



Asociace  
pro mezinárodní  
otázký  
Association  
for International  
Affairs

# Newsletter

## European program

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A Bi-monthly Review of European Affairs from the Czech Perspective

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#### Mini-analyses

##### **What Europe can Expect from the New American President**

Katarína Lokšová, Sylvie Milerová

Unsurprisingly, democratic candidate Barack Obama won yesterday's presidential election. The fact that he was elected the most powerful man of the planet raises many questions on both sides of the Atlantic. What does it mean for us, Europeans? Is the much discussed change awaiting us, too?

According to Obama's article Renewing American Leadership published in the prestigious monthly Foreign Affairs, America must concentrate on renewing old alliances and strengthening cooperation with Europe. Obama turns to the heritage of presidents like Truman, Kennedy or Eisenhower, who were respected in Europe, and wants to unite European support in international issues, for which he has an advantageous starting position in the old continent. Obama disapproves Bush's administrative for dividing Europe into "those who are with us and those who are not". Together with his vice-president he wants to support the enlargement of the European Union – namely Turkey's admission, in which they both see an efficient tool of promoting democracy and human rights in the Middle East.

However the opponents of radar in Brdy, who hoped that Obama would bring a change, will be disappointed – nothing changes in this sphere. The White House will continue in promoting the construction of an anti-missile system in Europe, with Iran remaining the official reason.

Czech citizens will probably have an opportunity to voice their (dis)satisfaction with the new resident of the White House. According to some opinions the first European visit of the new American president should take place in Prague during the rotating presidency of the European Union.

## The Results of Beijing ASEM Summit

Vladimír Beroun, Alena Falathová

The 7th ASEM Summit took place in Beijing from 24 to 25 October 2008. Leading political representatives from 43 countries of European Union and Asia attended. In the time of a global financial crisis, the main topic of the discussions was the issue of joint approach to the search of a new organisation of the international financial system. The summit was also concerned with the fight against changes of climate, world security threats and mutual social and cultural exchange.

Nicolas Sarkozy, chairman of the Council of the European Union, played a central role during discussions about solving the current financial crisis. He stated that Europe needs Asia – its growth, intelligence, creativity and Asia needs Europe – its technologies, know-how and stability. Therefore it is vital to find a common approach during the upcoming international summit on economic crisis in Washington. He emphasized the need for a common answer to the problems of the financial and monetary system. Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao confirmed interest in the cooperation of both continents. However the countries have not mentioned any particular methods they would like to push through at the Washington summit.

The chairman of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso highlighted that the current financial crisis cannot be used as a reason for laying aside commitments in the fight against changes of climate. The final declaration of sustainable development partially confirmed this direction, because it acknowledged the importance of fight against changes of climate, notably of the reduction of greenhouse gasses emissions according to the principle of shared responsibility. However the declaration cannot be seen as a major step. The situation of developing countries remains unresolved, because these refuse to join the common plan.

At the summit, the Czech Republic was represented by Deputy Prime Minister Alexandr Vondra, who decried Burmese junta and called for the discharge of the leader of Burmese opposition and Nobel Peace Prize holder Aung San Suu Kyi. The Deputy Prime Minister also met with Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Yang Jiechi, whom he ensured that the Czech Republic respects the policy of one China, with Tibet as its integral part. In contrast with the fierce criticism of the Burmese junta during the summit, this stance is a disappointment, especially with regard to the core idea of Czech foreign policy which is based on fight for human rights. Alexandr Vondra also met with German chancellor Angela Merkel, who once again confirmed that the Euro zone group will continue to remain an informal grouping.

## European Union has Formally Renewed Diplomatic Relations with Cuba

Jana Drlíková, Jana Srpová

Louis Michel, European Commissioner responsible for development and humanitarian aid and Filipe Perez Roque, Cuban Minister of Foreign Affairs signed a declaration of cooperation in Havana. Financial aid amounting to 2 million Euros should be used mainly to erase the damages caused by the hurricanes that have recently hit Cuba. The Union has also bound itself not to intervene in Cuba's interior political affairs. According to Louis Michel, Cuban representatives in return agreed with the renewal of discussions "without taboos". However European politicians hope that this first step of the European Union towards liberalization of mutual relations will influence Raúl Castro (who in February replaced his brother at the head of Cuba) and put him more in tone for democratization. Relations with Cuba were discontinued since 2003 because of mass arrests of opponents of Castro's regime (more than 75 persons were arrested).

In the long term, the Czech Republic is engaged in the issue of keeping human rights in Cuba. The Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg also participated in the first meeting of the EU with Cuban representatives on 16 October of this year. At that time the French Minister of Foreign Affairs even handed his Cuban counterpart a list of political prisoners, declaring that the EU demands their immediate discharge. That was the beginning of the policy of opening to Cuba

which according to the EU should encourage the regime's democratization. The Czech Republic has been reserved to this attitude; in the beginning it even opposed the renewal of diplomatic relations. However in the end it succumbed under the condition that the situation is evaluated on a yearly basis. The closest should take place during the Czech presidency.

It is hard to predict whether the new strategy will work. In exchange for humanitarian aid, the EU might make the Cuban representatives to have more respect for human rights. On the other hand it is possible that another "sponsor" with no strings attached will emerge. For example Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez has often helped the faltering Castro's regime by supplying it with crude oil.

However Europe is not alone, other countries have also realised the ineffectivity of sanctions imposed on Cuban regime. On 29 October, the General Assembly of the UN adopted a resolution which backs the lifting of sanctions. 185 countries voted for the resolution, only 3 were against it (Israel, Palau and the United States of America).

### EU and Efforts to Ban Smoking in Public Places

Petr Hajný, Michal Vít

In late October the Commission began to discuss the regulation of smoking ban at working places in the entire EU. The proposal following the "Public Health" strategy, was introduced by Commissioner Vladimír Špidla. According to him it is necessary to protect the health of workers, especially passive smokers – therefore e.g. cafés and restaurants are included in the proposal, because employees there are most at risk. Every year around 80 thousand people die of the consequences of passive smoking. Špidla's proposal strives for the harmonisation of regulations in the entire EU. However in this moment the text is not in its final version – Špidla is going to discuss it with the representatives of unions and entrepreneurs. Therefore it is highly unlikely that the proposal will be prepared during the functional period of the current Commission.

According to Eurobarometer, 77 % of respondents (mostly in Ireland, Italy and Slovenia) were against smoking in public places in EU countries in 2006. The support of restrictions against smokers was tiniest in the Czech Republic, Austria, Denmark and the Netherlands. In the Czech Republic, which generally belongs to one of the most liberal EU countries concerning this issue, an ambiguous stance towards the regulation of smoking in restaurants and bars is held by both members of parliament and the general public. But not only here are proposals of smoking ban met with negative backwash. As an example, let us mention the decision of the German Constitutional Court, which ruled the ban in two federal countries unconstitutional.

An amendment to anti-smoking law has been stuck in the Czech Chamber of Deputies for almost two years. Some members of parliament want to try to push through a change in line with Špidla's concept of an absolute smoking ban in restaurants and bars at the next session. According to Boris Šťastný, a Member of Parliament, most probable is a gradual tightening of anti-smoking rules, thanks to which the Czech Republic would come near the view of commissioner Špidla.

## Comments on Recent News

### New European Commissioner for External Trade

On 22 October British Catherine Margaret Ashton was elected a commissioner. The hitherto chairwoman of the Labour party in the House of Lords has thus become the first woman in this position. She replaced Peter Mandelson, who surprisingly resigned to become a minister in the British government. The naming of C. Ashton was surrounded with doubts concerning her qualification, notably her insufficient experience from international trade. N. Farage, Member of British Parliament stated: "Now is not the time for the novice, we need a big hitter."

However C. Ashton proved her professionalism during her three hour speech in the European Parliament, in the course of which she answered the questions of MEPs. She emphasised her pro European stance, efforts to renew talks and reach an agreement on world trade, in which the USA must have a significant position. The Commissioner is also determined to ameliorate EU's relations with developing countries. Her stances reflect the proposals for resolving the financial crisis proclaimed by the British Prime Minister G. Brown. Nevertheless her mandate terminates in October 2009 and so she does not have enough time to fulfil her goals. [More](#)

### **The European Parliament Awarded the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought**

Chinese dissident Hu Jia who has been detained since April for inciting the overthrow of state power was awarded the Sakharov prize, which is given to those who significantly contribute to the fight for human rights or democracy. Hu Jia is an activist who engages in educating about HIV virus as well as AIDS and who recorded cases of terrorization and arrests of other activists and calls for a public investigation of the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989.

Even before the announcement of the winner, Beijing pushed for the withdrawal of Hu Jia's nomination. Consequently China decried the award at the October Euro-Asian summit stating: "This is a profound interference with China's internal affairs." This event could even harm mutual relations. The chairman of European Parliament H. G. Pottering reacted: "By awarding the Sakharov prize to Hu Jia, the European Parliament expresses its determined support of Chinese activists for human rights in their every day fight for freedom." CH. Tannock, political speaker of conservatives in the EP, emphasized that "by doing so, the Members of European Parliament wanted to bring attention to the authoritative and repressive character of communist reign in China." The prize which includes 50 000 Euros will be awarded at a solemn ceremony in Strasbourg on 17 December. [More](#)

## **Interesting Publications**

### **Centre for European Reform**

The policy brief "Beyond banking: What the financial crisis means for the EU" deals with the impact of the financial crisis on politics and economics in its particular aspects. It is concerned with the future of Euro, financial regulations, economic reforms and other related issues. According to the authors, the crisis not only unveils the weaknesses of the EU and the USA, but also brings practical impulses for reforms or solving the problem of the ever more authoritarian Russia.

### **Centre for European Policy Studies**

The paper "The Changing Dynamics of Security in an Enlarged European Union" represents an overview of the results of search for an answer to the question: To what extent has the evolution of international context changed the dynamics of liberty and security? It is very important to point out the potential impact of the feeling of security and threat on political values and targets and the way it transforms them. According to the authors, the agents of development are: the process of increase in security as well as the use of technology as the basic solution and intergovernmental approach to the resolution of problems.

### **Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik**

After the rejection of the Lisbon Treaty and the growing differences between new and old members, the European Union is in dire need of a new strategy which is offered by the paper "EU Foreign Policy Perspectives. A Call for the Revival of the Weimar Triangle". Could a closer cooperation of the Weimar Triangle be the solution?

### **Europeum**

David Král, Věra Řiháčková and Tomáš Weiss are authors of a new publication called: „Views on American Foreign Policy - The Atlanticism of Political Parties in Central and Eastern Europe“, in which they deal with political parties in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia and their views of American foreign policy. Especially Czech foreign policy has to

deal with its “sitting between two chairs” position – its support of American foreign policy is incompatible with the dream of the EU an antipole to the USA.

## Invitations

### Workshop: Further EU Enlargement?

**When:** 13 November 2008, 5 - 6:30 pm

**Where:** Eurocentrum Praha, Evropský dům, Jungmannova 24, Praha 1

**Organiser:** Eurocentrum Praha

**Guest:** Vladimír Bartovic – Europeum Institute for European Policy

[More](#)

### International Conference: Security Strategy for Europe: New Priorities, New Challenges

**When:** 14 November 2008, 9 am – 7:30 pm

**Where:** Hotel Praha, Sušická 20, Praha 6

**Organiser:** Security Policy Center CESES FSV UK in cooperation with other partners

**Guests:** PhDr. Miloš Balabán, Ph.D. – director of Security Policy Center of CESES FSV UK, Benoît d’Aboville – former French ambassador to the Czech Republic and NATO permanent representative of France, Dr. Libor Rouček – European Parliament

**Registration:** [sbp@fsv.cuni.cz](mailto:sbp@fsv.cuni.cz) or tel.: 224 491 500 (until 10 November 2008)

[More](#)

### Conference: Europe of Citizens – Europe of Voters: The Democratic Deficit of the EU and the Role of the European Parliament

**When:** 20 to 21 November 2008

**Where:** Novoměstská radnice, Karlovo náměstí 1/23, Praha 2

**Organiser:** European Values in cooperation with other partners

**Guests:** Elmar Brok – German member of the European Parliament; Andrew Duff – British member of the European Parliament; John Palmer – former director and founder of European Policy Centre Brusel, Christian Lequesne - Sciences Po Paris

**Registration:** [conference@europeanvalues.net](mailto:conference@europeanvalues.net) (until 13 November 2008)

[Programme](#)

## Upcoming Events

### New Partnership Treaty with Russia?

An EU-Russia summit will take place in Nice on 14th November. The goal of the summit is to evaluate the implementation of conclusions reached in September of this year and notably the conclusion of a new strategic partnership treaty. Thus discussions that were interrupted in reaction to the Russian intervention in Georgia in August should be formally renewed. Even though that, at the October summit of the EU, the leaders of member countries did not agree on a specific date of renewing talks with Russia, French Minister of Foreign Affairs B. Kouchner has already stated that he expects a positive outcome of the upcoming meeting in Nice. The Czech Republic has reservations towards Russian steps. Nevertheless the Minister of Foreign Affairs K. Schwarzenberg remarked: “Both the West and the East are interested in cooperating. Thanks to the grave economic situation people get along better.”

### Extra Summit on Financial Crisis

After a call for a discussion about “new bases of capitalism”, the French presidency comes with a call for an extra summit on 7 November in Brussels. Its goal is to create a common position for the summit of G20 countries in Washington, which is planned for the week after. The dominant topic of the discussions will be the issue of strengthening financial regulation and toughening the approach to the so-called tax paradises. The Czech Republic was also officially invited as the upcoming EU

presidential country to Washington - president Sarkozy and Prime Minister Topolánek have agreed that a Czech representative will arrive in the USA together with the French delegation. [More](#)

### The End of Controls at Swiss Borders with Schengen

In 2005 Switzerland held a [referendum](#) concerning its entry into the Schengen zone. As a consequence of the referendum and of the conclusion of a treaty between Belgium, Luxembourg, France and Germany, controls at its borders will be discontinued from around Christmas. Controls at land borders will be lifted in November, at airports in March 2009. Before this could happen, Switzerland had to gain access to data in the [Schengen information system](#) and exchange records in order to ensure security. [More](#)

### European Topics for the Year 2009

The new declaration "[Partnership for Communication about Europe](#)" formulates a new "tool" for ameliorating communication between the organs of the EU and member states – EU's common communication priorities for the upcoming year. After they are officially approved by the European Parliament in November, the [topics for year 2009](#) will probably be energy and changes of climate, June elections to the European Parliament and the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of democratic changes in Central and Eastern Europe. However some [concerns](#) surround this step because of common priorities, institutions could uselessly duplicate their activities. Similarly, institution's priorities could "compete" with the topics of the EU's presidential state.

## Presidency 2009

### Mini-analysis: Sarkozy's Ambitions and the Czech Presidency Controversy

Marián Zachar

France has been presiding over the Council of the EU since June and President N. Sarkozy has been fully enjoying the informal post of the head of the EU. Faithful to [the style of the American video-democratic pre-election campaign](#), he presents himself as the maker of Georgian peace, even though Russian president Medvedev has violated it on several occasions. In the times of financial crisis he tries to transpose himself in the position of "a reformer" of capitalism and the main initiator of all rescue plans.

His last suggestion was the [economic government of Euro zone](#), which should secure EU's effective functioning under his guidance. At the beginning, continuation of French presidency in an informal grouping of ministers of finance of the Euro zone, in which the Czech Republic does not participate, was discussed, but thanks to strong exposure in the media, the proposal from 21<sup>st</sup> October was "extended" with the speculation of taking away the Czech presidency. In conflict with the contractual embodiment of rotating presidencies (change is possible only based on approval of all member states), France with Sarkozy as its leader was supposed to take charge of it until another Euro zone country would replace it.

In the light of [the results of Czech regional and Senate elections](#), in which the opposition ČSSD has become the dominant party, the feasibility of the Czech presidency has been discussed since last week. According to [Czech President V. Klaus](#), a euro sceptic disapproved by France, citizens clearly evaluated the policy of Prime Minister Topolánek in this indirect referendum. After the [formal abdication of ministers](#) from the defeated ODS it seemed that the Czech Republic is on the verge of a governmental crisis and that this will help Sarkozy's „plan“.

However in order to rule, the government needs de facto only a majority in the lower chamber of the Parliament and therefore Prime Minister [has no reason to resign](#) (nevertheless his position at the head of the party is endangered). [Topolánek, Schwarzenberg and Vondra](#) refused the proclamation of [villain role](#) and declared that the Czech Republic will lead the EU without any problems. Besides, Topolánek promised that [the Lisbon Treaty will be ratified](#) until the Czech

presidency. They were even supported by V. Klaus who denounced Sarkozy a socialist. Angela Merkel supported the Czech side from Brussels and so practically blocked Sarkozy's advancement.

Even though the Czech Republic is technically and politically prepared for the presidency French journals Le Monde and Le Figaro voiced their concern for the upcoming presidency. The support of Sarkozy's plan might seem inferior and the entire issue rather stirred up by the media, but in France such ambitious tendencies appear regularly. Apart from support of his own party, Sarkozy is backed by many influential personalities including the president of BusinessEurope, European association of employers. Some lecturers at the Parisian Sorbonne even contemplate fast institutionalisation of the mentioned plan.

However after Sarkozy's meeting with Topolánek on 31 October, that attracted wide media attention and during which they agreed on smooth transition of presidency, all manipulations concerning the presidency remain just mere speculations. Nevertheless Sarkozy's egoism and hyperactivity will probably not stand in the way to push through his other interests by alternative, informal methods.

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**The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Association for International Affairs.**

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