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Czech Republic: “Europeanization” of a hesitant Atlanticist?

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The CEE countries have undergone major developments since the regime change at the end of 1980’s. Their process of democratization brought about “emancipation” in international relations boosted by their membership in NATO¹ and EU² on the same footing as their Western tutors. At the same time, they have been gradually redefining their transatlantic policy balancing most notably prior to the war in Iraq between Washington and several major EU capitals. Despite the inconveniency of drawing new cleavages in Europe³ and concerns that their support could jeopardize the EU accession, all CEE countries displayed solidarity with the U.S. Yet in case of the Czech Republic, the formulation of her policy on the Iraq crisis was extremely difficult with public opinion and part of the political parties opposing any participation and support to the operations of the U.S. led coalition. Even though the Iraq case was unprecedented event in the history of transatlantic relations and Euro–Atlantic community (Král, Pachta, 2005), the European split over the issue went

¹ The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland have been NATO members since 1999. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania were invited to enter in NATO summit in Prague (November 2002) and officially joined NATO on March 29, 2004.

² The Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia entered the EU on May 1, 2004. Bulgaria and Romania are supposed to access the EU in 2007.

³ U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld divided Europe into “old” and “new” in his speech in January 2003.

far beyond the merits of the military operation, it showed different approaches to the transatlantic link, namely in terms of security. One group of countries, which believes their security ultimately depends on the United States, was labeled instinctive Atlanticists⁴, encompassing the UK, Netherlands, Italy and the EU member states from central and Eastern Europe. The other, which includes France, Belgium and Germany, wants an autonomous European defence identity as a key to achieving a multipolar world.

This paper focuses on the perception of the United States in the Czech Republic assessing public image of the U.S., depicting significant patterns in public discourse and variables influencing the U.S.–Czech relations. It argues that the Czech Republic is instinctive but hesitant Atlanticist, her transatlantic policy is agenda–dependent and the setting of ruling government, i.e. which coalition of political parties is in power, is of key importance. It also assumes that the future relations with the U.S. are likely to be based on pragmatic choices, not history or emotional ties (Bugajski, Teleki, 2005) – despite the efforts some of the Czech elites – such as ex–President Václav Havel, evolve in order to keep the memory of U.S. assistance in eradicating communism and building democratic system.

When it comes to the hard security issues, NATO and transatlantic partnership is seen as vital. Nevertheless, the Czech Republic will try to avoid any situation similar to the crisis over Iraq. It is unlikely she would participate in any other ad–hoc coalition under the U.S. leadership since the possibility of influencing its policy is close to zero⁵. Even the United Kingdom, the closest ally of the U.S. in Europe, did not score any points over Iraq in this sense. This leads to the last assumption on the likelihood of “Europeanization” of the Czech foreign policy. With the EU accession, the Czech Republic increased its potential to influence the international developments in the framework of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). It is likely the Czech foreign policy will become more closely aligned with the EU counterparts. The readiness to do so depends on several variables, most notably on the future development of the European integration and CFSP as such and second, which political parties will be in power. This paper focuses most notably on the second variable. There might be a tendency to strengthen the transatlantic link

⁴ The Economist, February 26, 2005, pg. 32

⁵ See Khol, Radek, *Národní bezpečnostní strategie USA a ČR*, Institute of International Relations, Prague, November 2004.

after the next general elections⁶ in the Czech Republic, nevertheless, further “Europeanization” of Czech foreign policy is seen as inevitable.

Historical and cultural background of the Czech attitudes towards the U.S.

There is plenty of symbolic and emotional attributes Czech society ties with the United States of America. America was perceived as an exotic and romantic country at the beginning of the 20th century. After the WWI, with the foundation of independent Czechoslovakia, the efforts to westernize the country led the cultural elites to introducing jazz and American movies to the general public. In the same way, tramping symbolized an element of new “U.S. inspired” lifestyle. The U.S. involvement in the WWII and the liberation of the part of the Czech territory by the U.S. army remained deeply anchored in the Czech historical consciousness, reemerging during the euphoric celebrations of Pilsen liberation in 1990 and 1995. The role of the U.S. army in liberating Europe during the WWII considered 83% of Czechs to be important or very important in April 1995, 81% in April 2000 and 83% in November 2004. The role of the Soviet army appreciated 87%, 88% and 87% of Czechs respectively (CVVM, November 2004).

With the beginning of the Cold war, the U.S. became the main target of the communist regime propaganda. The outcome was unexpectedly the opposite. Since the Czech public generally did not trust the propaganda, the U.S. gradually gained the image of a wonderland. The U.S. were the synonym of hope to those opposing the regime as well as to the non–communist Czech public which under cover attentively listened to the “Voice of America” radio broadcast. The minimum of U.S. literature, music and movie production, usually smuggled by extraordinary means through the iron curtain, represented the best of American culture of that time. The American soap operas could hardly find the way to the Eastern block TV screens since the currencies of the communist countries were not convertible. The idealistic image of the U.S., which had been built up during the communism, suffered with the regime change at the end 1990’s – with the invasion of American mainstream culture, wonderland turned in the eyes of many Czechs into disneylad, another problematic and untrue image of the only world superpower emerged (Calda, 2005).

⁶ Regular general elections are scheduled for June 2006.

As far as the Czech community overseas is concerned, the three main emigration waves are usually distinguished (Caldá, 2005): “the old”, “1948” and “1968”. The “old” emigration left the Czech territories in order to achieve and secure better economic living conditions. The next generations of the “old” emigration were mostly not interested in the political developments after the WWII. The political reasons for emigration on the contrary, prevailed within the “1948” and “1968” waves, and the communist regime in former Czechoslovakia embarked upon a very critical discourse towards these expatriots. Czechoslovak secret service agents were deployed within the community, too. After the regime collapse, the new administration sometimes turned deaf towards the demands of the Czech community in the U.S. Restrictions were put on their voting rights – unlike the American Poles, the Czechs cannot cast their ballots via mail, the votes can be handed in at one of the Czech diplomatic missions only. Part of the American Czechs raised complaints about the restitution procedures and lobbied the U.S. administration to leverage their alleged rights by blocking the Czech Republic accession to NATO. These efforts turned unsuccessful since the U.S. administration considered NATO enlargement as the security priority. Furthermore, the American Czechs do not represent extensive electorate. The most of the “1948” and “1968” emigrants criticized the “soft” approach towards the elite of former communist regime after 1989, too. A negative stereotype of an expatriot coming back after the fall of communism “to teach us how to do things” can be traced in the Czech society⁷.

The Czech–U.S. relations after 1989 did not have to overcome any historical burden. As far as the cultural, expert and political elites are concerned, the anti–Americanism is marginal (Caldá, 2005). In the academic circles, thank to the activity of the Fulbright commission in the Czech Republic, many young scholars and scientists have close links to the U.S. universities since they went to study or lecture overseas, the same goes for some of the top Czech army officers⁸.

⁷ On the other hand, the Czechs think high of some U.S. citizens with Czech origins – for example of Madeleine Albright, former U.S. Secretary of State in the second Clinton administration.

⁸ The U.S. education is perceived as a great asset within the Czech public. A negative experience can be tied with „Harvard Capital Funds“ affair – thousands of Czech citizens entrusted their vouchers during the “voucher” privatization to “Harvard Capital Funds“ run by Viktor Kožený who claimed he studied at Harvard. He mismanaged the funds.

The American direct investments in the Czech Republic reached 3.2 billions USD⁹ in 2004. The five most important U.S. investors in the Czech Republic are Conoco/DuPont (665 mil. USD), Phillip Morris (420 mil. USD), Pepsi-Cola International (291 mil. USD), Coca Cola (200 mil. USD) and IFC Kaiser (176.4 mil. USD). Two particular U.S. business investments had a broader impact on the Czech public opinion – the unsuccessful investment of Boeing to Aero Vodochody and Central European Media Enterprises Ltd (CME) investment to TV NOVA, the biggest commercial TV station in the country. The partnership with Czech company CET 21 under the leadership of Vladimír Železný led to the disputes over the ownership leading to an acrimonious lawsuit that reached government level. In March 2003, CME finally won 353 mil USD compensation from the Czech Republic for damages¹⁰.

Public attitudes

Since the beginning of 1990's the ties between the U.S. and the Czech Republic have been strained in their own right. Bilateral relations have come under pressure over a number of issues ranging from war in Kosovo and crisis in Iraq to the cancellation of the high-tech radar deal with China, purchase of JAS-39 Gripen fighters and denial of visa-free travel to the Czech citizens. Before looking closely to the Czech political elites, we will turn to the Czech public opinion and attitudes on selected issues of transatlantic politics.

NATO membership and security perception

The Czech public support to the country's membership in NATO, which is closely linked to the U.S. leadership and security guarantee, varies. Prior to NATO's

⁹ USA are at the fifth place after Germany – 12.055 bn EUR, Netherlands - 4.838 bn EUR, Austria – 4.029 bn EUR, France – 3.258 bn EUR. See www.mac.doc.gov/ceebic/countryr/czechr.htm (July 2004)

¹⁰ Launched in 1994, TV Nova is the largest commercial television network in Central and Eastern Europe. CME's chairman and founder, Ronald Lauder, originally set up TV Nova with a Czech partner Vladimír Železný and CET 21 company, which held the broadcast license. The station was a success with audiences, but in 1999 Mr. Lauder and Mr. Železný fell out over who owned what, leading to a lawsuit that reached government level. In March 2003, CME finally won a 353 mil USD award from the Czech Republic for damages. Mr. Železný became a Czech senator and consequently a member of European Parliament in 2004 in order to obtain parliamentary immunity. He is currently under the EP committee scrutiny due to the pending lawsuits against him. In December 2004 CME entered into a definitive agreement with the new TV Nova owner – PPF Group and acquired a controlling interest in TV Nova again. The transaction had an estimated value of 642 mil USD.

1997 invitation to join the alliance, public support in the Czech Republic for NATO membership had ranked among the lowest of all the NATO candidate countries. In September 1998, surveys showed the level of support for NATO membership to range from 55 – 61% (55% IVVM; 58% STEM; and 61%, Research Department of the Ministry of Defense) (Gabal, Helsusova, Szayna, 2002). It increased to 70% by the end of 2000. According to CVVM survey, 61% of Czechs supported NATO membership in October 2002, the results from May 2004 show that only 49% of the Czech population trust NATO, 36% expressed mistrust.

Czechs generally value the guarantees that NATO membership offers and major portion of the Czech public gained a feeling of full security with the country's accession to NATO which forms the basis for overcoming the Czech historical traumas related to the major international actors that had exerted control over Central Europe during the past two centuries (Germany and Russia)¹¹.

Nevertheless, there was a lack of a public debate regarding defense and military issues and responsibilities of the Czech Republic during the 1990's related to NATO membership. Czech officials and politicians prepared, negotiated, and implemented the entire process, with little public involvement or debate. Right up until the NATO summit in Madrid in 1997 when the alliance invited the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary to become members, the Czech public had a low level of knowledge regarding the responsibilities brought about by NATO membership (Gabal, Helsusova, Szayna, 2002). An opinion widely shared among Czech politicians that the Czech citizens have a passive or even a negative view towards military issues and alliances¹² was the main reason why there was no referendum on the NATO membership.

The Czech Republic became NATO member through the political elites' decision. Immediately after the accession (March 1999), critical situations appeared as reaction to NATO intervention in the former Yugoslavia. Even though the Czech

¹¹ The positive evaluations of Czech membership in NATO have three main features. One, Czechs consider NATO membership a suitable way to increase the performance level of the Czech military; Two, Czechs perceive accession to NATO primarily as a move towards the West rather than a move against Russia; viewing Russia from inside NATO's protective shield has contributed to seeing Russia from a perspective not characterized by fear and animosity. Three, NATO has neutralized the historical Czech traumas felt toward Germany (Gabal, Helsusova, Szayna, 2002).

¹² Namely Warsaw Pact due the invasion in 1968. Right after the regime change and Warsaw pact dissolution, the Czech elites with President Václav Havel at the front argued for abolishing NATO as a redundant military organization.

public opinion supported the efforts of the international community during the Gulf war (1991) and the war in Bosnia (1995) the Kosovo crisis turned critical.

Kosovo crisis NATO solution had a low public support in the Czech Republic, majority of the Czech population opposed the operation. The lack of Czech public support for Operation Allied Force has definitely some basis in the specific and historically rooted sympathy of Czechs towards Yugoslavia¹³. Another cause behind the Czech public attitudes during the military operation in Kosovo may be rooted in the lack of interest among the Czech public in the issue of Czech obligations towards NATO. The Czechs became a part of NATO but, in the mindset, the Czech public remained outside the alliance in 1999 (Gabal, Helsingsova, Szayna, 2002).

Operation Allied Force came largely as a surprise to the Czech society and caught it unprepared for such a situation. Retrospectively, three equally represented groups of people with different opinions were distinguished (Gabal, Helsingsova, Szayna, 2002). 34% of Czechs did not expect anything like Operation Allied Force when they thought of the responsibilities that came with NATO membership. Another 30% were aware that Czech membership would involve certain responsibilities but did not expect that the Czech Republic would need to fulfill them so soon and facing such an intensive operation. Only 27% people stated that they expected involvement in such an operation. There were many respondents with a critical attitude toward NATO within the last group.

This group felt justified in their predictions that Czech membership in NATO would involve many risks and entail negative consequences. The disenchantment of the Czech public during NATO's Operation Allied Force was tied closely to the lack of clarity among Czechs about the meaning of Czech membership in NATO. The content of membership was presented to the Czech public in an incomplete, shallow, and overly optimistic form (Gabal, Helsingsova, Szayna, 2002).

After the operation, 31% Czechs felt that the Czech Republic passed the test in Kosovo satisfactorily as a new NATO member, despite the problematic diplomatic

¹³ The emotional relations towards Serbs and Croats go back to the 19. century. Yugoslavia was a member of „Malá dohoda“ during the interwar period (trilateral pact encompassing Czech Republic, Romania and Yugoslavia). In 1939–40, Yugoslavia provided refuge and passage for Czechoslovak soldiers who left the German-occupied Czechoslovakia to fight on the side of the Allies in France and Great Britain. Tito's Yugoslavia, unlike Czechoslovakia, resisted Stalin and, in addition, assumed a clear position against the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Yugoslavia also served as a place of passage for Czechoslovak emigrants after the 1968 occupation. The inability of the Czech political leadership to define the difference between Tito's and Milosevic's Yugoslavia forms an important reason for the lack of Czech support for Operation Allied Force.

steps that the Czech diplomacy took¹⁴. Many respondents (14%) remained completely opposed to the operation, saying that the Czech Republic should have stopped the bombing campaign (Gabal, Helsusova, Szayna, 2002).

Table 1: Support of NATO membership 1999–2002 (Source: CVVM – Občané o členství ČR v NATO, October 2002)

Year	1999					2000	2001		2002
	IV	V	VI	IX	XI	XI	IV	XI	X
Satisfied with the NATO membership	49%	46%	45%	53%	49%	52%	50%	57%	61%
Not satisfied	38%	42%	41%	39%	30%	25%	30%	28%	23%
Don't know	13%	12%	14%	11%	21%	23%	20%	15%	16%

Membership in NATO is linked to the change of the security threat perception in the Czech population. Overwhelming majority of Czechs feels secure from external threat (87%). More than half of the population is convinced that the Czech Republic does not face any external military threat (61%). 26% of the respondents thinks that although there are military risks in Europe and surrounding areas, they currently do not pose any danger to the Czech Republic. The attitude corresponds with the generally accepted assessments by security experts of the current international geopolitical position of the Czech Republic and shows common sense perceptions among the Czech public. Older people and those who disapprove of Czech membership in NATO are more likely to be concerned about potential dangers. Those who approve of Czech membership in NATO (predominantly those with high-school education or higher) tend to feel secure (Gabal, Helsusova, Szayna, 2002).

After September 11, 2001 asymmetrical security risks (namely terrorism) started to be ranked higher on the list of potential sources of instability and potential threats in the opinion polls. Czechs do not have any direct experiences with terrorist attacks but have grown even more sensitive with the terrorist attacks in Europe (Madrid bombing). 35% of Czechs were afraid of the terrorist attack taking place in

¹⁴ Details on the Czech–Greek Peace Initiative, initiated on the Czech side by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Kavan see below.

the Czech Republic in December 2001, the number increased to 45% in September 2004 (CVVM, December 2004).

NATO summit in Prague (November 2002) was the first to take place behind the iron curtain. The meeting came at a time when some of the U.S. NATO allies—notably France and Germany—were already expressing opposition to any U.S. led war to overthrow Saddam Hussein in Iraq. How did the Czech public opinion view the event? According to a survey (CVVM, October 2002) almost half of the respondents stated it was unfavorable to organise a summit (49%), 37% was in favor and 14% did not know. Prague experienced gathering of protesters and demonstrators. The Czechs who were asked about the reasons for the demonstrations provided following answers: against globalization (17%), against NATO and its activities (16%), demonstrators are only a hooligans (14%), against social injustice (6%), against the U.S. policy (4%).

Perception of the U.S. foreign policy

Gallup International surveyed the citizens of the 25 EU countries about the roles that the United States and the EU play on the world stage (July 2004). Overall, 74% of EU citizens agree that the European Union's foreign policy should be independent from that of the U.S., while only 11% disagree. Not surprisingly, respondents' level of desire for a distinctive European role in global politics relates to how people regard America's global role.

According to STEM survey (December 2001), 75% of Czech population was in favor of coordinating Czech foreign policy with the EU. The coordination with the U.S. foreign policy favored only 37%. Combination of answers showed that over 50% of the Czech public regarded the Czech foreign policy to follow the right direction because there was no coordination with the U.S. stances.

Last Standard Eurobarometer (December 2004)¹⁵ showed that the perception of the international role of the U.S. has become increasingly negative in the EU 25 member states and candidate states. It focused on the roles played by the EU and the U.S. in two areas directly related to the foreign policy and security – namely on promoting the world peace and combating terrorism. Only three out of 30 surveyed

countries displayed a positive perception of the role played by the United States to promote world peace, the Czech Republic was one of them¹⁶. On the other hand, 78% of Czechs think that the EU plays a positive role both in promoting the world peace and combating terrorism placing the Czech Republic on the second position among the member states, 59% of Czech respondents are in favor of common foreign policy among the EU member states towards other countries (20 out of 25).

Table 2: Foreign Policy and the role of the U.S. in the world (Source: CVVM, June 2004)

Do you agree with following statement?	III/2003			V/2004		
	Yes	No	Don't know	Yes	No	Don't know
U.S. strive to secure stability and peace in the world	44%	49%	7%	47%	44%	9%
U.S. act internationally regardless the opinion of the world community	73%	21%	6%	64%	26%	10%
U.S. foreign policy defends freedom, democracy and human rights	48%	42%	10%	51%	38%	11%
U.S. prefer their own economic and power interests in their foreign policy	82%	13%	5%	76%	15%	9%
U.S. have the right to use military forces against undemocratic regimes	20%	71%	9%	22%	64%	14%
U.S. foreign policy poses a threat to the current world	57%	31%	12%	42%	41%	17%

Czech public opinion supported the U.S. during the Gulf war (1991) and the war in Bosnia (1995). After the Kosovo crisis the support dropped, reaching the bottom during the Iraq crisis followed by the operation Iraqi freedom, the Czech public opinion was largely against the war as such, and against the involvement of the Czech Republic, too. According to CVVM opinion poll, only 24% were in favor of the military operation in Iraq, 70% opposed it. 57% of Czechs assumed that overthrowing of Saddam Hussein would not improve the world security. The military operation in Iraq was opposed mostly by the people within the age group of 45–60 and supporters of the left–wing parties, namely KSČM (Communist Party). The U.S. led coalition gained support of the right–wing political parties' voters, namely ODS (Civic Democratic Party). Ambivalent attitudes adopted mostly young people with

¹⁵ See http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb62/eb62first_en.pdf

¹⁶ Together with Lithuania and Romania

lower education and women. The negative perception of the U.S. foreign policy has been slowly improving since than¹⁷.

Table 3: Czech public attitudes towards the U.S. Foreign Policy (Source: CVVM, June 2004)

	III/2003	V/2004
Positive (without objections) ¹⁸	5%	5%
Rather positive	16%	21%
Neutral or mixed	17%	24%
Rather negative	32%	28%
Negative	30%	22%

With regard to further analysis of the Czech political elites, let's turn to the Czech public attitudes towards the U.S. according to political parties' preferences. Most pro-U.S. attitudes show the electorate of right-wing ODS. Two parties of the current coalition government (KDU-ČSL, ČSSD) display similar data with slightly higher support to the U.S. foreign policy expressed by the voters of smaller coalition member (KDU-ČSL)¹⁹. The lowest support of KSČM (Communist party) electorate meets the expectations.

Table 4: Czech public attitudes towards the U.S. Foreign Policy according to the political party preference (Source: CVVM, June 2004)

	ODS (Civic Democratic Party)	KDU-ČSL (Christian democrats)	ČSSD (Social democrats)	KSČM (Communists)
Positive	8%	4%	4%	1%
Rather positive	31%	23%	22%	7%
Neutral or mixed	19%	26%	20%	19%
Rather negative	26%	31%	28%	32%
Negative	16%	16%	26%	41%

¹⁷ See Table 2 and Table 3

¹⁸ Positive (without objections) corresponds to prevailing of 6-5 positive statements about the role of the U.S. in the world, rather positive with 4-2, neutral or mixed respondents have the positive and negative statements in balance. Rather negative and negative mirror the positive and rather positive.

¹⁹ The electorate of the third coalition party – Freedom union (Unie svobody, US) was not subject of the survey. Supposedly due to the fact that according to opinion polls, the party will not meet the 5% threshold in the next general elections.

The re-election of George W. Bush

How do the Czechs see the outcome of the recent U.S. Presidential elections? 48% Czechs followed the U.S. Presidential elections in November 2004, 17% is satisfied George W. Bush was re-elected and will serve a second term in the office. Quite a high number (43%) is indifferent, 21% of Czechs expressed dissatisfaction.

Table 5: Are you satisfied with the re-election of George W. Bush? (Source: CVVM, January 2005)

Very satisfied	3%
Rather satisfied	14%
Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied	43%
Rather dissatisfied	15%
Very dissatisfied	8%
Don't know	17%

Assessing the impact of the U.S. Presidential election on selected issues of international politics, the Czech society definitely does not harbour a positive attitude on the further development in Iraq. The re-election of George W. Bush will have a negative impact on the situation in Iraq according to 58% Czechs and on the relations with the Islamic countries, too (57%).

Table 6: The impact of the U.S. Presidential elections on.... (Source: CVVM, January 2005)

	Very favorable	Rather favorable	Neither favorable, nor unfavorable	Rather unfavorable	Very unfavorable	Don't know
U.S. – EU relationships	2%	18%	42%	11%	2%	25%
U.S. – Russia relations	1%	20%	37%	12%	2%	18%
U.S. – Islamic countries relations	0%	4%	17%	38%	19%	22%
Situation in Iraq	1%	6%	16%	33%	25%	19%
Fight with terrorism	5%	22%	22%	18%	13%	20%
World peace	3%	15%	31%	18%	9%	24%

Czech politics and political elites vis à vis transatlantic relations

This chapter elaborates on several topical situations and issues, which have arisen in the course of Czech–U.S. relations and the ways the Czech political elites managed to deal with them. It focuses on the period since the Czech Social democrats (ČSSD) won the elections for the first time in 1998 and formed the first government, up until now²⁰. It is a period within which the Czech Republic entered NATO, several crisis (Kosovo, Iraq) occurred and Czech political elites gradually had to deal with domestic policy issues, taking into account the transatlantic dimension (Radio Free Europe, deal with China on hi–tech radars, purchase of JAS–39 Gripen supersonic fighters). A symbolic change in terms of U.S.–Czech relations can be seen in Presidential replacement in February 2003, when Václav Klaus took office after Václav Havel, right in the middle of the Iraq crisis. After an idealist and strong Atlanticist who emphasized the values shared by democracies on both sides of Atlantic and a leading figure of the U.S.–Czech relations, the Czechs got a pragmatic realist, a “eurosceptic” President who soon even got the label of anti–Americanist.

No Trojan horse of the U.S. and Kosovo crisis

Jan Kavan (ČSSD) took the office of the foreign minister in the ČSSD minority government after the general election in July 1998²¹. His nomination to the post raised some criticism²². Stating his main goals in the office for the Czech press

²⁰ February 2005

²¹ ČSSD won with 32.31% of votes and gained 74 seats in the Chamber of Deputies (200 seats), ODS (Civic Democratic Party) 27.74% and 63 mandates, KSČM (Communist Party) 11.03% and 24 mandates, KDU–ČSL (Christian Democrats) 9% and 20 mandates and US (Freedom Union, liberals) 8.6% and 19 seats. The minority ČSSD government ruled the country with support of the main opposition party ODS – so called “Opposition agreement” was concluded.

²²As an opposition deputy, he became famous during the debate on the Czech Republic entry to NATO for his question whether it is possible to step out of the alliance. President Václav Havel was said to have opposed his

immediately after the inauguration, he said: *“There will be no radical shift. The main priorities remain the same– the accession to NATO and EU. We will play an active role in NATO but I would not welcome the Czech Republic to be perceived as a Trojan horse of the U.S. in Europe. It does not mean the U.S. are not one of our closest allies. It simply means we are part of Europe and we should co–operate on strengthening the European defence identity.”* (Mladá fronta DNES, 23 July 1998). Since the minority government ruled the country with the support of the biggest opposition party (ODS), the so called “Opposition agreement”, this bound the government to consult the foreign policy issues with the opposition. Despite the growing euro–skepticism of ODS, the main goals (NATO and EU accession) were widely shared by the political elites, including the President Václav Havel.

With some exceptions, the Czech political elites were taken aback when NATO loosed its air strikes on Yugoslavia at the end of March 1999. President Václav Havel welcomed the attack. Without hesitation, the leaders of the two smaller opposition parties, Freedom Union (US) and the Christian Democrats (KDU–ČSL) supported the bombing, too. But the other party leaders were more reluctant. The Czech government, for obvious reasons, officially supported the air strikes, though in practice adopted a rather hesitant approach. It approved the military intervention based only on consultations between the Prime Minister Miloš Zeman and the foreign minister Jan Kavan. Initial reactions revealed the government's regret that the conflict could not have been resolved diplomatically. The Communists (KSČM) expressed unanimous disappointment that the negotiations had broken down and that a military option was being pursued.

The Communists' position surprised no one. But what proved rather unexpected was the attitude of the strongest opposition party – ODS, especially of its chairman, former Prime Minister and future President Václav Klaus. A day after the attacks against Yugoslavia were launched, Klaus went on record, stating that the use of force could not produce a sound or long–term solution. His forthright anti–NATO stance stunned not only President Havel, the other two opposition parties (US, KDU–

appointment as foreign minister because of his “remarkable talent for causing scandals” (Mladá fronta DNES, 23 July 1998).

ČSL) but several members of his own party as well²³ since the Czech Republic's accession to NATO had been one of the linchpins of ODS agenda when in power (1992–1998).

Efforts were made to prevent the opinion differences from damaging the Czech Republic's image abroad. Foreign minister Jan Kavan was the most active, denying repeatedly that there was any discrepancy between President Havel and the government stance on the support to the NATO military action. A heated discussion continued in the domestic political arena. Václav Klaus was attacked in the media and in the Parliament with Freedom Union deputies seeking his resignation from the speakership of the lower chamber. When it occurred that NATO would be undertaking ground operations, Prime Minister Miloš Zeman preemptively announced that Czech soldiers would not participate in the land invasion. In response, President Havel accused him of betraying the alliance. Their ensuing verbal duel ended with a meeting between the foreign minister Jan Kavan and the President. After the meeting, Havel remarked that, although he had explained his point of view to the foreign minister, he doubted that his opinion would be accepted.

Prime Minister Miloš Zeman (ČSSD) and ODS chairman Václav Klaus were both criticized about the Kosovo by their parties. The situation in ČSSD's congress in April was especially delicate. The party leadership made every effort to mute all discussion of the government's activities and of the air strikes in Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, a relatively large number of delegates signed a letter protesting against NATO operation (Znoj, 2001).

A Czech–Greek peace initiative, which was announced in May 1999²⁴, led to equally heated debates. The initiative was not an expression of the consensus of the key Czech institutions on the foreign policy, it was an individual project of foreign minister Jan Kavan and his advisors. The initiative was not discussed in either of the foreign policy and defense committees of both chambers of the Czech Parliament, with the President, or even with the leadership of the Czech army. Even the

²³ Not only Václav Klaus voiced his doubts about NATO's air strike, Czechs even heard Miroslav Macek, ODS vice-chairman, stating on television that, in addition to various other goals in Yugoslavia, NATO needed to test its new airplanes.

²⁴ A peace plan for Kosovo which would have basically divided the NATO members into two groups— those who did not take part in the bombing – these states would secure the post-conflict reconstruction (together with Russia and Ukraine), and those, who took part in the strikes. Jan Kavan and his Greek counterpart, Jorgos Papandreu, were both rallying support for their initiative. Kavan noted that the Czech–Greek initiative would require the support of Russia and China. Italians than suggested NATO stop bombing in exchange for Russian

government voted on the initiative after the announcement. It was characteristic of the Czech political atmosphere that the moment the Communists sought a parliamentary debate on the Czech–Greek initiative it was blocked by ČSSD, which was happy to sweep the whole issue off the table.

Confused reactions of Czech political elites to NATO's actions cannot be explained by the reaction to the public opinion opposing the strikes alone. Populism does not explain why Václav Klaus and the ODS leadership opposed the air strikes. Had they strongly supported NATO, they would probably have brought most of their electorate along²⁵. President Václav Havel offered lofty moral arguments to support the bombing of Yugoslavia arguing for new “Pax Americana”. He consistently supported resolute military action during the Gulf war, war in Bosnia and later the operation against Iraq. The ethnic cleansing in Kosovo troubled him so much that he not only welcomed the strike against Yugoslavia but used such a discourse that the Czech public was dumbstruck. He spoke of an ethical war claiming that, by virtue of an air strike in Yugoslavia, human rights are placed above the legal system²⁶.

September 11

After the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, NATO invoked Article 5 – collective defence clause, another challenging period emerged. The Czech Republic played its part in showing the solidarity with the U.S. offering help in the fight against terror. The Czech Republic dispatched a specialized radiation, chemical and biological protection battalion to Kuwait and Miloš Zeman's government also dispatched the Czech army's sixth and eleventh field hospitals to Afghanistan (Král, Pachta, 2005). Czech special forces later went to Afghanistan to take part in the counter–terrorist operations and Czech forces were also on peacekeeping duty in Afghanistan under the NATO led International Security Assistance Force.

and Chinese support of the conflict resolution. The plan was refused by the U.S. State Department as well as by the NATO members who took part in the operation.

²⁵ One interpretation is that Klaus was slowly refashioning the ODS image to resemble that of the earlier Czech National Democratic Party. At the beginning of the century and during the existence of interwar Czechoslovakia, this was a party of the dynamic Czech bourgeoisie, with a strong national program (Znoj, 2001).

²⁶ The Czechs did not accept this argumentation and the Kosovo war marks President's declining popularity.

Radio Free Europe (RFE) moved its headquarters to Prague from Munich in 1995 at the invitation of the Czech President Václav Havel. The radio moved to the steel-and-glass structure, which used to be the home of the Federal Parliament of socialist Czechoslovakia in the very city center. After September 11 terrorist attacks, the Czech government considered the U.S. Congress-funded radio to be placed in a very sensitive location for an institution that could be a terrorist target. RFE broadcast to Muslim countries such as Iran and Iraq and it was planned to start broadcasting to Afghanistan. Czech government adopted security measures, which reduced traffic, concrete barriers were erected and four armored vehicles patrolled the building. In December 2001, Czech government's Security Council recommended the station should move out of the centre of Prague, the U.S., however did not acknowledge the need to relocate the station. The Czech government consideration of moving RFE out of the city centre met a disapproval of the RFE management, too, which even considered moving the station out of country.

Since the Czech government failed to offer RFE an alternative which would met station's basic conditions for operations, foreign minister Jan Kavan was criticized in the Parliament by the ODS deputies, namely by Jan Zahradil who noted that Kavan's incompetence could damage the relations with the U.S. After the next general elections (July 2002), Prime Minister Valdimír Špidla (ČSSD) talked over RFE with President George W. Bush during the NATO summit in Prague. American President, according to Czech press agency (ČTK), acknowledged the need to move RFE out of the city centre. Nevertheless, RFE has kept broadcasting from the same building up until now.

In October 2001, Czech foreign minister Jan Kavan briefed U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell in Washington about the alleged trip 9/11 plotter Mohammed Atta took to the Czech Republic in April 2001. Kavan told Powell that the BIS, the Czech intelligence service, had reason to believe that Mohamed Atta might have met near Prague with Iraqi Counsel Al-Ani. It turned out to be a red herring later. But some analysts argue that this event influenced later Czech co-operation with the USA during the Iraq crisis²⁷ since this evidence for the justification of the war in Iraq

²⁷ The mistrust towards the ways the Czechs handle top secret information can be illustrated by delaying the signature of ATOMAL agreement by the U.S. The agreement covers top secret military information exchange. Due reputation and suspicious contacts of Prime Minister Zeman's advisor Miroslav Šlouf, the agreement was signed only after Vice-Premier Vladimír Špidla's visit to the U.S. in March 2002 promising to get rid of Šlouf's team once he becomes Prime Minister (It actually happened in June 2002).

through the establishment of the existence of connections between the Iraqi regime and Al-Qaeda proved to be controversial (Král, Pachta, 2005).

Iraq crisis

Next elections to the lower chamber of the Czech Parliament were held on June 2002. The Social Democrats (ČSSD) won the elections again and created a weak 101 seat majority government with Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL) and liberals (US-DEU)²⁸. The post of the foreign affairs minister was offered to the coalition partner and Cyril Svoboda (KDU-ČSL) acceded to the office²⁹. On the verge of the Iraq crisis, the Czech Republic had new weak coalition government and Václav Havel's term in the Presidential office was about to expire (February 2, 2003). At the moment the Czech government and other political leaders began to take clear positions on the issue of a possible military strike against Iraq, based on UN Security Council resolution No. 1441, Václav Havel demonstrated his position on the future of Iraq by his signature of the "Letter of Eight", addressed by the representatives of eight European countries (Great Britain, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Denmark, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic) to the Wall Street Journal³⁰. This letter demonstrated support for an American military strike against Iraq (Král, Pachta, 2005).

Nevertheless, Václav Havel's signature could not have been considered as constituting the real position of the Czech Republic. President's step was neither based on consultations with, or the approval of, the Czech government. Even though the world media thought the opposite, the "Letter of Eight" was not an official position of the Czech Republic, a Czech government signature was not forthcoming³¹. Václav

²⁸ ČSSD won with 30.2%, giving the party 70 seats, Civic Democrats (ODS) got 24.5% and 58 seats, Communist Party (KSČM) won 18.5% and 41 seats and Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL) and the Freedom Union (US-DEU) coalition gained 14.4% and 31 seats.

²⁹ Ex-minister Jan Kavan became a President of the UN General Assembly despite President Václav Havel opposition to his nomination. Jan Kavan initiated for example 3 UN resolutions on Cuba during his mandate, suggesting the U.S. should lift the embargo due to its inefficiency. U.S. State secretary Colin Powell allegedly complained over his Cuba resolutions proposals to Václav Havel.

³⁰ The letter was published in the *Wall Street Journal* on January 30, 2003.

³¹ Havel's signature was merely an expression of his own personal opinion. On the other hand, it is not possible to ignore the fact that Havel signed the letter on January 30, 2003 while still holding a constitutional mandate. For these reasons, the foreign media and some politicians (e.g. French President Chirac) assigned considerable significance to this gesture (Král, Pachta, 2005).

Havel confirmed to be strong Atlanticist by his signature, he was also encouraged to sign the letter by pro-American circles within the Czech Foreign Ministry, most especially the deputy foreign minister Alexander Vondra, a former ambassador to Washington and a close confidant of his (Král, Pachta, 2005).

After the Parliament elected Václav Klaus the President, he adopted clear attitude on Iraq. It stemmed from the idea of using force in international relations as a last resort in times of crisis. This criteria according to Klaus, was not fulfilled neither in previous Kosovo crisis, nor in case of Iraq. Klaus further asserted that the U.S. led coalition did not want primarily to destroy weapons of mass destruction, he even doubted Saddam Hussein's regime had such weapons. The preemptive nature of Klaus' attitude on Iraq was also reflected in his conflict with American ambassador to Prague, Mr. Craig Stapleton, – a conflict that was watched relatively closely in the media. Although the exact details of the meeting between President Klaus and the American ambassador are not known as it took place in Prague Castle behind closed doors, both of them after the meeting admitted differences in opinion. According to unofficial sources, the President asked the ambassador to send a clear message to Washington that the Czech Republic was not a country that was supportive of the coalition. According to other sources, Klaus went further and stated that he did not believe that the allies would find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. By making such a statement he was implicitly casting doubts on the official justification made by the U.S. administration for a military strike against Iraq (Král, Pachta, 2005).

However, on March 31 he sent a letter to President George W. Bush, in which he stressed Czech support for the coalition (notwithstanding the fact that it took place within the Enduring Freedom operation). Such support was given within the spirit of the Czech government's resolution and the parliamentary mandate given (Král, Pachta, 2005).

President Klaus declined to declare whether the Czech Republic was taking the side of the U.S. and Great Britain that is the leading countries of the war coalition, or the side of France and Germany, the strongest objectors to the military intervention. He stated that the Czech Republic had its own position, the goal of which was assistance in averting a humanitarian disaster in Iraq but also the effort to bridge the divisions within Europe and revitalize the weakening transatlantic link. By making such statements Klaus articulated the fears of a considerable number of

Czech politicians, who felt uncomfortable in being confronted with the necessity of having to make a choice between both sides.

On the eve of the initiation of the operation against the Saddam Hussein's regime the Czech government adopted a resolution (March 19, 2003), in which it expressed the Czech Republic's position without clarifying whether the Czech Republic was, or was not, a part of the war coalition. The government regretted that it was impossible to solve the crisis through peaceful means but it attributed the responsibility for the culmination thereof to the absence of cooperation on the side of the Iraqi regime. As a new mandate from the United Nations Security Council had not been obtained, the government declared the Czech Republic would not directly participate in the military action. However, the Czech Army battalion specializing in radiological, chemical and biological protection dispatched to Kuwait earlier within the Enduring Freedom operation, was set to intervene in Iraq if use was made of, or there was reasonable suspicion of, the use of weapons of mass destruction against civilians or the coalition forces. The government further expressed its will to provide Iraq with humanitarian aid and participate in the post-war reconstruction of the country (Král, Pachtá, 2005).

Vladimír Špidla's government was split on the issue. On the one hand, there were two small coalition parties – KDU–ČSL and US–DEU, which advocated for explicit support of the war coalition. Furthermore, they advocated that the Czech Republic become involved in military operations in Iraq. On the other, there were some ministers in the main governing party (ČSSD) who held completely opposing attitude³².

The Czech government further decided on dispatching the field hospital to Basra on April 1, 2003 following a request from the representatives of the city of Basra and the British Army Headquarters in southern Iraq. The government decided to accede to this request without delay and there were no significant internal conflicts unlike the situation during adoption of the resolution in March. In this case, there was a UN mandate, for the provision of humanitarian aid in post-war Iraq, which, moreover, was binding on the government because of the resolution adopted on March 19. The Czech hospital in Basra should have been under the direct control of

³² For details see Král David, Pachtá Lukáš, *The Czech Republic and the Iraq Crisis: Shaping the Czech Stance*, EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, 2005.

the Czech government and placed under the mandate of the leadership of the Enduring Freedom or Iraqi Freedom operations (CENTCOM). Czech units in Iraq were technically allowed to cooperate with the command structures of these military operations (Král, Pachta, 2005).

The complexity of the Iraqi situation led Czech political parties to adopt similar positions to the ones they adopted during the Kosovo crisis in 1999. As was the case five years earlier Czech political parties' divided into two camps. Centre-right parties generally supported the war in Iraq while left wing parties condemned the war. It is important to state from the outset that that the division between these two camps was not based on the government coalition being pitted against the opposition. The pro and anti-war division arose within the largest governing party (ČSSD)³³. This fact had of course some serious consequences. Conflicts within the ČSSD made it difficult to attain consensus within government resulting in perceptions of executive ambivalence on the Iraq issue. What is more within the Chamber of Deputies and parliamentary party meetings, government positions were more frequently undermined (because of misinterpretations – deliberate or otherwise) by ČSSD members than by opposing ODS representatives.

The ODS held a clear pro-American position in relation to Iraq. The opinions of its key representatives corresponded with the positions adopted by deputy foreign minister Vondra and (former) President Václav Havel. For example, the ODS fully supported Havel's decision to sign the "Letter of Eight". ODS, the second largest party in the lower chamber also ensured that the government resolutions were given a smooth passage through the Parliament.

The ODS experienced once again a "problem" with the founder and the long-time chairman of the party and at that moment also the President of the Republic, Václav Klaus. Like during the Kosovo crisis, ODS overwhelmingly supported the strike whereas Klaus did not. The party had some difficulties when trying to make comments on the Iraq crisis following the initial disapproving attitude of the President and it had to reconcile Klaus's opposition with their support for U.S. led military action in order to avoid public embarrassment. The ODS agreed with the President on the fact that weapons of mass destruction were not the primary objective of military

³³ Senator Richard Falbr (ČSSD) became one of the most emphatic critics of the military operation and was an ideological leader of the antiwar declaration, which was adopted in late March 2003 at the ČSSD congress that condemned the military strike against Iraq.

action against Iraq, the key goal was in fact the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's dictatorial regime. The key contradiction between the ODS party and the President was that the latter did not see this goal as a legitimate grounds for war (Král, Pachta, 2005).

Any attempt made to assess the position adopted by Czech political actors during the Iraq crisis must take account of the tense situation that prevailed among the international community and most especially within the transatlantic alliance. The Czech government expressed political support for the general objectives of the U.S. and its allies on the Iraq issue. However, the Czech government decided not to participate directly in the U.S. led "Iraqi freedom" military operation because there was no UN mandate for such an operation. In short Czech support for the military intervention in Iraq effectively stopped at the Iraqi border. The stance taken by the Czech government was a success in that it did not cause any immediate rift in relations between the Czech Republic and those countries supportive of military action in Iraq or those who favoured a more peaceful resolution. However, the Czech government did fail to communicate its position in a coherent and consistent manner on the domestic and international stages (Král, Pachta, 2005).

Purchase of JAS-39 Gripen supersonic fighters

It isn't often that Czech elite decide a matter of strategic importance to national defense and defense capability as it happened in the case of a purchase of JAS-39 Gripen supersonic fighters. September 11 ended a near-complete U.S. responsibility for military deterrent only symbolically complemented by European allies. The Czech Republic embarked upon a decision to secure an all-round efficient defense for itself as a NATO member country by buying new supersonic jets. It was a far-reaching strategic decision with the impact on both national defense capability and on how enormous amounts of taxpayer's money are spent to incorporate CR into collective Atlantic defense. The service life of available MIG-21 fighters expired at the end of 2004. In fact, the Czech Republic has been without an advanced supersonic air defense for several years already.

The plan to acquire supersonic aircrafts has surfaced for the first time in 2002 causing a consistent divergence between Czech authorities responsible for the

purchase (government, Ministry of Defense and General Staff of the Army) and NATO political and military planners. In December 2003 the U.S. ambassador to the Czech Republic Craig Stapleton, who was just about to finish his term in office in Prague, cast doubts over the transparency of a tender the Czech government called in order to purchase supersonic aircraft. He went on record during an interview on the Czech public radio station (Radiožurnál) warning the government in quite an undiplomatic manner that the preference of the Swedish JAS-39 Gripen to American F-16 would have political and military consequences for the Czech Republic. He claimed the fair conditions for all tender participants were not fulfilled requiring the access to the tender documentations once the decision was taken. Since the coalition government has been deciding for Gripens, Prime Minister Vladimír Špidla (ČSSD), who pushed for the F-16 in the government, did not want comment Ambassador's statement. Foreign minister Cyril Svoboda (KDU-ČSL) considered Stapleton's speech to be a regular statement the U.S. official makes in order to support U.S. military industry. KDU-ČSL Chairman Miroslav Kalousek, who did not hold any post in the government, noted that Ambassador's words were an inadequate pressure on a sovereign state. Communist deputy Miloslav Ransdorf (KSČM) raised the criticism towards the Ambassador in the lower chamber. ODS, namely Jan Zahradil, refused the criticism claiming no inadequate pressure on the government was taking place. The Czech government finally endorsed a ten-year lease of 14 JAS 39 Gripen aircraft on its session on 9 June 2004³⁴.

Conclusion

The facts presented here on the Czech public attitudes and opinions towards the U.S. are not of course exhaustive. Nevertheless, the findings allow for arguing that the "Atlanticism" is not deeply rooted in the Czech society. Looking at the perception of NATO – Czechs generally value the guarantees that NATO membership offers and major portion of the Czech public gained a feeling of full security with the country's accession to NATO but the support towards the alliance is generally not high. Kosovo crisis NATO solution had a low public support, with the

³⁴ For details see Ministry of Defense: Government's Decision on Gripen Lease Made, <http://www.army.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=3568>

majority of the Czech population opposing the Operation Allied Force. The same goes for the perception of the U.S. foreign policy and Iraq crisis especially – during the crisis followed by the operation Iraqi freedom, the Czech public opinion was largely against the war as such, and against the involvement of the Czech Republic, too.

Summing up the findings, it seems the Czechs do not have to undergo an “identity turn” with further “Europeanization” of the Czech foreign policy under way. The political elites regardless of their attitudes towards the transatlantic link have to take this atmosphere in the society into account. Allowing for a simplification, a cleavage “Atlanticist” versus “pro-European” observable among the Czech political parties is not that relevant when the Czech electorate is examined. Even though the voters of the right-wing Civic democrats (ODS) rather tend to support U.S. foreign policy and strong transatlantic link, mixed attitudes in terms of main framework of international co-operation and foreign policy formulation are observable within this group, too.

Czech political elites’ stances during the Kosovo and Iraq crises show a big deal of hesitation towards adopting a political decision at all, and with regard to expressing support towards the U.S. policy in particular. There is no political elite consensus on the matters of transatlantic policy. The disaccord on the transatlantic link goes not only between political parties but within themselves, too. Two biggest political parties in the Czech Republic – Social Democrats (ČSSD) and Civic Democrats (ODS) are a good example of it. In both major tests cases, Kosovo and Iraq crisis, the parties did not have a coherent approaches and their elites were split on the issue.

It is highly probable that the ODS will win the next general elections. Regardless the composition of the future Czech government, being it most probably a coalition with Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL), it occurs that ODS will take over the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Both candidates for the ministerial post, Jan Zahradil and Alexandr Vondra, promote a strong Atlantic link. Given their professional path, Alexander Vondra can be labeled “more enthusiastic” Atlanticist than Jan Zahradil.

Alexandr Vondra served as the Czech Ambassador to the United States, overseeing the Czech Republic's integration into NATO. As the Czech Government Commissioner for the Prague NATO Summit he managed the preparations of the event, too. In the time of the Iraq crisis, as a Deputy foreign minister for security, he was a key figure in the developments. He convinced Václav Havel to sign the "Letter of Eight" and proposed original clear pro-war and pro-American wording of the governmental resolution on Iraq³⁵.

Jan Zahradil is currently holding a post of the member of European Parliament. He is a key ODS foreign policy figure creating a party discourse namely on the EU issues. With the closing prospect of the government responsibility and with regard to the pro-European attitudes ODS electorate adopts to a large extent, the party has gradually refined its "eurosceptic" discourse. Nevertheless, Jan Zahradil is an Atlanticist who would like to see the EU-U.S. relations as a complementary partnership.

With an Atlanticist leading the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Czech Republic can experience improving of the U.S.-Czech relations. A paradigm foreign policy shift is not likely since the government is restrained by the Parliament opposition and public opinion. However, an impact on the Czech attitudes towards the development of CFSP can be expected.

Summary

The paper focuses on the perception of the United States in the Czech Republic in the light of the transatlantic relations recent developments. It tries to depict significant patterns in the Czech public discourse and variables influencing the U.S.-Czech relations. It argues that the Czech Republic is instinctive but hesitant Atlanticist, her transatlantic policy is agenda-dependent and the setting of ruling government is an important variable. It also reasons that the Czech foreign policy tends to become more "Europeanized" in the future despite the setting of ruling government since the framework of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) offers increasing potential to influence international development. Examining

³⁵ He is also a President of the Czech Euro-Atlantic Council, and a board member of the Program of Atlantic Security Studies (PASS).

the Czech public opinion and Czech political elites in dealing with the transatlantic issues, namely with the Kosovo and Iraq crisis, the paper reasons that the Atlanticism is not deeply rooted in the Czech society and there is no consensus of the elites across as well as within the Czech political parties on the matters of transatlantic link. The extent of the Czech foreign policy "Europeanization" will naturally depend on the developments of the European integration and CFSP in particular.

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