

THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND POLAND IN CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL POLITICS: PARTNERS OR RIVALS?

Ed. Vít Dostál



Asociace
pro mezinárodní
otázky
Association
for International
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FOREWORD

Maria Staszekwicz

Director, Association for International Affairs

The international roundtable organized in November 2009 revolved around the question of partnership and rivalry between the Czech Republic and Poland in contemporary global politics. The title as defined seems to reflect a mindset which is still predominant in the political landscapes of both countries. The “friend or foe” dichotomy has until recently been the governing principle within ministerial and political structures on both sides. This has of course been reinforced by the history of geopolitical goals shared by most post-Communist countries. In their striving for membership in western structures, the Czech Republic and Poland were seen as partners. Now, already part of them, and with divergent historical memories as well as geographical differences, are these two countries destined to become rivals?

This is where, in my opinion we should depart from the realism-driven divide. It is precisely the nature of the European structure that it allows its members to minimize tensions and maximize synergies. Yet, in order to achieve this, a future-oriented political attitude must be applied, and old sentiments scrapped. The Czech Republic and Poland declare similar political aims. Thus, it is time to make use of the available structures and further the common political goals.

As a Czech NGO promoting a thorough understanding of international relations, one of the Association’s most vital aims is to foster analytical exchange and to assist in the advancement of open political debate. Taking into consideration joint initiatives that have linked the Czech Republic and Poland in the past as well as those reaching into the future, the Association for International Affairs cannot but pay closer attention to developments in bilateral relations. Moreover, being part of the Czech-Polish Analytic Platform, it is our obligation to help intensify substantive communication between the two countries. Therefore, I would like to thank all of our partners, who significantly contributed to the organization of the roundtable “Czech Republic and Poland in Contemporary International Politics – Partners or Rivals, i.e. the Institute for Strategic Studies, the Czech-Polish Forum, the Open Society Fund, the Polish Embassy in Prague and the Polish Institute in Prague.

And last but not least, I would like to express the hope that the already extant bilateral and multilateral mechanisms, together with those recommended in this booklet, will be further developed and intensively deployed by both Czech and Polish policy-makers.

Maria Staszekiewicz,
Director, Association for International Affairs

PART I

ROUNDTABLE PROCEEDINGS

THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND POLAND
IN CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL POLITICS:
PARTNERS OR RIVALS?

Prague, November 5, 2009

CZECH-POLISH RELATIONS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Michal Thim, Association for International Affairs, Prague

Please allow me to welcome you to the premises of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on behalf of the Association of International Affairs to the international roundtable: “Czech Republic and Poland in Contemporary International Politics: Partners or Rivals?”.

As far as I know, this is one of very few events concerning how the Czech Republic and Poland, together and separately, deal with international politics. As regards the Czech Republic, the reason is probably that from the beginning we focused on the transformation from the Communist regime, then on accession to NATO and the EU, and now we are more or less searching for another reasonable goal in terms of foreign policy. I dare to say that the title of the roundtable sounds promising. I believe that we will find a lot of things that we have in common and at the same time we will find a lot of space for remarkable cooperation between us as well. Despite the lack of a specific topic on the agenda, we Czechs might also be able to advise our Polish partners on how to prepare and how to conduct their EU Presidency. At least we can certainly tell them what not to do – please, do not change government during the term! This will be probably difficult as you will have elections right in the middle...

This event could, of course, have never happened without the support of our sponsors. Therefore I would like to thank the Czech-Polish Forum, the Open Society Fund, the Polish Embassy and the Polish Institute in Prague.

Jaroslav Zajíček, chair, Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. The title of our panel is “Relations between Poland and the Czech Republic in the EU.” Please allow me, before I give the floor to our four panelists, three reminiscences on this topic.

The first reminiscence goes back to the accession talks, when it proved to be very valuable to have close cooperation between the chief negotiating teams and the public administration teams during negotiations with the EU. For me it was a most useful experience. There had been six member states that had been regularly meeting for years because the coordination of our strategies was crucial. Our approaches were not necessarily always the same but it was continually important that we regularly informed our partners of what we intended to do. Thus we created some kind of synergy in our procedures.

Reminiscence number two: the Czech Republic and Poland, two regular member states of the EU, are two concrete examples of very close cooperation in terms of, for instance, energy issues. Apart from that, they both promote a more liberal view of the EU internal market, irrespective of the structure of their governments. A very good example of hard negotiations was a gradual phasing out of auctioning permits in the electricity sector. Our economies are both to a large extent depend-

ant on coal. Therefore through this cooperation, we managed by the very end, in December 2008, to achieve the concessions.

Reminiscence number three, which is probably the most important thing – cooperation regarding the EU Presidency. I realize that this is not a place to evaluate the Czech Presidency, but what is worth mentioning is that the Czech Presidency was not important to the Czechs themselves, but its success was also in the Polish interest. Forgetting the fact that there were ups and downs, Poland always supported it. Having a look on the priorities of the Polish Presidency, you will notice that they resemble those Czech ones tremendously – energy security, economy and internal market, Europe as a global player and European defense. When I saw them for the first time, I said to myself – I have seen this before. This means that these are the topics that we have in common. Several seminars have been already held – such as the conference in Warsaw on the lessons learned from the Czech Presidency. I think we are ready to provide our Polish partners with all of our good and bad experience from those six months at helm.

These are my opening remarks and now I would like to give the floor to the individual panelists. I would invite them to have their presentations first and then, I hope, we will witness a provocative debate. First on my list is Piotr Maciej Kaczyński, from the Centre for European Policy Studies.

Piotr Maciej Kaczyński, Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels

Thank you very much for the invitation, for giving me the floor and for the introduction. Basically, I agree with what has been said so far. Especially, future coordination and the lessons to be learned are of great value. The Czech Presidency provided such an experience and probably nobody knows better about internal mechanisms than the Czechs themselves.

When I look at the title of today's conference, I completely disagree with the word "rivals". There is absolutely no rivalry between us and no race about who is going to be first. This has been already solved – it is Slovakia that has first accepted the Euro. However, as partners – absolutely – in the EU, in NATO, in the V4. Nowadays, we are the two European countries with a perspective of future cooperation. I dare to say that Poland is probably the first country of all of the new member states to come out of the problem of confusion – the confusion of the post-enlargement relaxation. Politically, that is – I do not speak about diplomatic, but about the political aspects of relaxation. Losing this confusion and the subsequent relaxation allowed Poland to get rid of the label of an unpredictable player, which Poland had acquired under the former government. The incumbent government succeeded in pulling away from this unpredictability motto and became a very complex partner able to win their arguments in the EU.

Poland has also become rather reserved for some EU countries because of its role of a negative power – negative not in the sense of vetoing but in the sense of testing policies. This regard is crucial to understand. Testing policies is completely different from vetoing them. Vetoing is the end of the process whereas consultation is the beginning of the process. Poland may be a strategic choice, as well. It has made the vital choice of being a big member of the European Union. The Poland of today holds a bilateral summit with France where President Sarkozy and Prime Minister Tusk are about to announce a common initiative in defense matters. As a similar initiative was assumed between France and the UK in the 1990s, this already says something about the current position of Poland in contemporary European politics. From the Paris perspective, there is the new declaration of the German coalition which has recognized Poland's essential position in German foreign policy. It is not only that Poland announces itself as a big partner and a big member state of the EU, but it is recognized as such by other partners, big member states, even by those that are larger than Poland itself.

However, Poland needs to realize that it is also the weakest of the six largest EU states and therefore needs to compensate for its own flaws. It does so through two approaches – by preparing policy negotiations that would not be possible without consultation with partners and through building a coalition of willing partners, especially with the Czech Republic and Germany. Germany is Poland's most important partner within the EU. That needs to be acknowledged. France is very important as well in this geography. The importance of the Weimar triangle may return once again.

The Czech President, Václav Klaus, has ratified the Treaty. I think it is about time to end the criticism of the Czech Republic within the EU of being an irritating partner with no impact, which I think was the case until now. However, politics is a dynamic process and when you are at point zero, you cannot but soar. Therefore, the Czech Republic cannot but enhance its currently quite poor and limited position. The reasons for this unfavorable sentiment are two – the problem of Lisbon Treaty ratification and a number of ups and downs during the Czech Presidency. That is why the Czech Republic and Poland are not rivals. They differ, but they do not compete for anything anymore.

Poland is a big country, but the Czech Republic is not. Even though the Czechs may not be quite a small nation, they are definitely much smaller. The Poles do have an impact, while the Czech impact is limited. The Poles do play hard and can win an argument, but the Czechs not yet. Therefore I move to my second point – what can be done in the future?

Of course, preparation for the Polish Presidency is important, but this will be over in two years' time. There will not be another Polish Presidency until the mid-

2020s, provided we do not change the rotating principle by then. The Polish future within the group of large member states is likely to deteriorate. It may be difficult for a country with 2% of the EU's GDP to play the role of a big member state. Thus there is a risk of losing that good balance that Poland enjoys right now as a big member state still paying attention to smaller nations, especially those among new member states and the Nordic countries.

The Czechs need to go forward, to move on and see what kind of approach can be made in the EU. What should the Czech policy be in the EU, who are its allies in the EU? The Czech Republic is a country of ten million people and limited GDP in the EU sense. However, this does not mean that countries of that size are beyond the EU's impact. There are members within the EU that I call SSMSes – small but smart member states – such as Belgium, Ireland, Denmark, Luxemburg, Finland or the Netherlands. The impact of these states is much bigger than their size would indicate. The Czech Republic can do it as well. It should realize that the absolute strategic partner for all small nations in the EU is the European Commission. The risk with the European Commission is that when it is weak, it applies double standards for bigger and smaller nations. If the Commission applies double standards that are detrimental to smaller nations, it is also eager to apply them as they are and this makes smaller nations hesitant to do it towards bigger nations. Therefore a strong European Commission and closer political integration within the EU should be of high interest to the Czech Republic.

A deleterious element to the Czech Republic is the fact that the Czech Republic is not in the eurozone. This should change as soon as possible. Now, I am not talking from an economic but from a political perspective. There is a Polish-Czech collaboration to explore the rules of eurozone accession in a thorough way. Because of the current economic situation, this is not an easy thing to do even when you want to.

Whereas the Czech Republic is a small but smart member state and Poland successfully plays the role of the weakest of the big member states, then there is absolutely no space for rivalry. Roles, duties, partners are different. What to do to realize this? There are many strategic partnerships but nothing comes of them – e.g. Poland has a strategic partnership with Spain if I am not mistaken. I am not saying that it is not important for Poland to have a good relationship with Spain. It is surely important for everybody to have good relations with Spain. However, there is a difference of whether you have such a relationship with your neighbor or with somebody who is on the other side of the Union. Therefore there must be not only partnerships but also mechanisms for making them real. I do not actually understand why there is no annual meeting of the entire cabinets of the Republic of Poland and the government of the Czech Republic. Why there is no Visegrad ambassadorial meeting every single week before COREPER meets? Why are these and other tools not explored more?

Jaroslav Zajíček, Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs

This definitely fulfills my expectations of a provocative intervention and I am looking forward to what will come out of this confrontation. I must say that I really like the definition of a “small but smart member state” and this is actually what we should be heading for. The current definition of the Czech EU policy is described as irritating with little impact. Ms. Łada, from the Institute of Public Affairs in Warsaw, the floor is yours.

Agnieszka Łada, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw

Thank you very much for the invitation. We at the Institute of Public Affairs in Warsaw have done a project about the Czech Presidency, including conclusions and recommendations for our Presidency. Let me summarize them briefly.

First of all, I would like to elaborate on how the Czech Presidency can influence the reputation of the new member states. Then I will present how the Czech Presidency has been assessed by Polish experts.

The assessment of the Czech Presidency is significantly linked to the reputation of the entire group of new member states, as the question is how the new member states are perceived by the old member states. We are usually treated as an entity and we are under the surveillance of the old member states. They claim that we have a democratic deficit, that we also have little commitment to integration and that our political representation is not as stable as in Western Europe. This is our profile. The way we were assessed by the so-called “old Europe” results in a lack of readiness to hand over power to Central and Eastern Europe. What does this mean exactly? From our point of view, this is the problem of the old member states. There are already 27 of us. It is no longer 15 of those who undertake decisions. Naturally, negotiations among 15 were much easier and therefore it is difficult to involve all in discussions. Moreover, our priorities are different. Difference is not a bad thing but sometimes you simply have to draw a common conclusion.

The Polish assessment of the Presidency consists of two pillars. The first pillar is connected to the implementation of the priorities of the Czech Presidency – the Eastern Partnership, energy policy and the motto of the Presidency – Europe Without Barriers, which are all of high importance to Poland. They are very similar to the intended Polish priorities so it is reasonable that we regard them as the correct ones.

There is also the second pillar – a kind of solidarity between the new member states that derives from the point mentioned above. We have similar economic and political problems so we understand each other much better. The Poles have some empathy towards the Czechs. Before the Czech Presidency, there had been a couple of French comments about the collapse of the Presidency, and about the

Presidency being a catastrophe. At that time, we had empathy and understood what it meant for the Czech Republic to have organized all this. We wanted the Presidency to be a success. Criticizing the Czech Presidency from our side is not in the Polish interest. Therefore, we are not going to denounce the Czechs. Here, the Visegrad Group is an essential tool that should be used to integrate the programs of the Czech Presidency with the programs of the upcoming Polish and Hungarian Presidencies.

From the Polish point of view, the most important Czech priorities were fulfilled – the Eastern Partnership, the common market operation principle and the energy issue – including the Nabucco pipeline project. Currently, we have to begin the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty and therefore the biggest question in days to come is the question of the new Commission. I think there should be some agreements about the commissioners and there should be some phone calls between our governments and our embassies. This is something we should begin with and later there will be also common initiatives. However, the question is, whether Poland and the Czech Republic can establish a new initiative within the EU. Right at the beginning, we should not start with own initiatives but should begin discussing the initiatives of other countries – to support them or not to support them. This should be done together with the Czech Republic. Nowadays, we should start talking about the fate of the Eastern Partnership during the Hungarian and Polish presidencies and create a common Polish-Hungarian initiative along with the Czech Republic.

To sum it up, I think it is in our common interest to cooperate because we are still perceived as new member states and we can do a lot if we join forces. Let's start with small steps and then we can initiate something as well.

Jaroslav Zajíček, Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Thank you, Agnieszka, this was a very beneficial presentation. I have a couple of short comments on the priorities of the Polish Presidency that you have enumerated. Truly, they have been chosen very well, such as the Eastern Partnership. When we can see the proliferations of these partnerships, such as the Union for the Mediterranean or the Baltic Sea Synergy, we see that what is important is for us to also keep the Eastern Partnership high on the agenda, because depending on which Presidency is at the helm, the orientation is changed. The Eastern Partnership is not forgotten and I believe that both the Polish and Hungarian presidencies will contribute to it. As for the disturbance on the internal market, it will continue as the crisis is phasing out. On the energy aspect, Poland is lucky that its Presidency comes in the second half of the year because normally we have problems with gas in the first half. Now I will invite Mr. Vít Dostál from the Czech think-tank, the Association for International Affairs. The floor is yours.

Vít Dostál, Association for International Affairs, Prague

Thank you for the floor. I am going to use my 5–10 minutes for an extremely important, however for some also quite boring topic, which is the forthcoming budgetary framework of the EU and how the Czech Republic and Poland can cooperate on that. I will focus on some general areas related to budgetary issues and which are similar for both the Czech Republic and Poland. Then, I will stress also the differences between the Czech Republic and Poland that are, in my opinion, important for the EU budget. As for the specific areas, e.g. Cohesion Policy and Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), I will demonstrate that these are the spheres where we should not expect eternal friendship between our countries. In spite of this, there are still some areas where we should cooperate very closely. I will stress these and after that, I will perhaps provide some general recommendations for Czech foreign policy leading up to the Polish Presidency.

At the very beginning, it is worth mentioning our general commonalities. Both countries are young member states, however, this factor of “newness” is continuously disappearing along with our deeper integration in the structures of the EU 15. For instance, many transitional periods are expiring and almost all of them have already passed. Apart from this, we have similar approaches to a number of the EU’s environmental and energy policy goals. The cooperation in this field is very good and this was demonstrated during the negotiations on the energy climate package.

As to differences, the size of the agricultural sector varies – in the Czech Republic only 4% of the workers are employed in the agricultural sector, whereas in Poland it is somewhere around 25%. Furthermore, Polish agriculture is a very sensitive issue in terms of the internal political debate. There are two parties that focus on rural areas – the Polish People’s Party and the Law and Justice Party. This is definitely not the Czech case. In addition, Poland is still poorer than the Czech Republic. This is extremely important when talking about issues linked to the budget. Currently, a considerable amount of money is spent on the EU’s Cohesion Policy. Countries with a GNP lower than 90% of the EU average are eligible for the money from the Cohesion Fund. It might happen that the Czech Republic will end up just over this line. At the moment we are at the 80% level and Poland is on 65%. Nonetheless, we will witness what the current economic situation of an overall economic slowdown will do to that. Moreover, Croatia is likely to join the EU soon, which will also make the statistics different.

Talking about structural funds in terms of the EU budget prospective for 2007–2013, regions producing less than 75 % of the EU average GNP were eligible for objective one of the structural funds. For instance, in the Czech Republic only Prague did not meet the criteria. According to recent statistics, several Czech regions are

already beyond the line of 75%, but in Poland this is not the case. In Poland, there was only one region that was over 75% and therefore the Czech Republic and Poland are likely to promote divergent strategies in terms of Cohesion Policy. This encompasses the Cohesion and Structural Funds. Poland will definitely try to build up a strong coalition supporting the allocation of funds to the Cohesion Fund. The Czech Republic will probably opt for phasing out the system from Structural Funds, as was the case of some worse-off regions in the EU 15 after the 2004 enlargement. This will not be favorable for Poland at all. Poland would like to see the system as it works now. However, the most important will be how all the objectives of the regional policy will be structured.

Speaking about the CAP, the Czech Republic promotes its further liberalization and focuses on the second pillar – the development of rural areas. The country will be probably willing to decrease the amount of funds gradually. As the CAP is very important to Poland, it will struggle to keep the CAP as a significant part of the EU budget for as long as possible. Moreover, Poland advocates support mechanisms for EU exports until 2013 and will definitely opt for the community character of CAP. A possible result of this confrontation is that the Czech Republic and Poland will find themselves in different camps. Poland will be among the stronger CAP countries, such as France, Denmark, Spain and Romania, but the Czech Republic not.

Nevertheless, there are also some joint goals for the next budgetary framework, such as the allocation of funds in education and science. This would strengthen our chances to catch up with the old member states.

We have to face the fact that the budgetary framework will be on the agenda of the Polish Presidency and it is likely to be one of the most conflicting issues. I believe that the Czech Republic and Poland should communicate extensively on the next budgetary perspective of the EU. This is not just a task for the Ministries of Foreign Affairs but even more for other ministries, as the issue falls under the Ministries of Agriculture, Ministries of Regional Development and Ministries of Finance. I am convinced that this is a perfect example of how we should use the unique opportunity afforded by the Visegrad Group. The Hungarians will have their Presidency before Poland, so there should be already now joint meetings of the V4 countries concerning the budgetary perspective.

In conclusion, we should also try to prevent the creation of a generalized image at the end of the Polish Presidency by saying that Poland was trying to support the Czech troubled Presidency and that the Czech Republic was trying to ruin the Polish one. That is likely to become a general view and therefore we should try to eliminate it as much as we can through good communication ties. Thank you for your attention.

Jaroslav Zajíček, Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Thank you, Vít. It was a very enthusiastic intervention. Of course, the topic of the budget will be with us again and will be getting bigger and bigger. The debate is already heated now even before the Commission has produced its white book on the subject. I can imagine that this could be quite a difficult topic for discussion. You have depicted some discrepancies that Poland and the Czech Republic might have regarding this. The notion of where the budget money will end is important and we have to be able to get this money in the end. On the relative wealth of the countries, with every enlargement we, Poland and the Czech Republic, get richer and richer – statistically. A couple of years ago, we were worried about what the Spaniards were doing. We did not understand why they should be entitled for EU funds. Now, we are changing our views on this and are starting to look at this from a different perspective. The Spaniards have been extremely efficient in negotiating their conditions and however circumstances are slightly different now, we should jointly follow this tactic.

Volker Weichsel, Osteuropa Journal, Berlin

Thank you very much for the invitation. I really appreciate it, especially because I am the only panelist that is from neither Poland nor the Czech Republic. As the editor of an academic journal, I do not have the insight into negotiations in Brussels as my colleagues from the panel have. That is why I do not want to add any new ideas or propositions. I would rather take a structural look at the problems of cooperation between the Czech Republic and Poland.

When we want to find out what possible areas of Czech-Polish cooperation within EU policy could be, we have to scrutinize the main features of the policy making in Central Europe. The features I refer to are those that are related to historical and geopolitical linkage, and play a major role in formulating foreign policy. What are they? The German problem, and this is a common perception, is the most significant issue of foreign policy and the most important challenge. However, whereas this led to common action in the last 20 years, I do not feel it now. In the 1990s, German-Polish relations were very smooth and relations between Germany and the Czech Republic rather difficult. However, this has changed completely in the last few years as there have been completely different policies. Whereas Poland has been trying to influence German politics, the Czech Republic has rather been staying aside.

Apart from Germany, there is also the historical sentiment about Russia. Nevertheless, Russia is not nearly as important for the Czech Republic as it is for Poland. That is why there has always been the Polish idea of the revitalization of Rzeczpospolita, a close cooperation with the old states whose contemporary terri-

tory belonged to the dynasty of the Jagiellonians. The Czech Republic does not play any role in that. Czech policy is directed more towards Central Europe, towards the former Habsburg Empire and towards the Balkans.

Thirdly, the structural differences in historical perceptions and geopolitical self-perceptions are as follows: Poland sees itself as a regional power, a big member state of the European Union, while the Czech Republic considers itself a small one. This results in the status of a regional power and is the main topic of the discussions about EU politics in Poland. For euroskeptics, there is the fear that Poland might not have enough influence on decisions within the European Union. In the Czech Republic, the central point of the discussions of euroskeptics is that the EU has too much influence on the domestic policy of the country. This difference leads to different policies.

To be provocative, I would say that Poland follows an assertive policy towards the EU and that in the Czech Republic there are some parties and people that have an isolationist attitude. It goes without saying that there are also some groups that want to bridge the Czech Republic with the EU.

Let's have a look on some possible areas of cooperation that have been already mentioned. Let's start with the EU budget. Everything which Vít mentioned had already happened during the negotiations for 2007–2013 budgetary framework. There had been a draft of the European Commission that wanted to spend more money. It was Poland that defended the first draft but the net donors of the EU budget amended it, and it was the Czech Republic that agreed to this amendment very early. I think the same will happen with the next budget proposal. These structural differences do exist. Whereas Poland is interested in getting funds, the Czech Republic is rather self-sufficient.

The next topic could be the Eastern Partnership – I always mention the specific Polish interest in its former territory and this is why Poland has become an important player in the relationship between the Ukraine and the EU. I know that the Czech Republic made the Eastern Partnership one of its priorities. Nevertheless my impression is that there is rather lukewarm interest towards Kiev. A good recent example of this has been the visa policy – the situation when the EU required introduction of visas for Ukrainian citizens during the accession to the EU and later to the Schengen area. As I remember, the Czech Republic was the first of the new member states to introduce the visa and Poland the last. Ukrainian citizens in the Czech Republic are seen as competition within the labor market whereas in Poland, they are seen as partners in cross-border cooperation. There are many other examples of this tepid approach of the Czech Republic towards Ukraine.

Let's take policy towards Belarus. Prague is rather focused on human rights and that is all. Warsaw sees regime change in Minsk as a complex issue and therefore

takes into account that part of the current ruling elites will be future partners of a more democratic regime. Therefore, Poland does not focus on human rights issues exclusively. An issue itself is surely the Polish minority in Belarus. These are the reasons for completely different strategies. Moreover, there is the idea of Russia as a partner and concurrently a threat – it is hard to imagine that the Polish Prime Minister or President could feel so at ease as Mr. Klaus. Then, there is an energy security community that shares a common fear stemming from too much dependency.

At the same time, there is also discussion of the nuclear plant in Temelín that are unlikely to start in Poland. I could continue with this list but I think it's worth explaining why this skeptical view is not a provocative plan. In Western Europe, Central European states are still perceived as a presence of American interest in Europe and at the same time a fortress of notorious EU skepticism combined with an anti-Russian sentiment. I think that when we assume that there are so many differences between Germany and France, others have to realize that there is no empirical evidence for anything of those between the Czech Republic and Poland. This could be a very important message to the Western public. One of the reasons why sometimes Czech-Polish cooperation did not function so smoothly as it could have was that the public was exactly at the point where they did not want to appear as the Eastern bloc but as normal member states.

Jaroslav Zajíček, Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Thank you, Volker. What can I add? You have fulfilled the ambition of this discussion to be stimulating and you even added something of your own to the debate. I have very few comments. As we are not in the field of bilateral discussion but of EU framework discussions, I can afford to have three remarks. Germany has been the closest partner of the Czech Presidency. I think this is without any doubt and I am sure that everybody who was involved in the turmoil around the Presidency cannot but confirm it. Politics towards Russia and Ukraine – as we experienced in the gas crisis during the Presidency – it was consequential to try to manage an impartial view on this and this is actually the only way how we managed to speak with one voice on behalf of the EU. This is one of the challenges you will have to face – you cannot have national sentiment being portrayed towards your Presidency, because this is what everybody is waiting for in order to trigger controversy.

CZECH-POLISH RELATIONS AND SECURITY AGENDA

Martin Svárovský, chair, Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Distinguishing not only from the perspective of the current position but also taking into account long experience with the security agenda, I am really looking forward to hearing the contributions to this panel, as I am sure they will be beneficial to all of us. Nevertheless, at the beginning I would like to utilize my position of the chairman of this panel and I will try to suggest some questions for discussion among panelists.

Certainly, I will not put the question of whether there is room for Czech-Polish cooperation within this agenda, as I am convinced that there is. Neither will I raise the question of whether there should be some cooperation, as the experience of the last couple of years has shown us clearly that it was always favorable to have a driving force for such cooperation in the security agenda. Firstly, in the 1990s, the accession to the NATO was that stimulus for cooperation. Then the so called 2+2 negotiations were established – these were meetings of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defense. Shortly after accession to the NATO, there was a will to have a common stance of the Visegrad states on the European Security and Defense Identity, and in the last couple of years, it has been certainly our common interest in achieving an American involvement in Central Europe.

In this regard, my question would be whether we can speak about the NATO strategic concept, as we have a new American administration that has recently reshaped the architecture of the European component of the missile system. Moreover, next spring there will be a review of the American nuclear position, which will also be reflected in new strategic relationships. Hitherto, all these facts have been, in my opinion, an incentive for the convergence of Czech and Polish interests. Whether this development could represent an impulse for divergence is not clear at the moment.

My second question refers to the security agenda and mainly to the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), as it has been announced to redress the ESDP. It was the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Sikorski, who announced that Poland would prepare a common paper on the ESDP along with their French counterparts.

Speaking about the incitements in terms of security issues, it is beneficial when this is underlined by concrete projects, mainly in the defense industry. I remember that there have been a number of these projects, be it common modernization of helicopters or projects to establish common training centers for pilots in Dęblin. I am not sure whether some of these projects have been implemented or not. Therefore my question is whether you see some concrete future projects in the defense industry. These are my three questions and I am looking forward to hearing your contributions. I would like to hand the floor to Mr. Janusz Onyszkiewicz.

Janusz Onyszkiewicz, former Minister of Defense, former Vice-President of the European Parliament

Thank you. I think that you, Mr. Chairman, quite rightly mentioned the beginning of our cooperation which was really forced by what were, at that time, urgent security issues such as dismantling the Warsaw Pact. The question that captures the main idea of the conference is whether we are partners or rivals. This is obvious in the security area. As far as you do not deal with an outright enemy, both sides can only benefit from cooperation in security issues. The security area is not like the economy, where you have to face discrepancies from time to time. But in saying so, I do not want to hide the fact that the situation of the Czech Republic and Poland is dissimilar.

Firstly, the Czech Republic is insulated within the EU and NATO. Poland is not. Poland is a border state and from this point, Poland forms a geo-strategic axis. That is why our security perception is absolutely different from yours. Russia is still somewhere in the 19th century and as Kissinger said in his famous work, it is still thinking about security in terms of the balance of powers. Therefore, potential threats are illustrated by several factors. Russia still keeps tremendous assets in the Kaliningrad region. To give you one figure, there are almost 900 tanks in Kaliningrad, which is more than the British army has altogether. Apart from that, there is also armor and artillery. At the beginning, the Russians claimed that this was just a parking lot for the troops and equipment that had been taken out of East Germany. However this could have been good as an explanation for two or three years, but not for 20. Moreover, military exercises of 30, 000 soldiers have been carried out close to the Polish border. The issue is reinforced even more by the presence of a significant Polish minority in Belarus.

Our NATO partners asked us why Poland needed planes. NATO has numerous planes, so why did Poland itself need some? Our answer was that the Polish air space could not be absolutely empty. Once there is a raid on our air space, we cannot wait for Germany or Denmark to come and sort it out because it could be too late.

In spite of this, within NATO, there is a range of vital issues under debate. One of them is the question of what NATO is going to be. Is it going to be a military-political alliance which is a collective defense structure, or is it going to be more of a political alliance which would gradually drift towards a collective security alliance? The difference is that a collective security alliance is basically an arrangement in which the involved countries accept a declaration that in case of one country being attacked by another one, others will come to help in the way they consider appropriate. This exists – it is the United Nations. If you read the UN Charter, you will see that the Security Council, the executive branch, has this option but in fact,

it has not yet been implemented. Nevertheless, the theory is there. Thus, the UN is a collective security alliance. It is an arrangement through which a country guarantees the security of another country but at the same time, this country can be attacked by a member of this particular community.

Collective defense is completely different. It is a system in which you assume that an attack coming from within the group is virtually impossible. The aggression comes from outside and that is why collective defense systems may form common military structures. If you have the common General Staff and there is an attack inside the system, the entire system becomes totally useless. This is important to mention because it also raises the issue of which countries can be seen as potential members. We all know that the Soviet Union made attempts to join NATO as well. Khrushchev made quite a serious commitment in order to join NATO, and to alter its character from a common defense system to a common security system. Therefore, the choice of the countries which could qualify for NATO membership remains a big question mark.

The second issue that is under discussion is the nature of Article 5. The Washington Treaty refers only to an armed attack but there has been a certain enlargement of this commitment. After all, the attacks on the World Trade Center (WTC) were not attacks with the use of military assets but with the use of civilian assets. It was not an armed attack in classical terms. It seems that we should think of Article 5 not in terms of the instruments used but we should treat this article as a commitment in case of an attack with major implications, irrespective of the tool of the attack. If we have this sort of thing, then the question is how effective this article is going to be. Article 5 was actually about a massive attack, yet, the point is not the scale of the attack but its gravity as well. Having a look at military conflicts in last 20–30 years, we will see that very few attacks had the nature of a military one. Therefore, we should incorporate in Article 5 other than just pure military attacks, but the question then is what the response to such an assault would be.

Of course, there are also several other issues that are indispensable – the most important one for me is the question of to what extent NATO is relevant to the security of Europe and the USA. This is not a completely theoretical question because when you read the US National Security Strategy, you may think that the NATO is completely irrelevant to the United States. On the other hand, when you read the European Security Strategy, the picture is absolutely the same. NATO is something to which both refer to as to a transatlantic dialogue. It is not mentioned as something of significance to European security. The main question which, I think, basically captures the first two examples is to what extent the foundations of the NATO – the philosophy and practice of being a principle of the security of the United

States and the EU – are still relevant. We are trying to show that it is still in practice. We did so in responding to the horrendous attacks on the WTC. All in all, we always try to keep the Americans involved in European security.

This treatise brings me to other two issues on the relationships of the USA and the EU to security. NATO and the EU both have certain ambitions to also have military capabilities. Some time ago, there were three principles on which the cooperation between these two organizations should have been based – the famous “three D’s”. These are no decoupling of security of the USA, no discrimination – no country which is not in the EU or the USA should suffer from this relation (mainly Turkey), and no duplication – not to create at tremendous cost and effort the EU assets as this would duplicate the NATO structures. As to the last D, I think Obama and Sarkozy have a chance to avoid unnecessary duplication. Because of the idea which was raised years ago, the EU can actually rely on some of the NATO structures which could be used under the European head – the so called double head formula. Of course, this could never work without the French President in the NATO military structures. One simply cannot imagine major military operations without French participation.

Moreover, there is still the problem of the presence of the United States in Europe. We experienced it in 1999 when we were entering NATO. At that time, there was no need to make any change in the deployment of military units. There was a certain feeling that we would feel much safer and much more secure having some NATO forces on our territory. Now the whole situation repeats itself.

Let’s be frank – a missile defense system in Poland should not be seen as something which would be instrumental in addressing a missile attack from Russia. It was not seen that way. The new decision of Obama to change the nature of this program is not something I consider of major importance. However, it has one important element – the program could possibly be incorporated in NATO. Let me say that we should have a common approach to these issues and there should be some mechanisms of how to realize this.

The Lisbon Treaty offers a possibility of structured cooperation which might take the shape of cooperation in the security area. That could be something different from what we have had so far. Thank you.

Martin Svárovský, Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Thank you, Mr. Onyszkiewicz, for your contribution. It fulfilled my expectations and was really absorbing. At the beginning, you spoke about the differing situation between the Czech Republic and Poland. Despite this, I think that it should be a challenge for further cooperation and does not necessarily have to be an incentive for competition. It might be also the way to a complementary approach.

You mentioned the enemy and in this regard, your risk assessment is not based only on threat substance but also on assessment of one's own strength. Even when you compare the Czech Republic and Poland, I think that at least one third of the issues might have a common denominator. Furthermore, we spoke about NATO and Article No. 5. Therefore I would just repeat that both the Czech Republic and Poland voted for higher visibility of this piece. Thank you very much again.

Now, I would like to give the floor to Mr. Eugeniusz Smolar.

Eugeniusz Smolar, Centre for International Relations, Warsaw

Truly, there is not much to say about the Polish-Czech military cooperation. There is a discussion on the development of military armaments, or medical services, but this is routine between NATO members. It is something that probably happens also between Poland and Belgium or ourselves and Germany. Our cooperation with Germany and Denmark is also strong. We used to have this "Battle Group" in Szczecin, and there was such a group with the Czechs and Slovaks but it disappeared. Nowadays, there is talk of establishing a new Visegrad Battle Group which would also include Ukraine, as it obviously has certain capabilities that Visegrad does not have, such as carrier planes. However, there is also a hidden agenda of getting Ukraine closer to the EU and NATO.

After all, there has been no attempt to reach any kind of synergy between our armies or military industry. Basically, we do not have any common projects. The recent helicopter project ended because the Russians claimed they held the licenses and we cannot do anything with Russian agreements. We chose F16 and you chose Swedish planes that cannot take petrol in the air. This is an example where we talk about cooperation but practical decisions are being made without any synergy.

Going back to the major issues – even though there are some problems which we share, we also share a feeling of satisfaction. We all want NATO to become credible but many have mixed feelings. Janusz mentioned the European security documents but did not mention those of NATO. It is slightly worrying because it looks like the USA is imposing the whole security debate on us. This impression might even be reinforced by the fact that Europe does not conduct any satisfactory security debate. There is a feeling that (mainly) the Iraq war, which we joined, was imposed on us – that European armies were forced by the USA to participate in a far away country we know little about.

I would like to quote one of my German friends. She said at a conference in Warsaw: "You know, when I was listening to the debate, I had the feeling that you are still in the trenches of the WWII and we in Germany felt ourselves in a kind of a post-modern society where conflict does not exist and blood is not blood but just ink." I liked this comment because there is something to it.

We tend to say with great relief that WWII ended for us in 1999. The Iraq war was a disaster for the cohesion of European security policy, and the plans for American missile systems in Poland and the Czech Republic were set aside as they did not have support of the European allies. Nonetheless, we have a new cooperative American administration and the first part of its message was delivered during Obama's visits in Europe and was accepted by great satisfaction. The Obama administration has been helping us to solve some of our major foreign policy and security threats, such as Afghanistan or Iraq. However, there is a real threat that Europeans will fight among themselves and sooner or later, there will be total disinterest in Washington. The American president has so much to do that he has about 2 minutes to deal with each particular issue. When President Obama left Prague, after having met European leaders, he said to his security advisor that it had been a waste of time. The United States is unique in terms of the world's security agenda, and this is accepted also by those who oppose this, such as China. Many Europeans look at the particular role of the USA with apprehension but also a feeling of peril.

Talking about a strong NATO, this particular role of the United States has been built into the structures of NATO from the very beginning. NATO does not exist without the US. It would have no capabilities. After Germany had reunited, we felt strong in thinking (as we still think) that we could act on our own. I do not think we can. This is why Poland insists on that strong US presence in Europe. The Russians were very unhappy about the Munich Security Conference and about the NATO Strasbourg-Kehl Summit, because all the leaders of NATO stated that NATO and the EU were the backbone of European security. Angela Merkel gave a very telling speech at the Munich Security Conference that the NATO would continue to be the central point of the transatlantic alliance. She said that the ESDP in its new form of cooperation with NATO would have to make a contribution. I thought of Angela Merkel, because Germany is important; not only Germany, but also France and Britain. They altogether cover 80% of military research expenses in Europe. Without Germany, we cannot think of any sensible European security or defense policy in Europe.

Everybody uses the concept of comprehensive approach. What does it mean? It means military and civilian apparatus, it means NGOs and some willing people who will all look together to achieve certain objectives. I would like to see Amnesty International work with American generals in Afghanistan. Generals are not going to wait for civilians to make up their mind under political scrutiny. NGOs would never accept the logic of generals whose business is to eliminate the enemy, which means to kill them. The ESDP sounds wonderful and is a great idea, both ideologically and politically. I remember when I talked to Robert Cooper – one of the signif-

icant contemporary intellectuals – and he said that we could not find civilian personnel in places where there was trouble. Therefore we have to rely on the military again. The Lisbon Treaty, thank God that is over, will not be able to fix these differences and priorities in any magical manner. Our leaders do not have the intention to go to their voters and say – we need your blood in Pakistan. We do not have such leaders in Europe. I think that President Sarkozy was right when he asked: “Does Europe want peace or does Europe want to be left in peace?” This is the question Americans are asking.

Then, the Russians help us by their mistakes. They blackmail and cut off gas. It was the Russians that made us realize that there is a real problem with Russia. Janusz mentioned the Russian concept of favored zones of influence, and this is something that cannot be accepted. We know the concept of Finlandization. Finlandization does not occur because somebody signs something. It just happens as a result of the interplay of forces. Thus we worry about Russian intentions and their capabilities. We realized that as history has not ended for Russia yet, it cannot end for us either. This is the reason why we want that strong US presence in Europe and also on Polish territory.

When I participated in a missile system debate in Moscow three years ago, I was asked by one Russian colonel – you threw us away as occupiers and now, you want to invite American occupiers. I answered – yes, we want five American soldiers and they could be pregnant. Symbolism is important. It is not about the number of troops, but about the presence of troops. There is a difference in threat perception, different between Hungary and Poland, not mentioning the difference between Belgium and Poland. Poland has four units accounting for 100 rockets. Why? Because it is like the F16. Once you lose the capability of training and know-how, you lose it for a very long time. You need to have basic technological know-how before our American and German cavalry come of age. This is the vision of Article 5 but it is not only about Article 5 but also about support of contingency planning of the article, and contingency planning in our part of the world exists only for Poland. Not for Slovakia, the Baltic states, Romania or Bulgaria.

We want contingency planning and after contingency planning, one must have exercises to make it credible. We need to work together not because we represent specific topics but because we are the regional backbone of the issues of security. We cannot have credible security in areas such as energy where we do not have structures in the main area. I believe that at least in terms of the Visegrad Group, there must be that cooperation. We have a history behind us that is similar and we face similar challenges in our security. Some people who want to keep the status quo can go to Hungary or Slovakia and say – why do you do things with those terrible Poles or Czechs? We could create a system of Visegrad experience sharing. That

would be more important because people would know each other from real trouble and not from desktop cooperation.

Martin Svárovský, Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Thank you very much Mr. Smolar for answering questions concerning the ESDP and the security agenda, even though some of the answers were skeptical. I must say that I really endorse your statement about Europe fighting for a country one does not know. It is very much connected to our experience and therefore we know that we should not follow the same pattern. As to Article No. 5, there can be threats from outside NATO that can reinforce its importance. Speaking about living in the post-modern world, it is unfortunately not just the case of Germany but also of other European countries. As I mentioned here, this can be reflected in some discussions on nuclear posture because when you live in the post-modern world, you may think that nuclear postures are something that is purely theoretical in that sense. I also very much liked the idea that the EU wants to have strong EU-US relations. This is connected to the acknowledgement that the United States has a unique position in the world security system which must be admitted also on the European side.

Now, I would like to give the floor to Mr. Dančák from the Department of International Relations and European Studies at Masaryk University in Brno. I know Mr. Dančák is experienced in security and transatlantic agenda as well.

Břetislav Dančák, Department of International Relations and European Studies at Masaryk University, Brno

Honestly, I am not sure what else I should add, because my predecessors have already mentioned many crucial things. I would concentrate on missile defense and I might say a few words on the ESDP from a theoretical point of view but based on empirical evidence.

I dare to say that Czech-Polish relations were rather good during the 1990s and this was proved also by the “2+2 negotiations”. After the 1999 NATO enlargement, the organization gained a special Central European experience. NATO was enlarged by countries that were militarily weak. Neither Hungary, Poland nor the Czech Republic was prepared for NATO entry from the military side. However, I hope that all of them supported the idea that NATO was not a political tool but a military treaty with a political agenda. For this type of cooperation, it was very important to have at least some strong supporters.

At the time of transition, Bill Clinton needed support in Central Europe. Later, we saw differences on the question of Kosovo. I remember when Mrs. Albright spoke about the potential NATO candidates from the Baltic States. She said –

“Sorry, we are not thinking about the next enlargement now.” This was the experience of the Balkan conflict.

The new wind of opportunities was opened by the American intention to build a missile defense system in Central Europe. For Poland, it was a long-term wish to have Americans on their territory. It is part of the Polish security and foreign agenda and this was declared by an official document. In 2004 Minister Cimoszewicz very openly expressed what Polish-American relations meant to Poland: “Our good bilateral relations with the USA help us balance relations with the big EU member states.” This was not the case of the Czech Republic. It might have been a wish of Atlanticists but I do not remember any official document which would explicitly state that.

Another experience is with the debate on security issues. To compare the situation of both, I would say that the Polish debate began in 1994 and since then many articles about security have been published. We did not have this kind of debate on security. It started in 2006–2007 when the Czech Republic was asked by the US to establish a missile defense system on its soil. Since then, there has been a debate but with vague results.

We should remember that at the beginning, it was called the “National Defense System” meaning an American Defense System. I mention this because our experts still use the term “National Missile Defense” or “American Missile Defense”. This has changed through the years because of many obstacles and various points of view of the Central European countries. It was necessary to change the language so that our participation modified the point of view what the defense system should be and how it should help NATO. I believe that the bilateral approach which the American administration followed at the beginning has been altered and the project is multilateral now. When many partners participate, there are more chances to succeed. The decision of Barrack Obama to withdraw from Central Europe is, in my opinion, not perfect but in spite of this we should go on cooperating.

Central Europe is more or less the victim of its success story. The Americans were interested in the Central European transformation. Now we see that we are disappearing from the screen in the White House. I believe that the missile system could keep Central Europe in their eye. Without a reason to have an American presence, we cannot think of transatlantic relations of the quality which we have experienced during the last 20 years. The Americans look at Europe through the NATO lens. NATO is the structure that helps them cooperate.

To add, I have a few comments on the ESDP and on the reasons of Czech and Polish reluctance to change NATO in favor of the ESDP. We should remember that there are three main players – Great Britain, France and Germany. Therefore, having a look at the ESDP, you can see three different components. In the UK,

the ESDP is seen as a tool for cooperation with the United States – it is seen as the European side of NATO. For France, the ESDP is a tool to counterbalance the American presence in Europe. For Germany, it is a post-modern collective defense system. Moreover, these three countries have completely different experience with foreign missions – France and Great Britain are experienced in sending their troops to remote parts of the globe and Germany is reluctant to send them anywhere.

In conclusion, I am not convinced whether we can believe that the ESDP will replace the importance of NATO. I would support the idea of having NATO as a military structure, with new ideas like a missile defense system and with the participation of European projects as much as possible and as much as needed.

Martin Svárovský, Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Thank you very much. You have spoken about the debate on the missile defense and mentioned that in this debate there are several paradoxes – those who we cannot suspect will be against democratic administration. Paradoxically, there is a good image of NATO also among those who are not normally on its side. You may remember that the Green Party or the Social Democrats said – if it is part of a NATO project, then we would support it. This paradoxically created a positive image of the organization.

I am not sure whether it is easy to say that the bilateral architecture was changed into a multilateral one. Even in the first proposal, the message from the Strasbourg-Kehl Summit was crucial. This architecture could become a theatre of missile defense protection in the future. This could enlarge the overall protection, so let's hope this will be possible with a new one.

In addition, I really enjoyed the remark of the Czech Republic being a paradise. I heard another ironic expression as well – the Czech Republic is a country that has no enemies but no friends either.

Last but not least, I would like to give the floor to Mr. David Král from the Institute for European Policy EUROPEUM in Prague. I know he has been involved in a couple of projects concerning transatlantic relations.

David Král, Institute for European Policy EUROPEUM, Prague

Thank you very much, Mr. chairman. It is really very challenging to be the last of a panel. Indeed, I would try to contribute in terms of the research that our institute undertook and which looked at the role of the new member states and their ways of viewing foreign policy and security after having entered the EU and NATO. My research was focused mainly on the Czech Republic and Poland. The research is available on our website and you are welcome to share it. It was published one

and half years ago, so some things might be rather obsolete. Not only because of the changing dynamics in the European Union, but also in the new American administration.

Basically, in my presentation I would like to focus on some points that will hopefully complement what has been mentioned so far. I would like start with a comparative analysis of the two countries. Until 1999 and 2004, and the respective NATO and EU enlargements, there was “an agreement alliance” between the Czech Republic and Poland. These twin goals have been largely achieved. I would argue that in Poland, we still see a large alignment across the political spectrum regarding the security agenda. This is not necessarily the case of the Czech Republic. What we see in the Czech Republic is that the composition of the government really plays a substantial role in how the security and foreign policies are shaped. Perhaps we should not focus on security in terms of hard power, as security goals can be achieved also by soft power. There is huge space for cooperation and I think that is something that both the Polish and the Czech government could agree on very easily.

Firstly, I would like to underline that the perception of security is different in our countries. It is likely that there is more consensus on the overall direction of security policy in Poland than in the Czech Republic. Nevertheless, Poland has always formed a kind of a buffer zone between Russia and Germany – that has much to do with the old non-participation syndrome when Poland was divided among its neighbors in the 18th century. Of course, something similar applies also to modern history, such as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact which was recently alluded to again by Mr. Sikorski. You probably recall the context when the deal was signed between Germany and Russia on the Nord Stream Pipeline and Mr. Sikorski said that Poland saw it as a new Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. I would say this is not exactly the perception we have in the Czech Republic. There are no concerns about Russia, but it is at least seen as a hard security threat – more to do with economy, infrastructure and perhaps about intelligence penetration. I mean it is probably not the issue which would be comparable to the one of Poland. To illustrate the current situation, I would allow myself a joke: Mr. Putin and Mr. Topolanek meet together in Moscow to discuss the radar and Mr. Putin says to Mr. Topolanek: “If you have that American radar on your soil, we will bomb it.” Mr. Topolanek replies: “If you bomb our radar, you will bomb Karlovy Vary.” This is just a small joke to illustrate how we might perceive Russia sometimes.

Coming back to the role that participant composition plays in shaping foreign and security policy, I think that what we see in Poland is what Marcin Zaborowski from the EU Institute for Security Studies labeled as “instinctive atlanticism”. In Poland, to some degree not depending on which political party is mainly at the

helm, there is still a feeling that Polish security interests should be aligned with those of the United States. The United States is seen as the most reliable guarantor of Polish security and this is caused by the role the U.S. has played in the Polish history – starting at the end of the 18th century and ending with the help of the United States in defeating Communism. Likewise we should not underestimate the large Polish diaspora in the United States – a diaspora with voting rights. Thus what each Polish government has to take into account is what type of policy it shall adopt considering the impact on the Poles in the United States. This is not something we have in the Czech Republic.

Next – Iraq: When you have a look at the decision of both countries to get involved at least in the first stage of Operation Iraqi Freedom, you will see that in the Czech Republic some institutions did a lot of research in detail into the Czech position. The result was that it was not very clear and legible what position the Czech government had. To a large extent it was what we call “sitting with one bottom on two chairs”. We basically stayed with the United States but at the same time tried not to influence relations with European partners that were opposed. In the case of Poland, there was a higher degree of consensus. Of course, it changed, mainly over the question of until when the Polish troops should stay. However, at least at the first stage it was a much more consensual issue.

Regarding the missile system, this is an extremely divisive issue in the Czech case – just by having a look at the two absolutely opposite views of the two main political parties. In the Polish case, the position was something like “we want the system but what we also want is something out of it.” At this point you can see the difference between the PiS government that was determined to get the system at any cost and I think it was also one of the reasons why Mr. Sikorski left the government after having done hard negotiations. Then the new government adopted the stance that if Poland was to agree with the installation of the missile system, then there must be clear tangible benefits for Polish security. This was not the case in the Czech Republic, where there was a huge difference on the internal political scene. At a certain stage we had also that crazy debate about trading off the Lisbon Treaty with the Missile Defense Treaty. I think this was one of many Czech specialties that we have witnessed throughout the years. It has never happened but even the fact that it was raised shows the controversy of the whole project.

As to the ESDP, there have been some shifts in Poland in the perception of the ESDP but they are not as dramatic as they seemed. I remember that Mr. Kaczyński spoke in favor of the European Army. However, I think that Poland is now a much more constructive player in shaping the ESDP and therefore Poland intends to put upgrading the ESDP into the priorities of the Polish Presidency 2011. When we look at the attitude of the Czech Republic, I think it is still rather hesitant. On the

side of the ODS, the ESDP is viewed as a weird Franco-German initiative which tends to be a counterbalance to NATO, which is not something we really want. As for the Social Democrats, I do not know if they even have an idea about what should be the Czech contribution to the ESDP. I just tried to illustrate that there are many points in which the partisan composition in the Czech Republic really plays a role. I would really follow what Eugeniusz said that if we have a change in the Czech government in the future, especially to the left, it might really result in some substantial shift in foreign and security policy in general.

For the future, there might be a good window of opportunity in case we have a more atlanticist leadership in France. Notwithstanding, we agree that France is a substantial country in shaping the ESDP. Moreover, with a new German government there should be a fresh opportunity as it should be a less controversial issue than in a grand coalition. As to the UK – if the Tories came to power, which is the expectation after the general election, what would be the consequences for the ESDP? If one has a look at some of statements of the shadow Minister of Defense, one can easily see that this could mean a blockage of the ESDP in the days to come. Moreover, I think we all agree on the fact that the European defense is not very credible. Perhaps, even for ESDP-NATO cooperation, the biggest problem will not be Cyprus or Turkey, but might be the UK.

Regarding the Lisbon Treaty, some of the innovations have been already mentioned here. Structural cooperation might be a step towards the development of the ESDP. In the Czech case, we do not know if we want to be in or not. On the contrary, Poland with its current government is ready to participate in this.

To conclude, I would say a couple of words on soft security. The things I want to put on the table are as follows: energy security, the Eastern Partnership and the future of NATO. We made some steps at the beginning of the Czech Presidency but they were not as successful as we had hoped they would be. Ratifying the Lisbon Treaty, new options are being opened so we can both push things forth. The Eastern Partnership is a multiple process which has to handle many soft diplomacy concerns so that we are able to cooperate efficiently. As to the future of NATO, possible enlargement of the NATO to include Ukraine and Georgia seems to be just on the agenda. I think we should go beyond that and think what Ukraine would mean for the NATO. Accepting Ukraine is different from accepting Baltic countries or the Western Balkans. This might be in the interest of Poland and the Czech Republic as well but only provided we state what kind of impact this would have on the transformational potential of NATO. This is a question where I would love to hear some of your comments. Thank you very much.

Martin Svárovský, Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Thank you very much, especially for mentioning soft security. It is a substantial area so thank you for the explanation. You mentioned also that in the Czech Republic, the radar had been a very divisive issue in contrast to Poland. I might agree but I would say that it was a very divisive issue among those who really cared – on both sides. I think that being a civil servant is not a very comfortable position for commenting on that. Nevertheless the PR was firstly undermined by both the Czechs and the Americans. In this regard I was afraid that the Americans repeated their mistake when they announced a retreat from the project on September 17, 2009. You mentioned also a substantial shift that we might observe if the Social Democrats came to power. Although there is always a shift when an opposition party comes to power, it is a question of how big the shift would be. Now, it is too early to assess.

CZECH-POLISH RELATIONS AND THE EASTERN POLICY

Michal Thim, Association for International Affairs, Prague

I dare to say that today is the day of two countries which are putting forth the same view on what should be done in regard to the East. Priorities are quite comparable. They are both similarly enthusiastic about the possible European future of countries like Ukraine, Moldova or Georgia. Nevertheless, it is obvious that these two countries have different backgrounds. Poland is the country with a genuine Eastern policy, which has been built up throughout centuries. Moreover it borders both Ukraine and Belarus. The Czech Republic started to learn about having an Eastern Europe policy as soon as it became an EU member. Looking back to the modern history of both countries, we see that Czechoslovakia always looked more westwards although we had some special relations with the countries in the Balkans. On the other hand, Poland has taken the East very seriously for at least the last 500 years. This is provided by the fact that Poland is simply a country squeezed between Germany and Russia. The first panelist of the last part of the roundtable is Rafał Sadowski from the prominent think-tank based in Warsaw, the Centre for Eastern Studies. How do you see the situation now, Rafał?

Rafał Sadowski, Centre for Eastern Studies, Warsaw

Thank you very much for the floor. I would like to focus on two main things in my presentation – the factors which make the Polish and Czech Eastern policy slightly different and the areas where, I dare to say, we can deepen our cooperation regarding the Eastern dimension of the Neighborhood Policy.

As Michal said, the general aims of our foreign policy towards Eastern Europe are rather similar and there are no significant contradictory points. We share many common objectives: deeper integration of the Eastern European countries within Euro-Atlantic structures and support for democratization and transformation in those countries. Although the purpose of our policies is more or less similar, the implementation is different. In fact, cooperation is limited in practical reality. I think that this happens probably due to different perceptions of Eastern Europe. Poland, bordering Ukraine, Russia and Belarus, perceives those countries as areas of vital interest. We have strong cultural links in the region such as a Polish minority living there. Those factors have made Eastern European policy a key element of Polish foreign policy since 1989. Moreover, we are constantly trying to develop and strengthen these relations. Poland is also active on multilateral forums in regard to Eastern Europe, mainly at the EU level. When we started our accession negotiations in the late 1990s, we emphasized the momentousness of developing and enhancing the contacts with Eastern Europe.

The Czech interest in the area came later, probably after the elections of 2006, when Mirek Topolánek became Prime Minister. Until that time, Czech foreign policy had focused rather on compliance with the EU structures.

This different attitude somehow reflects the approach of our political elites towards Eastern Europe. In the Polish case, we can speak about a general consensus on the main aim of Polish foreign policy. All of the Polish political parties recognize Eastern Europe as a sphere of high importance. I think that Czech politics is rather divided on the issue and various political parties see the importance of Eastern Europe differently. It will be interesting to observe what would happen after the next election if the Social Democrats won.

Moreover, the Czech perception of this region is dominated by Russia. Russia is the main partner and therefore Eastern Europe is associated with it. In the case of Poland, there is a clear distinction between Eastern Europe and Russia. Actually, building close relations with Ukraine, Poland is trying to balance the position of Russia.

Notwithstanding these differences, we can do a lot to improve our relations. The biggest problem now is communication. We need profound communication between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, but not only between them. We need to rectify communication and exchange between people that are responsible for Eastern Europe in form of various internships and workshops. This exchange of views should not involve Ministries of Foreign Affairs only, but also NGOs and think-thanks. These should provide substantial support for Foreign Ministry through their proposals.

The challenge is to make the Eastern Partnership an accomplishment. I think launching the Polish-Swedish initiative along with the engagement of the Czech Presidency is a very specific instrument with concrete funds that are allocated in it. That was only the first step and the Eastern Partnership should eschew the fate of, for example, the Black Sea Synergy. Now, there is need to prepare project drafts which could be implemented within the framework of the Eastern Partnership. Both the Czech Republic and Poland, finance a couple of projects in Eastern Europe from their national budget. Therefore, it would be beneficial to start some “Czech-Polish flagship projects” that would demonstrate our deep interest in the region.

Michal Thim, Association for International Affairs, Prague

Thank you. Regarding the Eastern Partnership, it reminds me of what was said yesterday, that the Czechs initiated it, the Poles elaborated it and asked the Swedes to join them. The Swedes appeared to abandon it and we cannot expect much from Spain either, nor from Belgium. So – are the Poles going to put it high on the agenda in 2011 while holding the EU Council Presidency, Grzegorz?

Grzegorz Gromadzki, Stefan Batory Foundation, Warsaw

Definitely. It will be one of the main topics of our Presidency, although the Presidency will have a bit of an “updated” character due to the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty.

I think there are several interesting questions raised by the organizers. Why did Poland prepare an Eastern Partnership proposal with Sweden when there was already such a project extant among the V4 countries? Does Poland privatize the speaker’s position of the Eastern Partnership at the expense of the others? Are Prague and Warsaw playing on the same team in the energy game?

I would like to start with more general remarks and I would like to be frank and realistic about our cooperation. We are here in the circle of friends. I think we need a map of differences. In my opinion, there seems to be something like a “Carpathian Mountains dividing line” as already mentioned by Janusz Onyszkiewicz or Volker Weichsel. I think the “North Carpathians” are mainly focused on Eastern Europe. “Southern Carpathian” countries, including the Czech Republic, are focused not only on the Eastern partnership but also on the Balkan. This is a key difference between two groups. This division is natural because of the past. The Czech Republic is a positive example in the second group and cooperates better with the East than, for instance, Hungary or Slovakia, which I would also label as southern Carpathians.

The second question is the sustainability of the Czech and Polish approach towards the East. I think Poland is much more predictable towards the East than the Czech Republic. It does not mean that Poland is better and the Czech Republic is worse. Yet, Polish governments have had this kind of policy since 1989. During the last one-two years, there has been an evolution in the Polish stance. I think the current Polish government has a rather pragmatic approach towards Eastern European policy. Nevertheless, relations with Eastern neighbors will surely dominate.

As to the situation in the Czech Republic, I would like to stress the role of Václav Havel and his influence on the formation of the Czech Eastern European policy. Similarly like the Topolánek cabinets, he had a realistic view of Eastern Europe and Russia. However, there is also another opinion, that of President Klaus.

The third problem is with whom we should cooperate and build coalitions in the EU when promoting a strong and healthy European Eastern policy. Poland would like to play the role of a regional leader linking the Visegrad and Baltic countries. The Czech Republic has a different position which gives it a stronger position among other member states. Poland is therefore confused. It thinks it should focus on big member states and achieve at least a kind of neutrality from the side of France, Spain or Italy. Smaller member states are then neglected and I think this might be a spark of opportunity for Czech-Polish cooperation and the division of labor.

There is also another important point of view. The problem of the mixture of new and old member states – I do not like this distinction and we should try to avoid using it but it still exists. The EU Eastern European Policy cannot be purely an issue of the post-communist countries. It should be a challenge for the EU as a whole. Therefore, I think it was right to elaborate the concept of the Eastern Partnership with Sweden and not with the V4 countries. I have to say the same as Rafał did – the Eastern Partnership is an idea not a red tape process. First of all, it is a political concept which we have to be fill in with specific actions. We are desirable partners because there are not many countries active in the Eastern Policy. Moreover, Eastern Europe needs us. Take, for instance, the situation in Moldova after the spring elections – there should be commenced new initiatives enhancing the role of civil society in that country right now.

The second big question is the relation with Russia. Here, I am less optimistic. Despite the fact that there is a common denominator between the Czech Republic and Poland – better knowledge and experience with Russia than in Western Europe does not necessarily lead to a common position. In reality, there are many problems on particular issues. For instance, gas supplies from Russia are a source of misunderstanding between the Czech Republic and Poland. For example the OPAL gas pipeline issue. The OPAL would bring Russian gas to Central Europe while bypassing Poland. Therefore it is supported by the Czech Republic and understandably not by Poland.

Nevertheless, there might be joint projects in the energy policy towards Eastern Europe. The Czech Republic and Poland should start energy efficiency projects in the countries like Ukraine or Belarus. These countries would benefit from such initiatives and, furthermore, we might get some old member states and more developed countries such as Germany and Sweden on the board.

The last point where I see a difference between the Czech and Polish approach is the position towards migration from the East. There is much higher fear of massive migration from the East in the Czech Republic than in Poland. However, I believe that the visa-free policy should be the medium-term goal of the Eastern Partnership exactly for the reason that person-to-person contacts are crucial when bringing Eastern Europe closer to the EU.

Despite all my skepticism, we have strong common interests – the Europeanization of the Eastern Partnership countries and a more realistic approach towards Russia.

Michal Thim, Association for International Affairs, Prague

You have mentioned that to a certain extent Czech policy is less predictable than the Polish one. I think this is caused by the fact that the Czech Republic does not have this policy in the form Poland has. There is a specific policy towards Belarus in the

Czech Republic – yet, the Polish Eastern policy is very complex and elaborated. It may be the reason why the Czech European policy seems to be so unpredictable. Yes, we both have better knowledge of Russia, but this sometimes seems to be a disadvantage within the EU. Luboš, the floor is yours.

Luboš Veselý, Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The best comment regarding Czech-Polish cooperation on the European Policy would be “deep and long silence”. Now, I will speak in my personal capacity and not as a representative of the Foreign Ministry. I think you will understand why I say that.

In general, we all see that we have very similar interests in the East. Gas and oil come from the East and this will remain unaltered in the future. We have a basic interest in independence and democracy in the close-by neighboring countries. Nevertheless, we do not communicate enough. This is not the case only of the Foreign Ministries, but mostly of them.

Firstly, it is the case of energy policy. Grzegorz mentioned the OPAL pipeline which connects to the Nord Stream pipeline and goes alongside the Polish border to the Czech border. It is not the project of the Czech Republic, but a private project. Still, I believe that communication on this pipeline and the Gazela pipeline should have been better. I know that the Polish Foreign Ministry was not properly informed about them from the Czech side. Moreover, we have huge problems with communication about gas supplies and about talks and discussion with Russia and Gazprom. There is also, unfortunately, growing Czech-Polish distrust with regard to the future of the PKN Orlen investments in Unipetrol. Furthermore, as far as I am concerned, despite huge investments of the ČEZ company in Poland, the cooperation on issues connected to nuclear energy projects is non-existent.

Secondly, there was also very weak communication during the Czech Presidency, both in the Eastern Partnership countries and in Brussels. Moreover, I have some information from our embassies in Kiev, Tbilisi and Minsk. It seems that sometimes even Czech and Polish diplomats there do not know each other. So we can observe that despite the fact that our interests are similar, the exchange of information on the ground is almost non-existent. Most discussions about the Eastern Partnership between the Czech Republic and Poland are about who put the first draft on the table. Nobody asks what we are going to do now and how to promote the project after the Czech Presidency. There were no consultations about the future of the Eastern Partnership between our ministries or governments. Some are starting now, and I hope that it is not too late as the upcoming Spanish and Belgian Presidencies will definitely be less interested in the Eastern policy than we are.

Thirdly, given the number of Czech and Polish NGOs working in Ukraine and especially in Belarus, contacts are weak. Recently, I have spoken to a representa-

tive of the biggest Czech NGO – People in Need. They actually have a grant from the Czech-Polish Forum to launch the project in Crimea along with Polish NGOs and they were astonished by the number of Polish NGOs working in Crimea and Ukraine. They knew that there were some of them in the area but their personal contacts were very limited.

That brings me to the Czech-Polish Forum and I hope that the Forum will be able to promote not only cooperation with think-tanks and NGOs but also between governments. Although there were 26 projects selected this year, only one was specifically aimed at the East. I partially agree, that the Poles are, of course, more active in East. However, there was only one project in the Forum aimed at Eastern Policy and this was on the Czech not on the Polish side of the Forum. Therefore our goal should be to promote more communication and more basic understanding between think-tanks and ministries.

My last remarks – first of all, I agree with what Grzegorz Gromadzki said that the personality of Václav Havel has been always indispensable. We cannot say that the Czech Eastern policy started after Topolánek came to power. In my opinion, much support, especially for Belorussian dissidents, was visible already during Havel's second term. Moreover, the Department for Human Rights and Transformation Policy on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was established already in 2004.

I would like to answer the question about possible changes of the Eastern European policy after the upcoming elections. Of course, everything will depend on the election results and the form of coalition. However, I have a concrete proposal for our Polish friends. We would need someone like former President Kwaśniewski to come and educate the Czech Social Democratic Party about the East and the weight of the Eastern Partnership.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Michal Kořan, Institute of International Relations, Prague

Thank you very much for this privilege, indeed. Looking at history, Czech-Polish relations have been a mess. Even when we were facing Nazi Germany, we kept struggling. Look at 1968 when the Poles happily invaded Czechoslovakia, or at 1980 when the Husák regime was ready to intervene in Poland. Today, we have a totally different stage and it took a lot of effort to get where we are now. This is Central Europe for God's sake. It was always a nest of instability, and now it is not any longer!

On the other hand, there are several things we have not mentioned in detail. Mainly, the asymmetry between the two. It seems to me that in many issues and in many agendas, we started discussing a particular issue and then said what the policy should be. I think we should start by defining the position and then identify the main points.

The first asymmetry I can trace is in the general view of the EU. It is not only a recently acquired more pro-European outfit of Poland but it is also the fact that there is no political power in the Czech Republic that could challenge President Klaus in his views. In this sense I can see that there are some changes coming in Czech politics. Firstly, the Czech Presidency, in my opinion, made a huge impact on our view of the EU. The second thing was a very recent development after Obama had come to power. Now, you can hear Alexander Vondra saying openly – “now we have to take care of the EU and even the United States wants us to do so.” I think there is a growing consensus even among the Czech political elites with regard to the EU. Thus, the two countries might soon merge together in their views.

The second asymmetry is definitely the one of size. I really liked what has been said about Poland – that Poland is somehow swinging between positions of the strongest of the small and the weakest of the large. I think, at this point, Poland is finding itself in the latter position, being the weakest of the large.

It has also been mentioned that Central European cooperation is for Poland a way of compensating for its weakness among the large players. That is true. However, it will take a lot of effort for Czech and Central European diplomats to swallow their pride and to realize it. It will imply also a lot of self-control and self-discipline for Polish diplomats in order not to overcook and overdo this argument. A lot of Central European initiatives have toppled just because there was a fear from other Visegrad countries that it was another Polish attempt to dominate. Let's be honest – we can see part of this approach in Radosław Sikorski's politics.

Let's go deeper into the agenda. What I was trying to say is that we can use these asymmetries of ours. The larger picture is rosy but when we go deeper, we can see some frustration.

We have talked about military cooperation for twenty years but for fifteen years we have not been able to sign a single deal on the modernization of military equip-

ment. The problem is not only licensing but also the fact that national defense industries are insanely jealous and are trying to keep their hands on any business that happens by.

Another of today's issues was political communication and great political understanding. However links among the political parties are completely missing. There is the Memorandum of Understanding between the MFAs that is trying to establish some standards and continuous communication but it has not been implemented yet.

Next, we talked about deeper and deeper economic interconnection in the region. Actually, if I am not mistaken, the Czech Republic occupies fourth place of Poland's most important partners. Then we see that the Polish government is continuously unwilling to sell anything from the strategic industry to Czech hands; be it Świdnik helicopters or energy. Vice versa, the Czech government is painfully trying to get any information on what is going on with PKN-Orlen.

We also know that 80% of the program of the Polish Presidency matches the Czech one. However, we are afraid that the Czechs might ruin the Polish Presidency because of the budgetary perspective.

This all is natural. You can expect that even your best neighbor might park his car in your driveway when he is about to throw an oversized garden party. Then, the important issue is not whether you are upset but whether he is going to invite you or not.

RECOMMENDATIONS STEMMING FROM THE ROUNDTABLE

- There should be annual meetings of the entire cabinets of the Republic of Poland and the government of the Czech Republic, as Poland already has a framework for such cooperation with Spain and France. The first such meeting should be convened before the Polish EU Presidency and be focused, inter alia, on the priorities of the Polish Presidency.
- There should be an ambassadorial meeting of all countries of the Visegrad Group in Brussels every week prior to the meeting of COREPER, in order to achieve better synergy of the V4 on the European stage.
- Extensive sharing of information should be conducted during the Hungarian and Polish Presidency within the framework of the Visegrad Group. Among the preferentially debated issues should be the forthcoming financial perspective, the Eastern Partnership and the future of the Common Agricultural Policy.
- Despite the fact that the areas of priority for the Polish EU Presidency resemble the Czech ones, it should not be taken for granted that the Poles will promote the same policy as the Czechs would. Additionally, there are certain indications that the policies will be in many areas divergent. Therefore, the Czech Republic and Poland should conduct a far-reaching dialogue on the Presidency priorities and the Czech administration should closely examine Polish European policy.
- Better cooperation between the Czech and Polish defense industries should be achieved.
- Czech political parties should (re-)define their position towards the European Security and Defense Policy, as its role has changed with the Lisbon Treaty and the new American administration. The Polish attitude towards the ESDP might serve as a possible example and/or scenario.
- Higher visibility of Article V of the Washington Treaty should form the cornerstone for both the Czech Republic and Poland during the debate on the new NATO Strategic Concept. Both countries should also share their views on the Strategic Concept debate with their Visegrad counterparts.
- Both countries should be aware that there are additional security risks other than just a military attack. Such threats as cyber-terrorism, energy security or terrorism should be reflected in the NATO Strategic Concept as well.
- The Czech Republic and Poland should strive for a long term American presence in Europe and also on their territory, as it increases their security. The renewed debate on Missile Defense which should now be placed directly under the NATO framework represents an opportunity for achieving this.
- Czech-Polish cooperation in the Eastern Partnership should be further developed as it represents the cornerstone of both Czech and Polish East European policy. Mainly, information sharing should be improved. There should be, whether for-

mal or informal, contacts of Czech and Polish diplomats in the countries of the Eastern Partnership.

- The Czech Republic and Poland should commence joint flagship projects within the framework of the Eastern Partnership. Among the projects conducted by the Czech Republic and Poland (or Czech and Polish NGOs) should also be some aimed at energy efficiency. Moreover, these might attract cooperation also with countries like Germany and Sweden.
- Communication and information sharing on energy issues between the Czech Republic and Poland should be significantly improved. Provided that this synergy of attitudes is achieved, the promotion of common interests would be easier. In order to achieve this level, mutual mistrust in energy and Eastern European policy must be overcome.

List of Panelists of Roundtable I, on Czech-Polish relations in the European Union

- Piotr Maciej Kaczyński, Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels
- Agnieszka Łada, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw
- Vít Dostál, Association for International Affairs, Prague
- Volker Weichsel, Osteuropa Journal, Berlin

List of Panelists of Roundtable II, on Czech-Polish Relations and Security Agendas

- Janusz Onyszkiewicz, former Minister of Defense of the Republic of Poland and Former Vice-President of the European Parliament
- Eugeniusz Smolar, Centre for International Relations, Warsaw
- Břetislav Dančák, Department of International Relations and European Studies, Masaryk University, Brno
- David Král, Institute for European Policy EUROPEUM, Prague

List of Panelists of Roundtable III, on Czech-Polish Relations and Eastern Europe Policy

- Rafał Sadowski, Centre for Eastern Studies, Warsaw
- Grzegorz Gromadzki, Stefan Batory Foundation, Warsaw
- Luboš Veselý, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Prague

PART II

ADDITIONAL PAPERS

THE CZECH PRESIDENCY IN THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION – THE VIEW FROM POLAND

Aleksander Fuksiewicz, Agnieszka Łada

INTRODUCTION¹

The Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU has, since its inception, attracted negative comments, especially from the “old” member states. A “new” and rather small member state, which had not yet ratified the Lisbon Treaty, was under the close scrutiny of the more experienced and influential partners in the Community. The deepening financial crisis and the volatile situation on the European stage as well as a new American administration coming to power, all suggested that the time of the Czech Presidency would be filled with new challenges. This resulted in unequivocal signals coming from some European capitals, expressing concern that Prague might not be able to face the challenge. Some predicted a failure of the Presidency even before it started. At the very beginning of the Presidency, it appeared that, apart from the already adopted priorities, some other important and unforeseen events moved to the top of the agenda. The Russian-Ukrainian dispute and the conflict in the Gaza Strip required immediate response from the Czech Republic as the representative of the whole European Union. At the same time, in the Czech Republic itself, efficient EU activity was hindered, and not only by its Euroskeptic president, Vaclav Klaus. The internal government crisis which led to the collapse of Mirek Topolánek’s cabinet in the middle of the Czech Presidency effectively blocked Prague’s ability to function as an EU external representative and as the party initiating internal EU agreements.

While evaluating the achievements of the Czech Presidency, it is therefore necessary to take into account a number of factors. Both the preparation of the Czechs for the Presidency, the adopted priorities and their implementation, as well as the unexpected challenges and the way they have been dealt with, all need to be considered. A question should also be asked as to how the activities of the Czech Republic and their assessment in Europe have been affected by the fact that it is a small country and that it was their first Presidency of the EU. Have the “old” member states been ready to relinquish “power” to the Czechs? Or perhaps their example has led to generalization of the assessment and creation of a general image of all of the states that acceded to the European Union in 2004 and 2007?

¹ This paper has been prepared on the basis of the publication: Aleksander Fuksiewicz, Agnieszka Łada. The Czech Presidency in the Council of the European Union – the View from Poland, Institute of Public Affairs, Warszawa 2009 (to download: <http://www.isp.org.pl/files/3772579050187310001249982492.pdf>). It was written in the framework of the project *Czech Presidency in the Polish eyes – evaluation of Czech achievements during their Presidency in the Council of the EU* realized by the Institute of Public Affairs together with the Heinrich Böll Foundation. The research was obtained from interviews with Polish government administration officials, representatives of the third sector, experts and journalists. The statements and assessments presented in the text derive from conclusions drawn from interviews and analysis of the written material. Therefore they are not only the opinions of the Institute of Public Affairs but also represent the position of a group of Polish experts.

Polish assessment of the Czech Presidency is based on two pillars. First, what is important is the implementation of those priorities seen as vital from the Polish point of view – those which are consistent with areas in which Poland wants to play a significant role or which are important for the development of Polish economic or foreign policy. That description fits two main areas of the Czech activity – the Eastern Partnership and energy. Also the motto of the Czech Presidency: “Europe Without Barriers”, was interesting from the Polish point of view.

Second, the basis for the Polish assessment of the Czech Presidency is the lack of distinction in treating and perceiving the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in terms of their European activity by those countries with a much longer record of European membership. This leads to a certain solidarity among the “new” members. As neighbors with similar experience, who must struggle with similar economic and political problems, we understand each other better and are not so strict in our judgments, seeing the broader context of the situation. We may even be a little lenient towards each other in view of the criticism of the Western partners. Some Polish experts openly admit that in the context of the unfair and aggressive tone of the French, they, as Poles, felt empathy towards the Czechs. Others admit that criticizing the Czech achievements was not in Polish interest, because similar problems may appear during the Polish Presidency. The objectives that the Poles will define may well be the same as the Czech ones. Therefore, Poland should not join the chorus of the critics. The “campaign” against the Czech Republic will also be an argument in favor of moving away from the rotating Presidency. And this, in the opinion of Polish experts, is not in the Polish interest.

THE ADOPTED PRIORITY TASKS AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION

Eastern Partnership

In the area of external relations, the most important objective of the Czech Presidency, from the Polish point of view, was the action to implement the Eastern Partnership. This initiative was proposed by Poland and Sweden in May 2008, as a tool for furthering relations with the EU’s Eastern neighbors: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The Czechs had supported the Eastern Partnership since the very beginning. That project was expected to be the main achievement of the Czech Presidency – its identification mark.

The activity of the Czech Presidency related to the Eastern Partnership was assessed positively. Polish experts consider the very fact of adopting such a priority the right decision and a success, especially from the Polish point of view, and if one takes into account such external factors as the financial crisis, the unstable situa-

tion in some of the countries to which the program is addressed (Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus) and the reluctance on the part of some member states to undertake any action contrary to Russia's will.

The organization of the summit in Prague devoted to that initiative was not just a symbolic moment. The initiative was actually launched at the summit, for which the Czechs should take the credit, especially as their internal situation at that time was not conducive to undertaking any major action. The declaration signed at the summit, even though not taking into account all the proposals of the six states covered by the program is nevertheless a document which, in conjunction with the document published by the European Commission, makes it possible to open activities leading to the implementation of the Eastern Partnership. This must be considered a Czech success.

The biggest challenges faced by any new initiative include the acquisition of funds to finance its implementation. In total, for the years 2010–2013, 600 million Euro has been allocated. It is not a sum of money that would satisfy the ambitions of the states that have initiated the project, including Poland, but if we take account of the current financial crisis and the rather limited influence of the Czech government, we must admit that it is a step in the right direction.

In comparing the Czech Republic and France in the context of the two projects promoted by those countries, which are often considered jointly – the Eastern Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean – one might reach the conclusion that Prague promoted its initiative rather weakly and did not seek support for it as actively as Paris did for their project. But here again we must remember both the internal crisis in the Czech Republic and also the much more limited influence of that country on the European stage². In addition, the self-limitation of the Czechs is often mentioned in this context, especially in pushing forward those elements of the Partnership which raised some controversy, in order to avoid a situation where particular Czech interests were excessively emphasized³.

To summarize, in the current geopolitical and internal situation, the Czech Republic could not have done more for the Eastern Partnership. Now is the time when some concrete action needs to be taken, whose results it will only be possible to judge from a longer perspective. However, in Poland, the very launch of the program is often considered a success of the Czech Presidency, especially from the

2 An important fact in this case, although not much mentioned by Polish experts, is the lack of direct borders between the Czech Republic and the states included in the program. That is the reason why the Czechs naturally have a different approach to the program than France has to its initiative, the Union for the Mediterranean.

3 See B. Wojna, M. Gniazdowski, *Partnerstwo Wschodnie – raport otwarcia*, Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, Warsaw April 2009, p. 22.

perspective of Poland and, perhaps even, from that of the whole region of Central and Eastern Europe. The Czechs have done what had to be done and what, in the current situation, could be done.

The Economy and the Financial Crisis

Polish experts appreciated the Czech firmness in opposing the disturbance of common market operation principles: “Here, the Czech Republic has been very firm. *Chapeau bas* – they have reacted in an absolutely uncompromising way”. The results of an extraordinary informal meeting of the EU state and government leaders, devoted to the crisis, held on March 1 2009, have also been seen as positive. Some have even considered them the greatest success of the Presidency. For others, however, this had only a symbolic character. The meeting, in a way, closed the discussion on protectionism and gave a clear signal that it would not be accepted in the EU. The paradox of the whole situation was evident, “new member states, such as the Czech Republic, care much more for the fundamental principles of the European Union: solidarity, the real common market, than some ‘old’ member states do”.

In Poland, the manner of dealing with specific issues undertaken by the Czech Presidency in the ECOFIN Council and its working groups, such as the adoption of legislative changes or the conclusions of the Council, has also received a positive assessment. During the first phase of the Presidency, the Czechs were recognized as effective and consistent. What may have influenced the positive assessment was the fact that the interests of Poland and the Czech Republic in that respect were similar at that time – the Polish Prime Minister was no less firm in this matter than his Czech equivalent, especially when opposing the idea to issue common euro-zone bonds.

An important decision taken during the March meeting of the European Council (March 19–20), was to increase financial assistance to the member states from Central and Eastern Europe who remain outside the eurozone from 25 to 50 billion Euro under the so-called “support facility”⁴. That decision should be treated as a success of the “new” member states and the Czech Presidency, which, while preserving the intermediary role of global financial institutions, secured a real possibility to obtain support from the “old” members of the Community. Poland was satisfied with the action of the Czech Republic in this matter.

However, a number of Polish experts have questioned the significance of the Czech involvement in tackling the crisis. Opinions have appeared that the

4 See the European Council 19–20 March 2009, Presidency Conclusions, 7880/1/09, REV1, CONCL 1, Brussels 29 April 2009.

Czech Presidency was ignored when real decisions were made. That happened, for instance, when the agreement was reached regarding the European Economic Recovery Plan, adopted at the same meeting of the European Council on March 19–20 mentioned above, when the most important arrangements were agreed between the biggest states and the Commission. The Presidency took a bold decision to have the GAERC (General Affairs and External Relations Council), and in consequence the European Council, work on the Plan, even though it was not at all certain that a consensus would be reached. That move was considered as playing *va banque*. In spite of that, it was the Commission who played the key role in the negotiations.

Even though some experts have treated the adoption of the Plan as one of the greatest Czech achievements, the real fight against the crisis, in view of many experts, was taking place not only outside the Presidency but also outside EU institutions. At the Community level, there are no instruments to respond to a crisis situation, and the Presidency cannot do anything to address it. Therefore the anti-protectionist rhetoric was important, but practical action even more so, and on that, the Presidency had very little or in fact no influence at all. As far as the negotiations of the EU position for the G-20 meeting is concerned, the general assessment has been that the Czechs did well in chairing the debate, yet the differences of opinions among the members states were too big for the Presidency to be able to play any significant role. Thus, the Polish reception of Czech activities in the economic sphere has varied.

Energy and the Environment

A number of Polish experts think that the Czechs should be praised for the agreement reached on financing infrastructural energy projects. It is considered a success that additional funding was secured and that the Nabucco Pipeline was included on the list. From the Polish point of view, “the Czechs have done a good job”, and “the European Union has shown that it can have common energy interests”. However, some experts have been skeptical. Funds allocated for the Nabucco project are not big, and it is also important to note that during the special summit at the beginning of May in Prague devoted to the Southern Corridor, the participants failed to sign contracts for a gas supply to the Nabucco Pipeline. It has been noted that even though the result of the meeting met Czech expectations, it was rather the Commission who facilitated the discussion and not the Presidency.

Unlike in regard to energy issues, the activities of the Czech Republic in the area of climate policy turned out to be a complete failure. The Presidency Work Plan has been assessed as ambitious but the same could not be said about its actual achievements. In the view of the Polish experts, the Czechs left the initiative totally to the other member states. They were completely invisible in the decision-making proc-

ess. All the problems during the negotiations were solved without the participation of the Presidency, by the interested states. The Czechs often could not “keep up with the negotiations”, where an agreement was reached without their participation by the most interested member states. The achieved consensus was only “notified” to the Presidency. The Czechs often did not even show interest in the negotiations, handing over the initiative to the British experts who led many issues on behalf of the Presidency. One of our interlocutors has summed it up by saying that the Czechs had even given up representing their own interests. They not only failed to facilitate the discussion, which is the natural role of a Presidency, but did not even take part in the negotiations as a member state. After the collapse of the government, the problem became even more acute. The Czech attitude was described as “total silence, total indifference”.

When analyzing the outcome of the implementation of the adopted priorities, one should emphasize a number of factors that influenced the effectiveness of Czech actions. Firstly, a small country, overwhelmed by a political crisis, with a weak government and a weak position on the European stage, has, by definition, much less room for manoeuvre and will not attempt any spectacular action. Secondly, because of the external situation, a lot of energy had to be devoted to things other than what the Czechs had originally planned. In addition, the attitude towards the Czech Presidency was negative from the very beginning, especially in the West, which made their work, especially at the political level, even more difficult. Only from this perspective can the effectiveness of the Czech Presidency be properly evaluated. And yet, in trying to make a general assessment of the implementation of the Czech Presidency work program, it is still difficult to formulate an unequivocal opinion.

The first half of the Czech Presidency, until the collapse of the Czech government, taking into account all the factors mentioned above, was assessed by Polish experts rather positively, although without any spectacular success and not in all areas of EU policies. It had come as a certain surprise, as the Western press had been predicting that the Presidency would be close to a disaster. Whereas the priority objectives such as the Eastern Partnership or financing of energy projects were successfully completed. The situation differed in a number of detailed issues, not treated as priorities. There, the work plan has been assessed as vague and not very ambitious. Its implementation has also been criticized, primarily because it lacked political support and commitment.

The experts more skeptical about the role of the Czechs, have concluded that, in fact, events were following their own course. Even though the Presidency, on the whole, worked satisfactorily, during some important developments, the lead was taken naturally by the biggest member states: “The priority objectives were imple-

mented but a question remains, to what extent the credit for that should be taken by the Presidency and to what extent by EU governments and institutions. I would not say that the Czech Presidency was a driving force, a motor behind the action, although they did play a part in achieving the priority objectives [...] they were trying to lead, but the steering wheel was slipping away from their hands”.

INTERNAL SITUATION – A GOVERNMENT CRISIS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE PRESIDENCY

The change of the Czech government in the middle of the Presidency was assessed as definitely negative among Polish experts. “The collapse of the government changed everything” – our experts have agreed. They have described that fact as a “disaster” and “the greatest failure of the Presidency”. The Czech politicians, who were not able to reach a consensus of the main political forces around the Presidency, have been assessed very negatively. The period of the Presidency has been divided into two parts: before and after the collapse of the Topolánek cabinet. The change of the government that took place at that time, affected the way in which the Presidency was perceived and its leadership in matters that required political commitment. In that respect, the Presidency was virtually invisible, with no influence or power. The opinions on whether the collapse of the government affected the expert dimension of the works, in the working groups, have been divided. Some Polish officials have said that the impact was practically unnoticeable, that matters followed their own course according to natural EU dynamics, whereas others will say that the impact was great and definitely negative: discussions were stifled.

The failure to ratify the Lisbon Treaty did not have any great influence on the way the Czech Presidency was perceived in Poland. At the beginning of the year 2009, that subject was still relevant and suggested that it could cause some additional problems to the Czechs. However, with the growing crisis and other international problems, Lisbon was moved to the background and did not have any impact on the course or the perception of the Presidency.

EXPECTED AND UNEXPECTED CHALLENGES IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The views of Polish experts on the Czech achievements during Israeli-Palestinian conflict in this respect have varied. More skeptical experts have emphasized the lack of proper background or knowledge of the situation, and the lack of experts.

The majority of the interlocutors, however, have stated that even though the situation proved to be beyond the capabilities of the Czechs, they cannot be blamed for that. The possibilities of diplomacy of such small countries are objectively limited, especially in remote regions, and therefore one cannot compare their effectiveness with the effectiveness of France or the United Kingdom. Comparing the conflict in Gaza with the war in Georgia, the experts wondered: “in the case of the Georgian conflict, it was clear that Russia would talk to France, but what would happen if the conflict broke out earlier, during the Slovene Presidency? Which of the Slovene politicians would go to Russia to mediate? That is why in my opinion, until the collapse of the government the Czechs were doing well”.

Russian-Ukrainian Gas Conflict

Polish experts have assessed the general activities of the Czechs during the gas conflict either positively or neutrally, emphasizing that “they did what they could”, but without any great success as, for some time still, the gas did not begin to flow to Europe. They have decided that the beginning, when the conflict was treated as an internal problem between Russia and Ukraine, was unfortunate, but with time, the Presidency and especially Prime Minister Topolanek, were doing better and better. The more critical ones admitted that the Presidency did what it could, but only the biggest member states could realistically influence the behavior of Russia. In addition, Ukraine behaved “extremely irresponsibly, hoping that the EU had no choice but to support Ukraine even if Kiev was acting stupid”. That was why the EU was ignored by both sides of the conflict for quite a long time. It should, however, be appreciated that the Czechs managed to involve the entire Union in the dispute: “Thanks to them, the whole EU realized that it was a political issue. The Czechs ran the negotiations well”. Thanks to the Presidency, it was possible to “inject” a little Central European perspective on Russia, which could then later play a role in acquiring EU funding for the Nabucco Pipeline, in order to ensure sources of natural gas supply as an alternative to the Russian ones.

Some experts have criticized the Czechs for their lack of political and expert preparation to respond to both international crises – the gas crisis and the one in the Middle East. The Presidency let itself be taken by surprise and their initial responses were ill-judged. They lacked an analytical basis and a system of coordination. However, most of the experts have been firm in justifying those shortcomings: “Had any other country been prepared for the gas crisis or the Israeli invasion in the Gaza Strip? No, it had not. Maybe Israel had. The fact that the Czechs did not have a magic wand and were not able to halt the Israeli military intervention, or in two days convince Russia and Ukraine to make up, is not their fault. Such miracles do not happen. They did what they were politically able to do. The Czech

Republic has not been, is not and will not be involved in the Middle East conflict. If anything happens there, actors such as France, the UK, the US or Germany must intervene”.

A SMALL COUNTRY AND POLITICAL CLOUT

The Czechs, as a small country, chose the type of Presidency sometimes called a “low-profile Presidency” – they tried to be administrators and mediators⁵. The assessment of the Polish experts as to how they fulfilled that role varies. Some think that before the government crisis, the Czechs played that role well, efficiently leading to compromises. Their mediation efforts related to Eastern Partnership and its funding as well as to the energy projects accepted by the European Council, can be considered successful. In other areas, e.g. climate, the Czechs were practically invisible and the role of mediator between the most important players was played by the Commission. The inability to deal with such an important challenge as a successful conclusion of work on the working time directive represented a failure in the role of a mediator. The Czechs were also blamed for giving the floor too often to British advisors (e.g. on climate issues) who helped them prepare for the Presidency. The Czechs were also sometimes perceived as “more polite”, but definitely less effective than for example, the French, who brutally pushed forward their own interests during their Presidency.

GOOD PREPARATION IS FUNDAMENTAL?

From the point of view of organization, the Presidency was prepared very professionally. Logistics worked very well. Here, our interlocutors agreed that the Czechs had done their homework – the Czech administration was well prepared for that difficult task. Also from the point of view of the subject matter at the expert level (until the collapse of the government, as everything that happened afterwards has been disregarded by our interlocutors) the preparation was done at the very highest level. The work in the working groups in most areas was carried out efficiently and effectively, although not in all areas. Problems appeared with controversial subjects where it was necessary to secure political support. The less than excellent cooperation between the expert and the political level, and especially the lack of political support for the efforts of lower level officials, resulted

⁵ Originally, the Czechs had more ambitious plans, assuming greater activity, and the proposed number of priorities had also been larger. However, the economic crisis and internal instability verified those assumptions.

in slowing down the pace of work when it had to “move” from the working group level to COREPER (the Committee of Permanent Representatives) and the Council. Whereas the priority subjects had been well prepared: namely, Eastern Partnership and energy. The Czechs proved that they knew their subject matter and had the relevant expertise.

However, they let themselves be taken by surprise by unexpected situations, such as the gas crisis and the Middle East conflict. In those cases, the lack of an expert basis (that is, preparation) was evident. It could be noticed that they did not have contingency plans, that they had not carried out the appropriate analyses and had not examined the situation so as to be able to take immediate action and provide competent comments. A question remains whether anyone would be prepared for what happened and whether other countries would have been better able to cope.

The failure to resolve the internal political problems before the Presidency, should definitely be regarded as a lack of preparation. It is expected from a state presiding the Union that for the six months of their Presidency, internal disputes will subside and efforts will be made to reach an agreement between the main political forces in the country so as not to impede the fulfillment of the role of the EU leader. In the Czech Republic the crisis appeared in the middle of the Presidency, which hindered its further effective functioning. Polish experts have appreciated the achievements of the Czech officials, while unequivocally criticizing the political leaders. At the political level, the Czechs were not prepared for the Presidency.

ADMINISTRATOR AND ORGANIZER

An efficient Presidency also means a number of purely technical preparations and organizational activities. Contrary to some opinions that good organization is already a standard, that everything works well, there are still a number of areas where it is possible to fail to face up to the challenge. Especially as the state that is to preside over the EU Council for the first time does not have the appropriate experience. If it is a small country, and does not have a great number of administrative officials responsible for this sort of activity, the administrative challenge may be even greater.

In the opinion of Polish experts and officials, the Czechs faced up to the challenge. The meetings organized at different levels were well prepared, the necessary materials had been delivered in advance and the time and place of the meetings was kept as planned. Journalists had access to information and to the technical facilities. There have been no “slip-ups”. This clearly differed from the French

Presidency, which, in view of our interlocutors, had not always provided the proper organizational framework. Here it was clearly visible that the Czechs tried hard while the French did not seem to care. The logistical side in the Czech Republic itself also functioned perfectly well.

However, even the best organized Presidency will not be appreciated if the internal troubles, as it was the case with the Czech Republic, overshadow all other activities. That is why something that could have been an important and successful element, passed practically unnoticed.

THE CZECH PRESIDENCY AND THE POLISH CAUSE

While analyzing the Czech Presidency from the Polish point of view, one should pay particular attention to two issues. Firstly, how the Czech Presidency influenced the reputation of the “new” member states as leaders of the European Union. The second question follows from the first one: how have Poles assessed the Czech Presidency, and why do they hold such views? The assessment results not only from evaluating the achievements in those areas particularly important for Poland, but also from the fact that we are neighbors and from a certain regional solidarity shared by both countries.

Impact of the Czech Presidency on the Reputation of the New Member States

The example of the Czech Republic translates into perception of the whole region, which is unfortunately rather negative. Even though the Czech administration showed that they were able to mobilize and act effectively and that lack of experience might be compensated with good preparation, the Czech politicians did not make the grade. At first, the Czechs managed to effectively lead the Union and achieve certain solutions. Unfortunately, the government crisis overshadowed the successful beginning. What is remembered now are mainly problems in internal politics and the Euroskepticism of President Klaus. The image of an uncertain, unpredictable country, which was blocking the ratification process of the Lisbon Treaty, has now spread to other countries of the region. The position held by Klaus is very easy to link into one model with the attitude of President Lech Kaczyński, who was also delaying the ratification of the Treaty. That allows the “old” member states to make generalizations and apply the label of Euroskeptic on all the states of the region. The Czech Presidency will not therefore make things easier for subsequent “new” member states, including Poland, which in coming years will take over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, as it consolidates negative stereotypes in the West. It will be remembered as a Presidency torn by internal problems, reluctant towards integration and overshadowed by the

French Presidency. It will definitely not provide a good ground for building a positive image of the Polish preparation for the Presidency in 2011. Before Poland, the Presidency will be held by Hungary, whose economic and political situation is also very difficult. If their Presidency is not successful, it may negatively affect expectations towards the Polish Presidency. In the view of some Polish experts, the problems that appear during the Presidency held by the “new” member states may in future be used as an argument for the abolition of the rotating Presidency system.

SUMMARY

While summing up the achievements of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union, one should bear in mind a few facts. On the one hand, several external events had an impact on the Presidency, events that Prague could not have predicted and prepared for in advance. The Czechs therefore had to adjust, to take decisions that were necessary and not those that they had earlier planned. On the other hand, the responsibility for the EU during the Presidency means that the state leading the Union will be prepared also for unexpected situations that require immediate and competent response. The external factors were topped by the internal crisis. The collapse of the Czech government, as seen by Western observers, blighted the success achieved so far and limited their capability to act within the EU forum. However, unlike the external situation, the political crisis was the result of the behavior of the Czechs themselves. This internal crisis, much more than the fact of “debuting” in the role of the EU presiding state, ensured that the Czech Presidency was not a visible one.

THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND POLAND IN THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP – APPROACHES AND PERSPECTIVES FOR COOPERATION

Rafał Sadowski

INTRODUCTION

The Eastern European region plays an important role in the foreign policies of both the Czech Republic and Poland. Both countries define the main priorities of their policies towards the Eastern European countries in similar ways. These are support for political and economic transformation and deepening the integration with the European (the European Union) and Euro-Atlantic (NATO) structures. Especially during the last two years, when the Czech Republic noticeably increased its interest and activity in Eastern Europe, both countries have become initiators of the European Union's activities towards Eastern Europe. The most visible example of that is the launch of the EU program called the Eastern Partnership (EaP). The EaP was basically a Polish-Swedish initiative, which was drawn up with strong backing from the Czech Republic, and initiated during the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union on 1 May 2009.

However, despite common goals towards Eastern Europe, and growing activity in shaping EU policy, there is still much more potential for direct cooperation between Poland and the Czech Republic to be developed, especially in the light of the declared aspirations of both states. Currently both states act within the framework of their Eastern policies individually, or in cooperation with other partners, but there is no deep and active direct collaboration between Warsaw and Prague. There are no specific bilateral Polish-Czech programs addressed to the countries of Eastern Europe (beside those implemented within the multilateral frameworks of the EU or the Visegrad Group). Moreover, a significant problem is posed by the insufficient intensity of direct consultations and exchanges of information between Polish and Czech diplomats and officials dealing with Eastern European issues. However, the national interests of Warsaw and Prague, and their strong commitment to the Eastern European region, create the potential for a broader field of common activities.

This text discusses the general outline of Polish and Czech foreign policy towards Eastern Europe, and the differences in their approaches, which underlie their limited mutual cooperation towards this region. The text also tries to show potential fields of cooperation, especially within the EaP framework.

SIMILAR GOALS...

There are no contradictory issues in the aims of Poland and the Czech Republic's current policies towards the Eastern European countries, defined as Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and the three Southern Caucasian states. For both countries the main objectives could be defined as:

- a.) the democratization and economic transformation of the Eastern European states;
- b.) deepening integration with the EU (and NATO) and support for an ‘open door’ position which would not rule out the potential possibility of their membership in the future (albeit rather in the longer term);
- c.) the greater engagement and activity of the EU in its Eastern neighborhood.

Both states take similar positions with regard to the shape of the EU’s Eastern Europe policy, presenting more or less the same stance on that issue within the wider European debate. First of all, they share generally the same understanding of the importance of the Eastern European region for the EU’s interests, and the place which it should have in EU foreign policy towards the surrounding regions and states. In that context the Eastern European states are perceived as ‘European neighbors’ in contrast to the Mediterranean states in the South, which are seen as ‘the neighbors of Europe’. That distinction has quite important consequences for the concept of the EU’s relations with its neighbors. The term ‘European neighbors’ emphasizes a European character in terms of the cultural, geographical, political and social closeness of the East European states and societies. This implies the potential for deeper integration with the EU. At the same time, the ‘neighbors of Europe’ are those states with close proximity to the EU, but which are non-European, and thus have no prospect of EU membership.

The common understanding of the policies’ needs and goals has led to the formulation of the Eastern Partnership concept as a new instrument of the European Neighborhood Policy. A crucial role in launching this initiative was played by Sweden, Poland and the Czech Republic. The EaP project was a Polish-Swedish initiative, but the Czech Republic has played an important role in helping to draw up a more detailed project, which was presented to the European Commission in October 2008. This initiative was launched during the Czech Presidency, which played an especially important role in increasing the allocated funds.

... DIFFERENT DETERMINANTS

Despite similarities in the aims of the Eastern dimension policies, the scope of the cooperation between Poland and the Czech Republic is quite limited. Both countries are developing their foreign policy activities on separate paths. Apart from the EaP, it is hard to name any other common Polish-Czech initiative or project in the EU’s Eastern neighborhood (possibly there are some individual cases, but there is no common official collaboration program). This applies not only to cooperation between state officials, but also civic actors. Polish and Czech NGOs engaged in Eastern Europe do not cooperate with each other, and there is a lack of knowledge on each side about the level of engagement of the other.

One of the reasons for that is the fact that both countries have slightly different perspectives towards the Eastern European region. This is a result of the dissimilarity of the determinants for foreign policy activities. Other factors which cause divergences in Warsaw and Prague's approaches are the differences in each state's interests, perceptions and ties with Eastern Europe, and the importance of that region for each country's political elites.

The fact that Poland directly borders some of the Eastern European states¹, specifically Ukraine and Belarus (and also Russia, although the latter is not a subject of the EaP), as well as its close proximity to Moldova, shape the specific nature of its cooperation, and make this region vital to Polish state interests. The long common border (950 km), the ethnic Polish minorities living in the Eastern European states, and the strong cultural and social links and historical heritage, are also important factors. In contrast, the Czech Republic, which has no common border or strong social ties with the region, is more focused on European integration, democratization and economic cooperation (trade and investment activities).

The reasons given above are why the Eastern dimension has been one of the key priorities of Polish foreign policy since the beginning of the 1990s (after integration with the EU and transatlantic cooperation). Since that time, Warsaw has tried to play an active role in the region by developing bilateral relations, but also trying to engage European actors in that region, esp. the EU.

Since the beginning of its negotiations with the EU, Warsaw has emphasized the necessity of greater EU engagement in Eastern Europe. The 'Eastern dimension' of the EU's policy was first mentioned in 1998 by the then-foreign minister of Poland Bronisław Geremek during the ceremony inaugurating Polish membership negotiations². Furthermore, the Polish MFA published a document detailing this concept in 2001, which was expanded upon in the so-called Polish non-paper on EU policy towards new neighbors.

At the same time, however, Eastern Europe was not the main objective of the Czech Republic's foreign activities. Its foreign policy was dominated by Western orientation and mainly focused on integration with the EU. Also, Prague has long paid much more attention to the Balkan region (especially Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro) than to Eastern Europe³. Czech diplomacy was actively engaged in the stabilization of the Balkans, which had the status of potential candidate countries

1 There are around 550,000 Poles living in Belarus and Ukraine.

2 Joanna Popielawska, *W jakim towarzystwie? Partnerstwo Wschodnie na tle innych inicjatyw UE na wschodzie*, Analizy Natolińskie, Centrum Europejskie Natolin, 5 (37) 2009.

3 Petr Drulak, Elsa Tulmets, Michal Koran, *The Foreign Policy of the Czech Republic towards the Eastern Neighbourhood*, Institute of International Relations, Prague, <http://www2.hiia.hu/projects/visegrad/doc/Csehorszaz.pdf>.

for EU membership. Czech interests in Eastern Europe rose in 2007 after the formation of Mirek Topolánek's government (with Karel Schwarzenberg as Minister of Foreign Affairs), which switched the priorities of Czech diplomacy and gave more priority to the Eastern dimension.

While Czech interest in Eastern Europe was lower, Poland developed cooperation and contacts with other partners, especially the Baltic states (mainly Lithuania), Germany, Sweden and also the Visegrad Group. As a result, Polish diplomacy has long perceived the Czech Republic as disengaged from Eastern Europe, although this now seems to be changing.

The different priority which Eastern Europe has in the Czech and Polish foreign policy reflects the differing attitudes towards this region of both countries' political elites. In the case of Poland, there is consensus among all the main political parties concerning the importance of Eastern Europe and the general aims and shape of the Polish Eastern policy (although, of course, it is still a topic of political debate). Subsequent governments have thus followed the general outlines of this foreign policy, and there have been no significant changes in policy priorities after changes of government.

In the case of the Czech Republic, however, these differences seem to be much greater. The stronger commitment to Eastern European issues shown by centre-right wing parties is not shared by the left-wing parties, the Social Democrats and especially the Communists. The former are much more focused on an active policy within EU structures (although its previous governments were more interested in the Balkans), while the latter are mostly focused on developing relations with Russia, leaving the EaP states at the margins of their interests. Those differences lead to the question of whether the new Czech government (which will be formed after parliamentary elections in late Spring 2010) will continue the line of the Topolánek government towards Eastern Europe. It seems that if the Social Democrats win (with Communist Party backing), Eastern Europe would not be a high priority.

Another factor which distinguishes both countries is their distinct perception of the Eastern Europe region. For the Czech Republic, the dominant partner in this region is Russia, while the EaP states remain in the background. The Czechs quite often perceive this region through this Russo-centric view⁴. On the other hand, there is a clear distinction in Polish political thinking between their Eastern neighbors and Russia. Quite often, Russia is perceived as a separate subject which does not belong to the Eastern European political region. Such thinking is expressed in the

4 Petr Drulak, Elsa Tulmets, Michal Koran, *The Foreign Policy of the Czech Republic towards the Eastern Neighbourhood*, Institute of International Relations, Prague, <http://www2.hiia.hu/projects/visegrad/doc/Csehorszag.pdf>.

political initiatives proposed by Poland (including the EaP), which are addressed separately towards Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova etc. on the one hand, and towards Russia on the other.

The above-mentioned differences in approach between the Czech Republic and Poland towards the East explain the different scale and character of engagement in developing EU activities in Eastern Europe. Those dissimilarities have also to some extent influenced the limited cooperation between Warsaw and Prague regarding that issue.

NEW PERSPECTIVES FOR CZECH-POLISH COOPERATION

The launching of the EU's EaP initiative opened up new possibilities for Polish-Czech cooperation in Eastern Europe. Despite the criticism that it is insufficient for the needs and challenges coming from the Eastern neighborhood, the EaP is a very concrete instrument, supported by strong political backing, well-equipped to deal with various problems, and backed with concrete funding. Currently there is a need for the Czech Republic and Poland to make this project (which is their initiative) a success story.

Currently, the most important issues for implementation of the EaP are connected with the question of liberalizing the visa regime for the Eastern partners, new contractual arrangements between the EU and the EaP states, mutual cooperation in the energy sector (and also energy security) and economic support to overcome the current economic crisis. Common Czech-Polish actions should be based on simultaneous lobbying concerning similar issues and solutions within EU institutions, and also on the mutual implementation of concrete projects within the framework of the EaP.

The Czech Republic and Poland advocate more liberal positions for the EU regarding the procedures for obtaining Schengen visas for EaP citizens. In this context, it is most essential to simplify and unify visa procedures and lower visa prices. The visa issue plays a crucial role for the image of the EU in the societies of the EaP countries. The currently difficult and expensive procedures undermine the positive image of the EU, and lead Eastern European public opinion into more Euroskeptic positions. However, it is those publics which are a very important factor in democratizing their political systems. In this context, person-to-person contacts play a very important role in bringing the EU and Eastern Europe closer together.

Another possible field of cooperation could be active support for an efficient conclusion to the negotiations on an Association Agreement and a Deep

and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with Ukraine before the end of 2010. Both agreements play an important role as being model agreements for the rest of the EaP states. Poland and the Czech Republic should initiate a diplomatic offensive among EU members to ratify these agreements quickly. However, implementing them is much more important; this could be done by preparing a pilot project together with Ukraine. It might be worth considering launching these projects in the Western part of Ukraine, which is poorer and more underdeveloped than the east, and also borders the EU states of Hungary, Slovakia, Poland and Romania. It would also provide an opportunity to engage the Visegrad Group and possibly Belarus to a greater extent. Such projects should be especially concerned with cross-border cooperation issues, regional development and environmental protection.

The next highly important issue is cooperation in the energy sector and as regards energy security. In this context, the important issues for both Poland and the Czech Republic could be the security of energy supplies (which are delivered to the EU through the EaP states) and the modernization of those states' energy infrastructure. One possible question in this field is the efficient implementation of the EU-Ukrainian declaration on gas cooperation, which was signed on March 23, 2009 and which provides opportunities to reform the Ukrainian gas sector, and would enable the financing by international institutions of a modernization program for Ukraine's gas pipelines⁵. Poland and the Czech Republic should also be active participants in the work of the EaP 'platform' on energy security.

A NEED FOR BETTER UNDERSTANDING

Polish-Czech cooperation in Eastern Europe has been hindered by the fact that each state has been under-informed about the other's policies towards the region. So undoubtedly, there is a need to improve the exchange of information between the Polish and Czech Ministries of Foreign Affairs. A good measure of that could be an exchange between the Ministries of the civil servants working on the Eastern desks. It is also essential to strengthen cooperation between various analytical and think-tank institutes, which has already begun thanks to the activities of the Czech-Polish and Polish-Czech Forums which supported the creation of a Czech-Polish Analytical Platform linking different think-tanks from both sides and researching different areas for potential mutual cooperation.

5 Anna Górska, *Rosja przeciwko unijno-ukraińskiej współpracy gazowej*, Tydzień na Wschodzie, Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich, 25.03.2009.

CONCLUSIONS

The EU's initiative seems to be the most important framework for developing Polish-Czech cooperation in Eastern Europe. Both countries could play the role of a driving force in implementing this project, attracting other EU members into increasing their interest in the region of the Eastern neighbors. The EaP allows for the development of activities in various spheres, primarily through tightening economic, political and security cooperation between the EU and the Eastern European states, but also in other areas including regional development, the movement of people, environmental protection etc. The Eastern Partnership's objectives correspond to the Polish and Czech foreign policy aims. The success of this project will also raise the profile of Warsaw and Prague not only in Eastern Europe, but within the EU as well, as it was launched thanks to the considerable involvement of both states.

REINVENT YOURSELF. ON THE POLISH-CZECH RELATIONS IN THE EU

Piotr Maciej Kaczyński

Ever since the collapse of the Iron Curtain, the relationship between Poland and the Czech Republic has been marked by a forced cooperation and a hidden rivalry. The long-lasting process of accession to the European Union has shown that Polish arrogance was based on the fact that Poland was the largest acceding country; hence any future EU enlargement would be negligent without that country. On the other side, Czech arrogance was based on the argument that after the break up of Czechoslovakia, the Czech Republic was the best prepared, richest and most qualified, and hence, did not need any laggards, whose stubbornness would delay the moment of accession. In conclusion, the pre-2004 period brought the lesson that cooperation is at the same time necessary, but difficult.

The early days of EU membership after May 1, 2004 were marked by the approach of the leadership, both in Prague and Warsaw, that there was a need to re-adjust to the changed reality, but few – if any – knew how to go about this. As a result, there was a void in European policies of most of the new member countries. Most of the time, the new member countries' policy in the EU was characterized by passivity. Only from time to time did some of them attempt to pursue a policy on their own, such as Poland's engagement in the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in Fall 2004 and the Czech Cuba policy. In the process a number of vetoes were put on the EU table, most visibly the Polish veto on EU-Russia negotiations on a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.

THE TALE OF TWO PRESIDENTS: THE BIZARRE COALITION

Polish-Czech relations in the EU during the period 2005–2007 became more specific. On the Polish side, the new Presidency (Dec 2005) and governments of Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz (2005–2006) and Jarosław Kaczyński (2006–2007) viewed the Czechs as their primary international partners. In this period there was a 'coalition of the odd ones', as the Polish and Czech presidents were largely regarded in Western Europe as unreliable and unpredictable. Yet it was not only the period of the Vaclav Klaus-Lech Kaczyński duo, as the more economically liberally-minded politicians also presented a similar, skeptical approach to the ideas coming from Brussels, most notably towards the Constitutional Treaty. It was Jan Rokita MP, one of the leaders of the conservative-liberal Civic Platform, who spoke in the Polish Parliament calling for 'Nice or Death' while the Socialist (at the time) government negotiated the details of the Constitutional Treaty. Simultaneously in the Czech Republic, Miroslav Topolánek presented an equally skeptical perspective towards the new treaty, regarding it as an unnecessary nuisance. With time his approach evolved towards that of an unnecessary, but acceptable nuisance.

The period of 2005–2007 is therefore a period of forced cooperation between Poland and the Czech Republic, as both states were sidelined in the European integration. Both partners were more passive than active, and their activeness was rather of a negative than positive nature: vetoing and blocking seemed to be the main instrument of managing a European policy, at least in Warsaw. Also at this time a new concept arose in Poland of who were the country's strategic partners in the EU. In the vision of the Kaczyński brothers, the closest allies in the EU were Lithuania and the Czech Republic, and outside of the EU, USA and Israel. This original concept was possible because of the massive alienation of long-term Polish partners, such as Germany and other major European states, and a serious deterioration in relations with Russia. However flattered, the Czech Republic was reluctant to take up the offer.

POLAND IS BACK, AND THE CZECHS STILL TRY TO CONQUER THE MOON

The next period started when the government in Poland changed after elections in the Fall of 2007. The Tusk cabinet tried to re-write the foreign and European policies of its predecessors, and to a large extent the process has been successful. Its first objective was to get rid of the 'unpredictable' label in European affairs. In the process of building a constructive and open European policy, the use of the veto threat has been minimal. By 2009 Poland was largely still perceived as a difficult partner, but one able to win its arguments.

Today, Poland also made a choice regarding its own role in the EU. Ever since the accession period, there was a debate whether Poland was a small or big country in the EU, or what it meant to be middle-sized state. A strategic choice has been made: it is a big member state, but the weakest of the big states. Poles try to compensate for this weaknesses with two elements. First of all, with excellent policy preparations and negotiations, especially sensitive topics such as energy security, climate change and East European policy. Secondly, they have built coalitions of the willing with like-minded partners. It was the case during the climate-energy package negotiations in 2008 and climate debate in 2009 (a coalition of most of the new member states), the Eastern Partnership (a coalition of the Visegrad, Baltic and Nordic countries), or in reaction to the economic and financial crisis (i.e. to differentiate that not all post-communist countries are close to bankruptcy). Also, strategic partnerships have been re-thought. Relations with Germany are crucial for Poland; for the first time in 2009, the German side recognized that for them relations with Poland were of the same importance as with France. However, despite the higher position of Poland in the EU it should be remembered that the Polish leverage on Prague is quite limited.

At the same time, the Czech Republic seems to be in the middle of the confusion. Its EU rotating Presidency has been a rather negative experience, leaving the country with lost impact and credibility in EU affairs. But if the Czech powers have been limited in 2009 and the country has next to no impact in the EU, it needs to be remembered that this can be temporary. The EU is a dynamic element and its political life is characterized by a short-term memory. Yes, it is easy to ruin one's reputation, but to undo the damage is possible, provided there are leaders who are dedicated and possess the conviction to achieve this objective. Yet, some conclusions need to be drawn from the process. The post-EU Presidency stigma needs to be removed. More importantly, confrontation with EU institutions and other member countries cannot be an option for any member country; one can only lose with a confrontational approach. The problem is that only the political class can end the confusion. The presence of President Klaus as Czech Head of State for quite some time may prove problematic in upcoming years. However, the 2010 parliamentary elections represent a good chance for the Czech political class to attempt a renewal.

SIZE MATTERS!

There has been an extremely long-standing lie present the Czech-Polish relations. Most of literature on the subject treats both countries as being of similar size. After all, in 1989 it did not matter how big a post-communist country was. Size played no role in the success or failure of a given country during transformation. Also, during the EU accession negotiations size did not play much of a role: each of the applicant countries had to change their national legislations and reform state structures. Three countries switched between the role of a regional leader: the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary. They jointly adhered to NATO in 1999 and collectively with other states to the EU in 2004.

Since 2004, size has begun to matter. Even during the economic crisis a partial explanation of why Poland does better than everybody else is its size: a larger internal market; a limited role of exports in the nation's GDP, etc. Also, in terms of European politics the Poles have decided to play big and so far have done it reasonably well. The Czech Republic, on the other hand, seems to be undergoing an identity crisis, like most other newer members. Who we are and what we are and what we can do in this Union of half-a-billion people? The Czech Republic is among the smaller EU member states. Only once the Czech leaders accommodate this terrible news – pride difficult to swallow – that their northeastern neighbor is four times larger and therefore can successfully behave differently – only then Czech Republic will be in a position to maximize its potential in the European Union.

SMALL BUT SMART MEMBER STATES (SMS)

All the EU member countries are small. After all, Germany is the size of Vietnam and France and the UK are comparable with Thailand. Yet, within the European context, all three European nations are giants. Together with Italy and Spain, and since 2007–8 (at least politically) Poland they compose what the French President Sarkozy once called the G-6. Yet, the EU is not ruled by the largest – history has proven these are in no position to impose their will on other member countries. Many of the smaller nations are highly successful in the EU both economically and politically. For the purpose of this text, we can call them “small & smart” or “small but smart” member states. In Western Europe these are countries such as Belgium, Ireland, Denmark, Sweden, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Finland. The newer countries are still learning how to become an “sms” state. Why are those smaller nations so successful in defending their national interests, in promoting their people and views?

There are different ways to become an “sms”. First, a country needs to understand that there is a structural, institutional ally of all smaller nations in the EU, the European Commission. This institution’s primary role is to safeguard the treaties. Universal application of common laws is in everybody’s interest. The Commission operates on the basis of the inclusiveness of all views. Only those who do not speak are not heard; if only the larger countries speak – only they are taken into account. “Sms” states are more active in dialogue with the European Commission than the larger countries.

Second, it needs to be understood that closer integration and the strengthening of pan-European institutions is beneficial for smaller nations. This includes the Commission, but also the Parliament and the European Court of Justice. For example, a weaker Commission means a challenge to the application of European rules – when weakened the Commission is more vulnerable for larger member countries’ special requests. When the Commission is stronger, universal application of laws is beneficial for everybody.

Within the countries, an “sms” state needs to support and seek the construction of coalitions composed of smaller nations. Collectively, they constitute a significant power. Together, the three Benelux nations or the three Nordic countries have more votes than Germany or France. The Benelux and Nordic bloc together have more powers than the Franco-German duo. But these coalitions do not have to be only regional (like say, the V4) – if a larger country like Poland formed “a strategic alliance” with Spain on the issue of the voting rules in the Council of Ministers back in 2004–5, then there should be willingness within the newer smaller nations to seek coalitions with other like-minded states even if they are on the other side of the Union.

Sometimes, an “sms” country can play the role of intermediary in a conflict situation between the larger member countries or between one of the larger states and the rest of the Union. It is often the case of Belgium which offers a platform of middle ground for the French and the Germans; the Dutch help a lot when it comes to deadlocks between the French, the Germans and the British; while the Irish help the British to come out when cornered.

Yet a smaller nation is not a big state. Individually it means little, but collectively they can do miracles. In this context, the Polish position is particular. Even when its government pursues the policy of a big country, the country is the smallest and weakest of the EU’s large players. It is true that the Polish European policy works. But there is a significant risk attached to the fact that Poles walk on a thin rope. This is the classical big member state risk of alienating smaller member states, especially fellow newer member countries and the Nordic bloc. But in the Polish case the costs of ‘losing allies’ would be very high: it is the smallest of the big and one of the poorest in the Union, with an economy the size of the Netherlands and outside of the eurozone. It has been successful only because Poles have been able to complement their deficiencies within larger coalitions.

The second risk is linked to the series of domestic elections planned for late 2010–2011, after which a regional political class, a new President and a new Parliament will be elected. The domestic situation is such that the political forces which ruled the country between 2005 and 2007 are still strong and have not been marginalized. Their return to the Government could have devastating effects for the Polish position in the EU.

DELIVERING THE PUBLIC GOODS

Following the discussion on how to maximize influence for the Czech Republic and Poland in the EU, it is also interesting to see what kind of public goods the Czech-Polish pairing could seek to deliver. Probably in practically all policy areas a close cooperation between the two states would be beneficial; they represent similar views in most policy areas. The one that seems particularly important is the accession to the eurozone. Membership in the zone has a potential of creating new dividing lines in Europe, as more and more economic decisions will be taken within the group; the states outside of the group would have to follow; only the United Kingdom has an economy large enough to pursue a more independent policy. Therefore accession to the eurozone in political terms may mean in the new decade the same as accession to the EU did in 2000s: a place among the decision-makers. Among other public areas where the Czechs and Poles seem to have simi-

lar interests are Eastern Europe, energy supplies security and how to phase out the economic stimulus packages of 2009.

A specific occasion for closer cooperation is the upcoming Polish preparation for its EU rotating Presidency in 2011. Firstly, the Poles need to try to avoid the Czech mistakes, which may prove difficult if parliamentary elections are to be scheduled in the Fall of 2011. Poland will also have the difficult task of playing an honest broker respected by all partners since it is a major stakeholder in many policy areas – here some assistance would be more than welcome (i.e. for the Czech Republic to represent also the Polish national position, while the official Polish interest cannot be fully manifested during negotiations). Poland and the Czech Republic have the same structural disease of post-communist public administration. Many of those bureaucratic post-communist limitations will only manifest themselves during the second half of 2011. Empirical knowledge about how to address the problem is surely much greater in Prague than Warsaw. Also, potential limited trust towards the upcoming Presidency can be addressed only by an increased presence of all of Central Europe in Brussels – a lesson Czechs understood all too well, but also too late.

In conclusion, the Polish-Czech Strategic Partnership can enjoy a great future, if the commitment is strong on both sides. For the Czech Republic, Poland is the first big member country which they have direct access to (but not the only one! Privileged access to the United Kingdom might become very valuable in 2010). For Poland, a strategic partnership could become a place to present their own national positions (through the Czech Republic) during the EU Presidency.

Yet there are inherent problems in such a strategic partnership. There might be a proliferation of 'strategic partnerships' – hence making one insignificant. After all, two states are naturally exposed to different worlds. For the Czech Republic the first partners should be other smaller EU nations and the entire group of former Hapsburg Empire countries. Poland's dreams are for a workable and a well-functioning Weimar Triangle. And on top of things, can it work? Do the two countries trust each other enough to treat each other as partners – or friends – taking into account difficult bilateral pre-enlargement and post-enlargement relations?

THE NEXT EU MULTI-ANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK AND CZECH-POLISH RELATIONS

Vít Dostál

INTRODUCTION

The European Union Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF)¹ always produces a lot of havoc in Brussels. As the member states are the biggest contributors to the budget and are expected to fight for outlays, the most important decisions are concluded among various prime ministers and presidents at the level of the European Council. Taking into account the fact, that unanimity is needed to reach a final deal, a heated debate about the next financial perspective can be assumed.²

Furthermore, the current budgetary framework (for the years 2007-2013) was adopted in December 2005 only with the condition that there would be a far-reaching revision of the budget structure, in terms of both revenue and distribution.³ The EU faces new challenges and a certain change can be observed in attitude towards the traditional outlays of the EU budget. Issues like energy security, growth & jobs, climate change or EU competitiveness in the world economy attract a great deal of attention in terms of policy; therefore, one can assume that they would be reflected in the Union's budgetary plans. Nevertheless, there are also others who are confident that the EU budget should remain as is. We can expect the emergence of two camps among the member states; the first will opt for revision of the budget and the second will strive for retaining it in its current shape. Needless to say, the final outcome will be a kind of compromise. However, there are many variables which could be essential for various member states' priorities, and thus no phase of the MFF approval process should be neglected by any important player of the European Union political system.

The next MFF should begin in 2014 and last until 2020. Poland will hold the rotating EU Council Presidency in the second half of 2011, when some important decisions on the MFF will definitely be taken. Moreover, it is the biggest net beneficiary of the EU budget, so we can expect that it will play hard in order not to face drastic cuts in EU money flowing to Poland. On the other hand, Czechs face

1 The MFF is also called the Financial Perspective. For the current legal basis of the MFF see Article 312 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Thanks to the Lisbon Treaty, the MFF was incorporated into the EU Treaties. Prior, the financial perspectives had been agreed on the basis of so called Inter-institutional Agreements between the Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament.

2 According to the Lisbon Treaty the European Parliament has received higher competencies with respect to the annual EU budget (see Article 314 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union). The Parliament is now together with the Council jointly responsible for the entire budget, since it has gained the final say in compulsory expenditures as well. Therefore, we can expect increased assertiveness of the European Parliament with regard to the MFF.

3 Reforming Budget, Changing Europe – A Public Consultation Paper in View of the 2008-2009 Budget Review, SEC 1188, European Commission, Brussels, 12. 9. 2007, p. 2 (http://ec.europa.eu/budget/reform/library/issue_paper/consultation_paper_en.pdf).

damaged credibility after their turbulent EU Council Presidency and the difficult Lisbon Treaty ratification process. Furthermore, the Czech Republic is closer to the EU average in macroeconomic figures, and the structure of its economy signals that the position of net beneficiary which it now possess, will not last long.

The basic aim of this article is to estimate where the Czech Republic and Poland will stand in the debate about the next MFF, and why. Moreover, it will attempt to find the conflicting and overlapping priorities and, last but not least, some suggestions for the governments will be introduced. However, before turning to the specific issues, I will describe the current state of the budgetary review and outline the expected events which might determine the final outcome.

THE BUDGETARY REVIEW

As was mentioned in the introduction, the budgetary review was predetermined already in the Council decision concluding the talks on the Financial Framework of 2007–2013. The main row in the negotiations, which took place during the Luxemburg and United Kingdom Presidencies in 2005, were about Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) spending and correction mechanisms, namely the UK Rebate. On the other hand, all of the budgetary issues are interconnected and the Commission was tasked to “undertake a full, wide-ranging review covering all aspects of EU spending”.⁴

For this purpose, the Commission opened a standard public consultation procedure, whereby many ambitious and revolutionary views on the EU budget were collected. The procedure was concluded by the conference on the future of the EU budget in November 2008 and the Commissioner for Budgetary Affairs, Dalia Grybauskaitė, was expected to draft the full review. However, the process was then frozen. The mood was not ideal for opening new and complicated topics prior to the completion of the Lisbon Treaty ratification by all member states. Moreover, there is also a sort of gentleman’s agreement that the Commission would wait with any new initiatives for the newly-elected Parliament and lastly, the Barroso I Commission was expected to be replaced already in summer 2009, so it seemed reasonable to wait until the new College of Commissioners assumed the job.

The MFF and the EU 2020 Strategy, which should replace the terminated and failed Lisbon Strategy, will be the main goals of the Barroso II Commission. Moreover, these two policies will be closely interconnected, as EU spending should be, according to the new commissioner for Budget and Financial Programming Janusz Lewandowski, based on the EU goals outlined in the EU 2020 Strategy. Thus, we

4 Ibid

should expect a mid-term review drawn up by the Commission in the summer or the second half of 2010.⁵

Still, there is also another option, since some believe that the MFF period should reflect the working period of the Commission and the European Parliament.⁶ The only solution for now would seem to be that the current framework be prolonged until 2015.

THE POLISH VIEW – A CONSERVATIVE APPROACH

According to the Polish governmental response to the consultation procedure, Poland is in favor of only slight modification of the budgetary structure and gradual implementation of any changes during the period of the next MFF.⁷ Poland is reluctant in terms of policy towards reduction of the entire EU budget, as its position of net beneficiary will most probably remain unaltered.

Firstly, the Polish reaction stresses social and territorial cohesion. Polish regions are among the poorest in the EU and only the Masovian Voivodeship rates over 75 % GDP per capita according to the EU average. Under current circumstances, 75 % is the dividing line in order to be eligible for the Structural Funds' goal I – Convergence. All other Polish voivodeships are under 65 % and it is not probable that they will break the limit of 75 % by 2013.⁸ Thus, it seems to be favorable for Poland to keep the rules for distribution of Structural Funds and to thus receive the assigned substantive amount of money into this budgetary chapter. Furthermore, Poland as a country has a GDP per capita of 56.4 % of the EU average.⁹ Therefore, it will probably not rise above the 90% which would disqualify it from allocation of sources from the Cohesion Fund – and would presumably prefer to retain the Cohesion Fund in the current form.

Secondly, we should take into account the size of the Polish agricultural sector and the sensitivity of this issue in Polish politics. Thus, Poland will strive for

5 Summary of the Hearing of Janusz Lewandowski – Budget, (http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/008-66987-008-01-02-901-20100108IPR66980-08-01-2010-2010-false/default_en.htm).

6 Ibid; A. Iozzo, S. Micossi, M. T. Salvemini, A New Budget for the European Union?, CEPS, May 2008, p 7.

7 Poland's Reply to "A Public Consultation Paper in View of the 2008-2009 Budget Review " (http://ec.europa.eu/budget/reform/library/contributions/pgs/20080409_PGS_22_en.pdf).

8 Figures are collected from the last Eurostat data from the year 2006 (<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/mapToolClosed.do?tab=map&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tgs00006&toolbox=legend#>).

9 Figures according to Eurostat date from 2008 (<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tsieb010>).

keeping the community character of the CAP and the extensive resources flowing into it.¹⁰

Among other Polish priorities will definitely be investment into the energy and transport networks, as these are the Polish priorities within the EU. Moreover, Poland as the main proponent of the Eastern Partnership will focus on the adequate allocation of funds to transformation assistance of the six Eastern Partnership countries.

Last but not least, we have to take into account the fact that the posts which are important for budgetary reform are now occupied by persons which should understand the Polish governmental view on the MFF. As has already been mentioned, the new commissioner for Budget and Financial Programming is Janusz Lewandowski, a member of the governing Polish party Civic Platform and the former chair and vice-chair of the EP Budgetary Committee. Moreover, the commissioner responsible for Agriculture and Rural Development, Dacian Ciolos, comes from Romania, which in regard to the CAP is in a similar position to Poland. Last but not least, the chair of the EP Committee on the Regional Development, an important body when speaking about the future of the Cohesion Policy, is a Pole, Danuta Hübner, a former commissioner for the same area and a member of the Civic Platform.

To summarize the Polish view on the forthcoming MFF, we can state that Poland will be a hard player and, looking at the distribution of the important posts in the EP and the Commission, we might add that it already now understands what is at stake.

THE CZECH PERSPECTIVE – PREFERRING GRADUAL REFORM

The Czech Republic is in a different position. Its economical convergence with the EU-15 is faster, which indicates that the Czech budgetary priorities will vary from the Polish one.

The Czech Republic stressed in its respond to the public consultation procedure¹¹ the importance of the Cohesion Policy (which now includes the Cohesion and Structural Funds), however, it underlined that the resources should flow mainly into cross-border cooperation and the least-developed regions. Hence, it seems that the Czech Republic will move away from support from the Structural Fund

10 Budżetu UE według państw członkowskich – na podstawie oficjalnych odpowiedzi na Komunikat Komisji Europejskiej, lipiec 2008 roku ([http://www.ukie.gov.pl/HLP/files.nsf/0/8EE79EFC6A0DF914C1257486003F58D1/\\$file/Stanowiska_panstw_z_Polska.pdf](http://www.ukie.gov.pl/HLP/files.nsf/0/8EE79EFC6A0DF914C1257486003F58D1/$file/Stanowiska_panstw_z_Polska.pdf)).

11 Contribution of the Czech Republic to the Debate on EU Budget Review (http://ec.europa.eu/budget/reform/library/contributions/pgs/20080603_PGS_79.pdf).

goal I – Convergence, as the Czech NUTS II regions are quickly catching up to the limit of 75 % GDP per capita in regard to the EU average.^{12 13} On the other hand, as almost all NUTS II regions in the Czech Republic are border regions, it also logically stresses trans-border cooperation.

Nevertheless, a different approach is suggested by the Czech Civic Democratic Party in its European Parliament election manifesto. It proposes a kind of phasing-out system for the regions which will get over 75 % GDP per capita of the EU average.¹⁴ Paradoxically, if the general elections in May 2010 are won by their main opponents, the Social Democrats, it might be expected that they will strive for such a phasing-out system as well, since these regions are governed by the Social Democrats. Thus, we can predict that the governmental position will reflect the interests of regional colleagues from the same party. Hence, it might be said that the Czech position in the consultation procedure should not be taken as final for negotiations, as it is still developing and various ideas, mainly in regard to the future of the Cohesion Policy, continue to emerge.

Despite the fact that the Czech Republic sided with Poland in the CAP Health Check, in which both countries fought for balancing the positions of farmers from old and new member states, we should not expect that this honeymoon will survive debate on the future of this policy. Agriculture is not a huge issue in Czech politics, since only around 4% of the labor force is employed in this sector.¹⁵ Therefore, the Czech Republic supports the gradual reduction of the first pillar of the CAP (market support and direct subsidies) and, on the other hand, increasing of the share of the second pillar aimed at rural development.¹⁶

In conclusion regarding the Czech position, it must be also pointed out that among the leading Czech policy goals in the EU are areas such as energy security, the Eastern Partnership and the development of transport networks, which will be supposedly reflected in its attitude towards the MFF.

12 Figures collected from the last Eurostat data from the year 2006 (<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/mapToolClosed.do?tab=map&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tgs00006&toolbox=legend#>).

13 The same is case for the whole country as it is now on the level of 80.3 % GDP per capita of the EU average, which will soon exclude it from the Cohesion Fund, if the same rules apply in the next MFF. For figures see the Eurostat data from 2008 (<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tsieb010>).

14 Volební program ODS pro volby do Evropského parlamentu (http://www.ods.cz/docs/programy/program_2009ep.pdf).

15 P. Kuchyňková, *Reforma společné zemědělské politiky - cíle české politiky*; in V. Dočkal (eds.), *Česká politika v Evropské unii – Evropský integrační proces a zájmy České republiky*, IIPS, Brno, 2006.

16 Contribution of the Czech Republic to the Debate on EU Budget Review (http://ec.europa.eu/budget/reform/library/contributions/pgs/20080603_PGS_79.pdf).

CONCLUSION – CONFLICT AS MUCH AS CONSENSUS

After the description of both the Czech and Polish position, several observations might be highlighted. There are several areas where Prague and Warsaw stand in different camps; yet there are also priorities in which the Czech and the Polish views overlap.

Firstly, we should face that the approach towards the future of the CAP differs between the Czech Republic and Poland. The extensive share of the Polish labor force employed in agriculture will not disappear any time soon, so the importance of the backing of Polish agriculture by the EU will remain a cornerstone of Polish European policy for the next decade. On the other hand, Czechs are already voicing their readiness for substantive reform of the CAP.

The second important issue is the Cohesion Policy. The Polish position seems to be clear. It will strive for as large as possible an allocation of funds, as Poland perceives the convergence between the less and more developed member states and regions as one of the EU priorities. On the other hand, the Czech position remains unclear. The first option is that the Czech Republic will promote the orientation of funds into the least developed regions and will stress the importance of cross-border cooperation. The second possibility is that the Prague will prefer a broader attitude, which would include a phasing-out system for some regions already surpassing the line of 75% GDP per capita of the EU average. In the former scenario, the Czechs would support the Polish regions, which are among the least developed EU areas; however, this approach would be probably accompanied by less willingness to allocate extensive resources into this budgetary chapter. The latter option would mean that Prague would be in favor of a huge amount of funds flowing into territorial cohesion; nevertheless, the phasing-out system would distribute some resources among regions which have already surpassed the limit of 75% GDP per capita of the EU average, which might not be welcomed in Warsaw. Altogether, there is a chance for an agreement between the Czech Republic and Poland on the Cohesion Policy provided that both sides possess good insight into their partners' policies and would be ready to make concessions in some issues.

Concerning the rest of the budgetary issues, it might be stated that there is a large area for cooperation. Moreover, the positions are not yet that sharpened, as both countries are probably waiting for the final form of the EU 2020 strategy. Nevertheless, it is already clear that among the Polish and Czech priorities in the EU for the next decade will be energy security, the improvement of transport networks, which implies investments into infrastructure, and the Eastern Partnership, which entails funding of transformation assistance in those countries of the post-

Soviet area. Therefore, there is definitely a chance for close cooperation and coalition-building in these selected issues.

Although the Czech EU Council Presidency meant a turbulent period for the EU, Poland (as with Germany) never faltered in support. Moreover, communication between the Czech and Polish Ministries of Foreign Affairs is extensive in the field of Presidency experience sharing. Thus, we can say that Warsaw expects that the Czech Republic will side with Poland during its Presidency. However, taking into account the fact that the Presidency should deal with the budgetary review and the next MFF, it should be expected that their policies will be divergent. Therefore, particular attention should be paid to good communication between the Czech and Polish governments on these issues. Furthermore, this issue should be placed on the agenda of the Visegrad ministerial meetings in order to achieve better synergy of policies towards the MFF across the entire region.



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