential ideas shaping the Czech foreign policy and it will consider the perennial problem of the foreign policy coordination.

Two kinds of foreign policy ideas are distinguished: ideologies and prejudices.<sup>2</sup> On the one hand, foreign policy ideology refers to an explicit system of ideas which are publicly presented and defended and which serves as a programmatic guide. On the other hand, foreign policy prejudice is usually hidden in the depths of the mind reflecting historical sentiments. Some prejudices are not pronounced in public, as being extremely partial, they are deemed politically incorrect or damaging to the person who holds them. Other prejudices are occasionally acknowledged as articles of faith reflecting a supposed historical experience. Their taken-for-granted nature makes prejudices especially powerful. While ideology is public, rational and general, prejudice is private, emotional and particular.

However, foreign policy ideas need to be contextualised first. Therefore, the chapter starts with a brief description of the sometimes stormy domestic political development in the period, arguing that despite this, there is a strong continuity in the Czech foreign policy.

## CONTINUITY IN TURMOIL

In the period of 2007–2009, Czech Republic experienced heavy political turbulences in domestic politics which were caused by close election results and personal animosities. In the parliamentary elections of 2006, the main right wing parties – the Civic Democratic Party (ODS), the Christian Democratic Union (KDU-ČSL) and

the Greens – gained exactly as many deputies as the left wing parties – the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) and the Communist Party of Czechia and Moravia (KSČM). Moreover, personal animosities between the leaders of the two leading parties – the right wing ODS and the left wing ČSSD – prevented a grand right-left coalition. On this basis, a right-wing coalition led by the ODS with two junior partners – the KDU-ČSL and the Greens – came into being in 2007. This coalition of the Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek relied on a fragile majority, as it was only a majority because of the votes of the two formerly Social Democratic deputies whom the ODS poached from their original party.

The political turbulences started to become increasingly amplified in the fall of 2008, when both the ODS and the Greens lost the support of several of their deputies due to quarrels inside these parties. By the corresponding expulsions and defections, the government lost its majority to eventually be toppled by the opposition in the spring of 2009 in the middle of its EU presidency. Following the fall of the ODS-led government initiated by the ČSSD, the ODS, the ČSSD and the Greens agreed on a caretaker government to be led by Prime Minister Jan Fišer, which was in office until the elections in May 2010.

These domestic turbulences became highly visible to the foreign audience when the government in the seat of the EU presidency fell, as this badly damaged the international image of the country. However, even though the domestic political turmoil significantly impacted on the effectiveness of the Czech foreign policy, it had almost no impact on its basic orientation and its priorities. The Czech foreign policy has been characterised by a continuity of its priorities in the last twenty years. The priorities can be summarised as

- good neighbourly relations;
- active memberships in the EU and the NATO, including support for their further enlargement;
- an all-level cooperation with the USA and other Western great powers;
- an economic co-operation with other countries;
- contributing to the world-wide protection of human rights.

Since the early 1990s successive Czech governments may have differed on where they put their emphasis among these priorities and whether they came up with specific goals of their own but none of them would contest any of the above points. This does not mean that there would be a consensus on the foreign policy in the Czech society and among the Czech political elite. Far from it, the Czech foreign policy is subject to uncompromising domestic disputes which tend to undermine its external effectiveness. As it will be argued, some of these disputes come from differences in the foreign policy ideas which are held by political actors and by parts of the public. However, most of these disputes are derived from domestic political conditions and quarrels, such as the ones concerning the relationship between the government and the opposition, rather than from any fundamental disagreement on the principles of the Czech foreign policy.

## IDEOLOGIES: GEOPOLITICS AND FREEDOM

The Czech foreign policy ideologies have been constituted in the early 1990s as responses to some basic questions of the Czechoslovak and Czech transition towards liberal democracy and market economy. The slogans of the transition were ‘return to Europe’, ‘return to the West’ and ‘building of a liberal society’. A great majority of the Czech society identified itself with these slogans. However, their vagueness concerning the very identity of such concepts as ‘Europe’, ‘the West’ and ‘liberalism’ invited a variety of questions. Two questions were especially important with respect to foreign policy – the one about the West and the one about liberalism. Each gave rise to a particular typology of foreign policy ideologies.

The first question is geopolitical. It asks whom the Czechs should see as their Western role model, sponsor and protector.<sup>3</sup> Roughly, two answers were then possible – Germany or the USA. On the one hand, there was an economic giant and a re-unified leader of the European integration in the neighbourhood. In this classification, Germany stands for a wider *continentalist* ideology which emphasised European integration and cooperation with other EU leaders such as France and the Benelux countries. On the other hand, there was the winner of the Cold War and the only remaining superpower behind the Atlantic. In this classification, the USA stands for a wider *Atlanticist* ideology that also includes the UK and the NATO.

These two ideologies were not seen as mutually exclusive in the 1990s. On the contrary, together they constituted an *internationalist* ideology which considered the USA and NATO as a guarantee of Czech security, and Germany and the EU as a guarantee of Czech prosperity while both Germany and the USA were seen as sources of the Western values of democracy, human rights and market economy. While the internationalist ideology which prevailed among the Czech foreign policy makers in the 1990s incorporated both continentalism and Atlanticism, an alternative *autonomist* ideology rejected both. It stressed Czech sovereignty and warned against any outside hegemony, whether American or German. Instead it argued for either Czech neutrality or a construction of a collective security system considering the OSCE as the key regional organisation. It also recommended a deeper cooperation with the Eurasian continental great powers of Russia and China. Thus the geopolitical question brings about the following typology of foreign policy ideologies: Atlanticism (NATO, USA), continentalism (EU, Germany), internationalism (Atlanticism + continentalism) and autonomism (sovereignty, OSCE, Russia, China).

The second question is about freedom. It asks about the nature of the liberalism to be embraced. In terms of political philosophy, it can be put as a choice between Hayek and Habermas, between a right-wing, conservative liberalism emphasising economic freedom and self-regulation of markets, and a left-wing, progressive liberalism emphasising expansion of human rights and their cultivation by the state action relying on the inputs which come from civil society. This choice gives rise to two universalist foreign policy ideologies – *economic universalism* and *moral universalism*.

The ideology of economic universalism argues for the removal of institutional obstacles to the free flow of goods, services and money. It associates these flows with

freedom, peace and prosperity. Otherwise, it is sceptical about foreign policy as such and about international institutions which go beyond these goals. In contrast, the ideology of moral universalism argues for the expansion of democracy and human rights, which should be universally promoted by the actions of governments and international institutions. Again democracy and human rights are associated with peace and prosperity. While the ideology of economic universalism was shared by liberal economists led by Václav Klaus, moral universalism was close to the hearts of the dissidents around Václav Havel.

These two kinds of universalism are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Together they merge in a strong universalist ideology representing the world as a single political and economic entity of free entrepreneurs and citizens. However, both kinds of universalism can also be rejected in the name of cultural and economic specifics of the national community. This ideology of nationalism can take the shape of national liberalism, which has had a long tradition in Central Europe, or it can reject liberalism altogether in favour of communitarian and solidarist concepts. Thus, the freedom question brings about the following typology of foreign policy ideologies: economic universalism (free trade and investment), moral universalism (universal human rights), strong universalism (economic + moral) and nationalism (the community decides about its economic needs and its members' rights).

Even though there are some connections between the two typologies, these connections are personal and institutional, and thus subject to change, rather than logical and necessary. It is often the case that political actors have a clear ideological position on one scale while lacking such a clear position on the other. Having said that, it can be argued that autonomism and nationalism do frequently go together, and Atlanticism usually implies a strong universalism. However, it is only by the examination of the actors' positions and their evolution that the significance of these ideologies and their mutual links can be addressed.

As argued, most political parties were internationalist in the 1990s, supporting the NATO and EU accession of the Czech Republic. Even though under the surface the ODS tended toward Atlanticism and the ČSSD toward continentalism, these parties as well as most of the smaller parties paid lip service to the internationalist consensus. The most significant exception to this consensus was the autonomist KSČM. Things changed after the NATO and EU accessions (in 1999 and 2004) which are understood as the achievement of the return to Europe. With these accessions, the internationalist consensus fell apart. Atlanticists no longer feel obliged to hide their misgivings about European integration (rejecting the European constitutional treaty, resisting the introduction of the euro, and arguing against EU military capabilities), and continentalists voice their doubts about the American foreign policy (criticising the Iraq war, the mission in Afghanistan, and Missile Defence). In the reviewed period of 2007–2009, five political parties were represented in the Czech parliament. Internationalism was the ideology of two small parties, the KDU-ČSL and the Greens, and autonomism was still embraced by the middle-sized KSČM, the ODS was mainly Atlanticist and the ČSSD tended toward continentalism.

The strong universalism enjoyed a short-lived hegemony in the Czech society immediately after the Velvet Revolution of 1989. However, ever since the break up of Czechoslovakia there has been a struggle between proponents of economic universalism and partisans of moral universalism. This struggle was embodied in public clashes between Václav Klaus (as the Prime Minister and later as the President) and Václav Havel (as the President and later as a retired statesman) whenever the policy on China or Russia was discussed. While economic universalists, like Klaus, have been arguing for the cultivation of economic ties with Russia and China and warning against raising human rights issues as an unnecessary disturbance, moral universalists, like Havel, have been doing their best to put these countries under moral pressure for their breaches of the human rights of their citizens and they considered mutual economic ties as secondary.

This clash has been cutting across the party lines as apart from the Green party's unambiguous support of moral universalism, most parties have been either divided on the issue or have not had any clear position. Thus, the ODS has been divided between moral and economic universalists, the KSČM has experienced the tension between economic universalists and nationalists, and the ČSSD and KDU-ČSL have not had any clear position on the freedom issue at all. In contrast, the actors with clear positions have been, on the one hand, big companies and business organisations supporting economic universalism and, on the other hand, influential NGOs and most of the mainstream media, who embrace moral universalism.

The two typologies of foreign policy ideologies offer an important analytical tool for the study of the Czech foreign policy ideas. However, in political practice these ideologies are either reinforced or undermined by foreign policy prejudices.

## **PREJUDICES: HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY**

Czech foreign policy prejudices are constituted by normative judgements about the world beyond Czech borders. These judgements come from a particular evaluation of the Czech collective experience in the recent history. By labeling these judgements 'prejudices' I do not argue that they are always wrong. Actually, they can often be vindicated. As Henry Kissinger once quipped: 'just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're not after you'. Also, we can hardly avoid prejudices as they often represent rules of the thumb being accumulated in practice. What makes them misleading and sometimes dangerous is the fact that their holders are unreflective about the selectivity and normativity of the prejudices, taking them for granted and seeing no alternative to them – like paranoid people who do not see their paranoia.

There are two general prejudices within the Czech society which affect its foreign policy thinking and making. I delimit them in geographical terms as the northwestern prejudice and the southeastern prejudice. The northwestern prejudice is constituted by the admiration and emulation of, by the quest for recognition from, and by the feelings of inferiority in relation to the countries and societies to the west and to the north

of the Czech Republic (Western Europe, Northern Europe, USA, Canada). The southeastern prejudice is complementary to the northwestern one. It is constituted by the indifference about, by the feelings of superiority towards, and occasionally by the fear of the countries and societies to the east and to the south of the Czech Republic (Eastern Europe, the Balkans, Southern Europe and the rest of the world). These two prejudices draw on and give a geographical expression to the ancient dichotomy between civilisation and barbarism, and they reflect the historical experience of the Czech participation in the culture of Western Christianity. Apart from autonomism, all the Czech foreign policy ideologies (internationalism, continentalism, and Atlanticism, as well as all kinds of universalism) take these two prejudices for granted.

However, these general prejudices are developed, modified and even suppressed by a few specific prejudices, out of which the most influential ones are related to anti-communism. The Czech anti-communism, being reinforced by the southeastern prejudice, uses the Cold War dichotomy between communism and democracy to make judgements about contemporary international politics. Rather than taking the shape of a developed ideology, it rests at the level of a knee-jerk reaction which arises when something is deemed as communist or as somehow related to communism.

The Czech anti-Russian prejudice is an especially strong offspring of the Czech anti-communism. It draws on the Czech collective experience with Soviet imperialism and relates contemporary Russia with the Soviet Union (on the basis of the discourse of Russian leaders and the perceived continuity of power structures in Russia). In practice, the anti-Russian prejudice is expressed in a deep mistrust towards any Russian foreign policy steps. Another anti-communist prejudice is the anti-Chinese one. China is seen as a communist great power ruled and is thus highly suspect. The Czechoslovak experience with communism is used as a basis for understanding contemporary China. Thus, the domestic resistance to the Chinese government is seen as an analogy to Czechoslovak dissident groups in the 1980s. This gives rise to a pro-Tibetan prejudice in favour of the Dalai Lama and his movement for Tibetan autonomy. Anti-Russian and anti-Chinese prejudices sometimes go in hand with the Atlanticist ideology, according to which the USA is seen as the only actor to balance Russia or China.

However, the anti-communism undermines the ideology of moral universalism. Drawing on the Cold War dichotomy of communism vs. democracy, moral universalism understands the human right protection primarily as a struggle against communist or neo-communist regimes (such as Cuba or Belarus) while, for example, ignoring the human right breaches in the Middle East, in sub-Saharan Africa and in the Western countries themselves. This bias undermines its universality and, correspondingly, any of its moral claims. In contrast, the anti-communism is supportive of the Atlanticist ideology to the extent to which the USA is seen as the winner of the Cold War and the only credible security guarantee.

Another Czech prejudice which is somehow related with anti-communism is the pro-Israel one. Israel was denigrated as an imperialist aggressor by the communist propaganda in the 1970s and the 1980s, which contributed to its good reputation in the eyes of Czech anti-communists after 1989. However, the Czech sympathy for Israel



goes beyond anti-communism. It is probably linked with the special historical position of Prague for East European Jews and with the quality of relations between Jews and the majority population in Czechoslovakia before World War II, as the relations were relatively friendly in comparison to other places in Central and Eastern Europe. On this basis, Jewishness became fashionable in the Czech society after 1989 and this positive prejudice also found its expression in the emotional support for Israel and its policies. Like anti-communism the pro-Israel prejudice also reinforces the Atlanticist ideology, which is supportive of Israel's main ally.

Another Czech positive prejudice with deep historical roots is the pro-Serbian one going back to the 19th century, when extensive contacts were cultivated between Czech and Serbian intellectuals on the basis of what was then perceived as a shared Slavic identity. Moreover, the independence of the Yugoslav communists from Moscow and the relative freedom inside the communist, and Serb-dominated, Yugoslavia also enhanced the Serbian reputation. Even though the pro-Serbian prejudice was somehow mitigated by the Balkan wars in the 1990s, it is still at work reinforcing the autonomist ideology and partly resonating with some continentalists.

One of the most influential Czech prejudices has traditionally been the anti-German one reflecting the feelings of fear, admiration, humiliation and contempt which Germany can provoke in Czechs. Since the 19th century the modern Czech identity has been constructed in opposition to German speakers (whether Germans, Austrians or Czech Germans), and the World War II experience further enhanced the prejudice. On the other hand, the post-World War II transformation of the German identity and the decisive German support to the Czech return to Europe weakened the anti-German prejudice significantly. Still, the anti-German prejudice turns stronger whenever divisive issues between the two countries are discussed, such as the claims of Sudeten Germans who were expelled from Czechoslovakia in 1945. The anti-German prejudice goes in hand with the autonomist ideology but it is also sometimes embraced by some Atlanticists and continentalists.

## **THE STUMBLING BLOCK OF COORDINATION**

The plurality of foreign policy ideas and the number of institutions involved in foreign policy making give rise to coordination problems in the Czech foreign policy. The domestic coordination actually turns out to be the most serious challenge for Czech foreign policy. Broadly speaking, there are two levels of coordination which are essential here – first, the level inside the government and, second, the level between the government and other institutions.

First, Czech governments usually consist of two or more political parties which form a ruling coalition. Therefore, the Prime Minister, the foreign minister and the defense minister tend to come from different parties. That was the case with the government which came into being in January 2007, whose Prime Minister was from the Atlanticist ODS, whose foreign minister was from the internationalist and morally universalist Green party, and whose defense minister was from the internationalist

KDU-ČSL. Moreover, the Atlanticist ODS also occupied the important posts of the vice-Prime Minister for European integration and of the first deputy ministers at the ministries of foreign affairs and defense.

At the ideological level as evidenced by official proclamations, the government was internationalist and strongly universalist. Its internationalism came from two junior coalition partners (there was a constant tension between the ODS and the Greens) and from the exigencies of the office which push any Czech government in the internationalist direction (cultivating both Brussels and Washington). However, the Atlanticism, which was somewhat blunted at the ideological level, found its expression at the level of the prejudices. Thus, such Atlanticist prejudices as the anti-Russian, the anti-Chinese and the pro-Israel prejudice came to the fore. On the other hand, the two former prejudices were to some extent balanced by the ideology of strong universalism, which was the product of the Greens' moral universalism and ODS's moral and economic universalism.

The ideological position of the caretaker government of 2009 was a vague internationalism stemming from its conception by the Atlanticist ODS, the continentalist ČSSD and the internationalist Green party. Even though due to its caretaker nature the government tried to avoid any ideological choices, its decisions were necessarily shaped by ideas as well as by the institutional interests of those who were involved in them.

Second, the coordination with other actors involves the President and the parliament. Even though the government is the key foreign policy maker, its co-operation with the parliament and the President is needed for its smooth working. Thus, international treaties need to be approved by both Chambers of the parliament and ratified by the President to become legally valid. Similarly, foreign military missions need the consent of both actors. Moreover, it is the President who appoints Czech ambassadors upon the proposal of the government. Finally, being the head of the state, the President can act as the highest spokesperson and representative of the country abroad.

From the very beginning the government faced a hostile opposition in the parliament consisting of the continentalist ČSSD and the autonomist KSČM, which especially challenged the Atlanticist part of the government agenda where parliamentary approval was needed (missile defence, the military mission in Afghanistan). The government tried to ignore the opposition by relying on its thin majority. However, once this majority was lost, the Atlanticist projects stumbled and the government eventually fell.

The relationship with the President was friendly at the start even though it has never been easy. On the one hand, President Klaus was the founder and the honorary chairman of the ODS, leading the governmental coalition, and he also needed his party's support for his reelection in 2008. On the other hand, his own foreign policy views widely diverged from the foreign policy ideology of the ODS. He has been embracing economic universalism and rejecting anti-Russian and anti-Chinese prejudices as well as any kind of moral universalism. Also, he has been tending toward autonomism rather than Atlanticism. Finally, his personal relationship with the ODS leader and Prime Minister Topolánek was lukewarm at best.

The relationship was based on their mutual respect during the spring of 2008, which was the moment of the Presidential re-election being engineered by the ODS. Until then, their mutual differences were muted down. However, since then, the President has been much less shy about taking distance from the government on a variety of foreign policy issues including the ratification of the European constitutional treaty, the Russian intervention in Georgia and the recognition of Kosovo. At the end of that year he left the ODS, and later on he did not use his political clout to save the government from being toppled by the opposition. The fall of the government greatly increased his influence on the Czech politics. First, he was constitutionally responsible for appointing the caretaker government. Second, its caretaker nature as well as its lack of political experience turned the President into the key political actor in Czech politics.

So far, the coordination problems have been discussed with respect to diverging foreign policy ideas. However, such a discussion assumes that the Czech foreign policy emerges from a clash of ideas no matter how co-ordinated or unco-ordinated this emergence is. This assumption is frequently unjustified. The foreign policy ideas, whether ideologies or prejudices, are often marginalised by institutional self-interest. Some institutional interests can be linked with the above ideologies. For example, the Ministry of Trade and Industry tends to defend economic universalism, which is also an interest of Czech corporations which are active abroad. Also, the defense ministry and the general staff tend toward Atlanticism, which is connected with their NATO socialisation and the military position of the USA. Similarly, the Ministry of Interior is close to autonomism in its strict visa policy and in its general reluctance toward the liberalisation of the movement of foreigners. However, institutional interests are usually non-ideological, being defined in terms of budget and reputation.

One of the most important manifestations of the marginalisation of ideas by an institutional interest is made visible by the difference between being in office and being out of office. Thus, parties in opposition emphasise their ideological distinctiveness while they usually abandon this distinctiveness once in office, as they try not to diverge much from the above long term priorities. For example, the ODS fought against the European Constitutional Treaty when it was in opposition, but once it was in government, it abandoned its Atlanticism for internationalism and started to support the Lisbon Treaty. Similarly, the ČSSD led secret talks with the USA about the Czech participation in the Missile Defence when it was in the government, but it became its strong opponent once it was in opposition, as it rediscovered its continentalism and abandoned its internationalism. The difference between being in office and being out of office also explains the change in President Klaus's relationship with the government – from co-operation before his re-election in 2008, i.e. when he faced the risk of losing his office, to confrontation after the election, when he was safely in office again.

Even though every national foreign policy needs to deal with co-ordination problems, they usually do not have such a decisive impact on the foreign policy making as they did in Czech Republic during the reviewed period. In this respect, I argue that it was the domestic co-ordination problems rather than any foreign development that produced the greatest challenges for the Czech foreign policy.

The fall of the government in charge of the EU presidency is a case in point. Being the result of a poor co-ordination between the government and the parliamentary opposition, it seriously damaged the Czech position in the EU. Even though the opposition criticised the economic universalism of the Czech EU presidency priorities, the immediate reason for toppling the government was an unrelated domestic policy issue.

Similarly, the government failed to prolong the mandate of the Czech troops in Afghanistan at the end of 2008, stumbling on the continentalist and autonomist opposition in the parliament. While the autonomists were against this military mission out of principle, the continentalists argued that the government failed to communicate with them, and they linked their opposition with an unrelated domestic issue. A few months later, a trade off was found and the mission was prolonged.

A very divisive issue was the recognition of Kosovo in 2008, which was challenged both by international legal argumentation and, more importantly, by the pro-Serbian stereotype. Even though the government was divided, it eventually decided that it would recognise the new state. The decision was criticised not only by the autonomist and continentalist opposition in the parliament but also by the President. Therefore, the diplomatic relations with Kosovo are not at the level of ambassadors, where an appointment by the President is needed, but at the level of *charge d'affaires*. The Czech response to the Russian military intervention in Georgia also suffered from a lack of co-ordination. On the one hand, the dominant anti-Russian stereotype led the government and most of the other actors, apart from the autonomists, to a condemnation of the Russian actions and rhetorical support for Georgia. On the other hand, the President did not share this interpretation, arguing that Georgia is also to blame for its fate.

Apart from these, three international treaties faced serious ratification problems stemming from clashes between the government, the parliament and the President, whereby each of the treaties stood for an important Czech foreign policy priority. These were the Lisbon Treaty, the Czech-US treaty about the Missile Defense and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

The Lisbon Treaty ratification turned into a touchstone of the Czech EU membership. The treaty has been negotiated by the Topolánek government of Atlanticists and internationalists. The Atlanticists in the government did not particularly like the treaty but they saw its ratification as necessary to avoid an isolation of Czech Republic in the EU. Even though it could rely on the approval by the oppositional continentalists, it was disliked by the autonomists and some Atlanticists (from the Prime Minister's party, the ODS) in the parliament, who, being encouraged by the President, were blocking its parliamentary approval for more than a year. Once the parliament approved of the Treaty, it was the President's turn. However, the President waited until the Irish ratification in the second referendum on the Treaty before he approved it.

The Czech ratification took two years. During these two years, and until the very last moment, the Czech Republic, unlike Poland, the UK or Ireland, was not able to explain to its partners what it objected against in the Treaty and under what conditions it would ratify it. Only after the second Irish referendum, when the Czech Re-

public became the last EU member that did not ratify the Treaty, President Klaus came up with the argument that the Treaty could be used by Sudeten Germans in claiming back their former property. This mobilisation of an otherwise weak anti-German prejudice found a surprisingly strong resonance in the Czech society, including the continentalist ČSSD, and provided the President with a new legitimacy for his previous resistance against the ratification. On this basis, the government asked for the Czech opt-out from the provisions which the UK and Poland had already opted out from. Eventually, once the condition was formulated, the Czech Republic was guaranteed the opt out by the European Council, and the President signed the Treaty.

The bilateral treaty with the USA about the Czech participation in the Missile Defense turned into the most important project of the Czech Atlanticists. Not only was the American military presence seen as enhancing Czech-American relations, but it was also supposed to send the symbolic (not military) message to Russia that it cannot claim any influence in the country. The anti-Russian prejudice was at least as strong a motive for the Czech involvement in the Missile Defense as the Atlanticist ideology. Despite its intensive promotion by the Topolánek government, which negotiated the treaty, the continentalist and autonomist opposition was against it, as was the public opinion. Once the government lost its narrow parliamentary majority, it withdrew the treaty from the parliament. The treaty was then definitely killed by the new Obama administration, which left Czech Republic out of its Missile Defence plans. This decision deeply disappointed Czech Atlanticists, disturbing their relations with the Obama administration and raising question marks about the identity of the Czech Atlanticism.

The International Criminal Court, with its universal jurisdiction over the most serious human rights abuses, turned into a touchstone of the Czech human rights policy. Its statute was signed by the Czech government as early as in 1998, being supported by moral universalists, internationalists and continentalists (reflecting the EU support for it). However, ever since then, it was facing a fierce opposition from Atlanticists (reflecting the U.S. rejection of the Court) and autonomists who did not want to limit the Czech sovereignty. The President eventually signed the Rome Statute in 2009, after many years of obstructions by the parliament and by him, at the moment when Czech Republic was again the last EU member to ratify it.

Not all the problems of the Czech foreign policy can be put down to a lack of coordination. For example, the corruption scandals with the Czech visa provisions in Vietnam and Ukraine were due to a general weakness of Czech governmental institutions. Also, a lot of problems come from the prejudicial or ideological blindness of the decision makers. Thus, the pro-Israel prejudice, as evident in statements of senior officials and in the UN votings, deprives the Czech foreign policy of its proclaimed impartiality in the Middle East. Similarly, anti-Chinese and anti-Russian feelings prevent a constructive dialogue with these countries even though their own great power arrogance does not help the dialogue either. Likewise, the economic universalism led the Prime Minister to disparaging remarks about the American economic rescue plans just before President Obama's visit to Prague. However, these problems do much less damage to the Czech foreign policy than the coordination problems.

## MODEST ACHIEVEMENTS ALSO COUNT

Despite the lack of coordination, the Czech foreign policy also achieved a couple of important results in several priority areas within the reviewed period. First, its Central European dimension was especially successful. The relations with Germany developed vigorously on all levels, being only marginally affected by the anti-German prejudice. During the Czech EU presidency the German support was essential in the areas where the presidency marked its achievements. Also, the relations with Poland gained new impetus. The ideological affinity between Czech Atlanticists and the Kaczynski brothers gave rise to an intensive exchange of information, which has continued after the change in the Polish government and which may reach beyond the political level too. Despite important differences in the foreign policy ideologies of Czech Republic and Slovakia, the mutual relations kept their good quality. It is only in relations with Austria that no improvements have been made.

Second, despite the ultimate failure of the Czech involvement in the Missile Defense, the negotiations fetched several spin offs. Czech negotiators insisted, against the original American proposal, not only that the Missile Defense should be bilateral, but that the NATO should also get involved. Consequently, an important step towards its multilateralisation was made at the NATO summit in Bucharest. Moreover, some new bilateral projects of scientific cooperation were started. Finally, Czechs, and other people from the region, gained a visa-free access to the USA. Even though Czech negotiators were criticised by the EU Commission for making a separate deal with the USA and for not waiting for others, the EU's past effectiveness on this issue had been rather unconvincing.

Third, despite the ultimate failure of the Czech EU presidency, several results have been achieved in important areas. The energy security agenda has been advanced by organising the conference in Prague with key suppliers in the Caucasus in Central Asia, the Nabucco pipeline was given a lease of new life, and the Czech diplomacy helped to mediate the gas dispute between Russia and Ukraine. Also, the Eastern Partnership, which should help Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and the South Caucasus countries, was launched in Prague. Moreover, the Czech presidency resisted the protectionist pressures which arose during the financial crisis.

Finally, even though the Czech human rights foreign policy still suffers from a couple of prejudicial and ideological biases, in the reviewed period it became more even-handed and it showed several tangible results such as the grant of asylum to the refugees from Myanmar or the fellowships for Belarussian students.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Czech foreign policy has been marked by a long-term continuity. Despite a variety of clashing ideologies and prejudices, the policy has been focusing on good neighbourhood relations, the EU, the USA, NATO, international trade promotion, and hu-

man rights promotion. The domestic political turmoil in the years 2007–2009 did not much affect this continuity of goals.

However, the turmoil exposed a long-term failure of the Czech foreign policy. It has been repeatedly unable to come up with trade-off positions which would at least temporarily bridge the variety of differences and which would give a basis to foreign policy actions which would be transparent and understandable to the international partners of the Czech Republic. This coordination failure reached its peak with the fall of the Czech government in the course of its EU presidency, which raised doubts about the Czech capacity to act internationally. In this respect, any discussion about specific Czech foreign policy goals turns out to be redundant as the Czech Republic's very capacity to reach any kind of goal is uncertain.

The plurality of foreign policy ideas does not seem to be the main stumbling block of coordination. Such a plurality belongs to a liberal democratic society and it could be seen as its strength rather than as its weakness. First, the competition of ideas should contribute to their conceptual development, which is necessary if an idea is to turn into a political program. Second, the plurality of ideas can be used strategically by the Czech foreign policy at the international stage. Thus, it can inform a policy of rational ambiguity, which is sometimes needed when dealing with issues defying clear and simple solutions (such as the future of Kosovo). Also, it can be used in negotiations by making the Czech partners aware of the possible ratification problems which can paradoxically strengthen the Czech bargaining position (as this could have been the case during the Lisbon Treaty negotiations).

However, all of these (conceptual development, rational ambiguity, bargaining games) require that the political actors take foreign policy seriously. Even though they are unlikely to always agree, they are able to talk to one another and to occasionally shift their positions to strike a compromise. This has not been the case in the reviewed period. First, foreign policy issues have not been taken seriously enough. Instead they were taken hostage by unrelated issues in domestic politics. Second, the key foreign policy makers, the government, the parliamentary leaders and the President, were not on speaking terms during significant moments. These failures concern the whole political class. While the left-wing opposition failed on the former problem, the right-wing government failed on the latter.<sup>4</sup>

The political turmoil of 2009 significantly changed the Czech political landscape. In the elections of 2010 two of the above parties (the KDU-ČSL and the Greens) did not make it into the parliament, the ODS and the ČSSD changed their leaders, and two new parties whose political identity was unclear at the time of writing came in to become partners of the new government coalition led by the ODS. Moreover, the old foreign policy ideologies may be in flux too. Czech Atlanticists became quite critical of American foreign policy, and Czech continentalists played with an anti-German prejudice. It remains to be seen whether new ideologies are going to develop, which prejudices are to be reinforced and whether the political class is ready to address the coordination failure of the Czech foreign policy.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> This chapter summarizes and develops author's previous analyses: Drulák, Petr (2008): *Česká zahraniční politika mezi internacionalismem a Atlantikem*. In: Michal Kořan et al.: *Česká zahraniční politika v roce 2007. Analýza ÚMV*. Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, pp. 395–402; Drulák, Petr (2009): *Česká zahraniční politika v době počínajícího politického rozkladu*. In: Michal Kořan et al.: *Česká zahraniční politika v roce 2008. Analýza ÚMV*. Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, 2009, pp. 373–379; Drulák, Petr (2010): *Závěrem: Český nezájem se prosazuje*. In: Michal Kořan et al.: *Česká zahraniční politika v roce 2009. Analýza ÚMV*. Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, 2010, pp. 354–361.
- <sup>2</sup> There is a rich literature on the foreign policy ideas starting from the rationalist classic Goldstein, Judith–Keohane, Robert O. (eds) (1993): *Ideas and foreign policy: beliefs, institutions and political change*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, and the constructivist classic Katzenstein, Peter (1996): *The Culture of national security: norms and identity in world politics*. New York: Columbia University Press. Moreover, hardly any examination of the American foreign policy can do without distinguishing a variety of American foreign policy ideologies such as Kegley, Charles W.–Wittkopf, Eugene R. (1979): *American foreign policy: pattern and process*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- <sup>3</sup> The following typology was originally developed in Drulák, Petr (2006): *Qui décide la politique étrangère tchèque? Les internationalistes, les européens, les atlantistes ou les autonomistes?* La Revue internationale et stratégique, No. 61, Printemps 2006. Paris: IRIS, pp. 71–84, and in Drulák, Petr–Kořan, Michal–Růžička, Jan (2008): *Aussenpolitik in Ostmitteleuropa: Von Universalisten, Atlantikern, Europäern und Souveränisten*. Osteuropa, vol. 58 (7), pp. 139–152.
- <sup>4</sup> A more thorough discussions of these failures can be found in Drulák, Petr–Braun, Mats (eds) (2010): *The Quest for the National Interest: A Methodological Reflection on Czech Foreign Policy*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang; Drulák, Petr–Handl, Vladimír a kol. (2010): *Hledání českých zájmů: vnitřní rozmanitost a vnější akceschopnost*. Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů; Drulák, Petr–Horký, Ondřej a kol. (2010): *Hledání českých zájmů: obchod, lidská práva a mezinárodní rozvoj*. Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů; Drulák, Petr–Střítecký, Vít a kol. (2010): *Hledání českých zájmů: mezinárodní bezpečnost*. Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů.



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