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Domestic Politics in Czech Foreign Policy: Between Consensus and Clash

Summary: This article is an attempt to analyze the impact of domestic politics on foreign policy. In order to do so, four domestic factors relevant for foreign policy are identified and then defined with respect to the development after the 2006 parliamentary elections. It is argued that the foreign policy process is substantially molded by ideology of the relevant parties, by the 'issue area' involved, by the constitutional and institutional setting and by the interplay between the relevant actors. Focusing on these factors should allow us to grasp both the immediate changes in foreign policy resulting from domestic politics as well as to delineate a long term framework of which the foreign policy process unfolds. The article will conclude with an overview of the key foreign policy issues of the day, aiming to explore the link between the identified relevant domestic political factors and the actual foreign policy outcome.

Any attempt to analyze the impact of domestic politics on foreign policy making¹ necessarily begins by an almost helpless stare at the overwhelming stack of different research approaches. These approaches are based on all sorts of epistemological, ontological, methodological as well as substantive platforms². Therefore, it is necessary, to execute certain form(s) of

¹ Since this article deals explicitly and exclusively with the influence of *domestic politics* not with the *domestic setting* in general, many important aspects of foreign policy's variables (such as wealth, territorial and population size etc.) will be left out.

² See W. Carlsnaes, "Foreign Policy", W. Carlsnaes, T. Risse, B. A. Simmons (eds.) *Handbook of International Relations* (London: SAGE Publications, 2001); V. M. Hudson, Ch. S.

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this research scope's reduction. The first reduction chosen for the purposes of this text is an ontological one: the approach adopted here tends to explain foreign policy outcomes from an 'actor-specific'³ perspective. That should not imply that no structural forces are at play; on the contrary, it is too often the case that foreign policy is but a response to an external development. The 'actor-specific' approach only suggests that domestic politics does not 'stop at the water's edge'⁴, that is that domestic politics extend beyond the state borders and contribute in a fundamental way to the foreign policy making process.

Contrary to the structural perspective⁵ that treats states as essentially monolithic units whose internal structures and value systems are largely irrelevant for understanding their external conduct, the 'actor specific' approach adopts a view that the way state shapes its foreign policy (or the way it responds to the systemic environment) should be regarded as essentially a function of internal predispositions.⁶

The above outlined approach represents one of the most fundamental ontological choices for which there is no epistemological or other external justification⁷. Therefore, it seems pointless to carry on with the discussion any further. Yet, we still have to choose factors we deem relevant for foreign policy making. Even only a brief glance at the development of *Comparative Foreign Policy* (CFP) and *Foreign Policy Analysis* (FPA) disciplines reveals a vast array of theoretical and analytical choices available to the researcher. To name just a few of them – decision making approaches⁸, organizational process and

bureaucratic politics⁹, cognitive¹⁰, psychological, identity, role and culture based approaches¹¹ and so on.

The richness and diversity of the FPA research tradition even gives rise to valid doubts whether it is "possible to synthesize or integrate at least some of these" approaches.¹² As a result of these doubts, many of the students choose to focus on an extremely specific and narrow aspect of foreign policy, sacrificing the complexity in order to further deepen our theoretical understanding.

While I fully agree with this strategy, it is not the path taken here. In this article, I will (albeit somewhat eclectically), identify and define four factors which I deem to be relevant for an analysis of domestic politics and foreign policy interplay. These factors are: 1) ideology of the relevant political parties and that of other key foreign policy actors; 2) power distribution among the relevant parties; 3) constitutional and institutional setting, the decision-making process; 4) interrelationship between the relevant actors of foreign policy.

This analytical choice, again, is hardly to be justified in generally accepted terms. However, it is fair to at least explain the choice. An explanation lies in the fact that these factors are 1) frequently used within the FPA; 2) they are both of a highly dynamic nature (party politics, power distribution, actual interrelationship between actors) as well as they are relatively stable (party ideology, constitutional setting). As such, this choice should be able to allow us to grasp both the immediate changes in foreign policy resulting from domestic politics as well as to delineate a long term framework within which the foreign policy process unfolds. It is by no means claimed that the above-described focus allows dealing with the complexity of such an immense phenomenon as 'foreign policy'. Yet, it is not the goal here. The only aim is to understand and explain certain aspects of Czech foreign policy, namely the impact of domestic politics on foreign policy, by focusing on certain explicitly stated factors.

⁹ See G. T. Allison *The Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*. (Glenview: Scott Foresman, 1971), see also J. A. Garrison: *Foreign Policy Making and Group Dynamics: Where We've Been and Where We're Going*; J. A. Garrison *Foreign Policy Analysis in 20/20: A Symposium*. *International Studies Review*, Vol. 5, No. 5 (2003), pp. 155 – 156.

¹⁰ For an overview, see J. A. Rosati, "A Cognitive Approach to the Study of Foreign Policy", L. Neack, J. A. K. Hey, P. J. Haney *Foreign Policy Analysis: Continuity and Change in Its Second Generation*. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1995).

¹¹ See e. g. V. M. Hudson (ed.) *Culture and Foreign Policy*. (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers).

¹² W. Carlsnaes, "Foreign Policy", W. Carlsnaes, T. Risse, B. A. Simmons (eds.) *Handbook of International Relations*. (London: SAGE Publications, 2001), pp. 348 – 349.

Vore, "Foreign Policy Analysis Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow", *Mershon International Studies Review* Vol. 39, No. 2/1995, p. 210.

³ For a thorough explanation and contextualization of the term 'actor-specific' see for example: V. Hudson "Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations", *Foreign Policy Analysis* Vol. 1, No. 1/2005.

⁴ This term is borrowed from: T. J. Volgy, J. E. Schwarz, "Does Politics Stop at the Water's Edge? Domestic Political Factors and Foreign Policy Restructuring in the Cases of Great Britain, France, and West Germany", *The Journal of Politic*, Vol. 53, No. 3/1991, pp. 615 – 643.

⁵ For classic systemic perspective works, see: K. N. Waltz *Theory of International Politics*. (New York: MacGraw-Hill, 1979); A. Wendt *Social Theory of International Politics*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999).

⁶ W. F. Hanrieder, 'Actor Objectives and International Systems' *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Feb., 1965), p. 110.

⁷ See Colin Wight *Agents, Structures and International Relations: Politics as Ontology*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006).

⁸ For a paradigmatic and pioneering study, see R., C., H. Snyder and W. Bruck and B. Sapin (eds.) *Foreign Policy Decision-Making: An Approach to the Study of International Politics*. (Glencoe: Free Press, 1962).

Issue Area and Foreign Policy Analysis

Many students of foreign policy have invested a lot of energy in solving the following puzzle: why is it that the process of foreign policy making is often so different with respect to various issues? The question of how different types of issues evoke different behavior on the part of different actors was thoroughly examined especially during the 1960s and 1970s. One of the most important contributions from the field of political science was Theodor Lowi's 'public policy issues area' typology.¹³ His call was further answered for example by Michael Brecher, William Zimmermann, Thomas Brewer or William C. Potter. In general, all these authors agree that whether domestic politics have some significant impact on the conduct of foreign policy depends on the nature of the issue in question. As a consequence, it has to be expected that the policy process does not unfold similarly with respect to any issue. Some issues, from their very nature, attract more political attention than others. Due to their attractiveness, these issues provoke political actors to enter the process of policy making; on the contrary, less attractive issues are then handled almost exclusively by the lower-level executive or administrative bodies (in our case, mostly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or sector ministries).¹⁴ The attractiveness of various issues can be said to depend on two factors: 1) their relevance for deep ideological commitments of a given political actor; 2) its relevance for the outside-the-state context. Obviously, in the case both of these factors coincide, the particular 'issue area' becomes extremely sensitive and manifests in the foreign policy making process.

Foreign Political Ideology

To be able to identify an 'issue area', it is necessary first to define the most vibrant ideological options in the Czech foreign policy. Unfortunately, there are more than few concepts and terms in IR that continuously escape both substantial attention and at least some marginally accepted definition. 'Ideology' is certainly one of them. For the purpose of this study, I employ a definition suggested by Alexander George: "political ideology [is] a set of fundamental beliefs ... a belief system that explains and justifies a preferred" political action and "contain[s] some notion of a program and at least a

¹³ T. Lowi, "American Business, Public Policy, Case Studies, and Political Theory", *World Politics* (July 1964), pp. 677 – 715.

¹⁴ For an overview of the 'issue area' research, see W. Potter, "Issue Area and Foreign Policy Analysis", *International Organization* Vol. 34, No. 3 (Summer, 1980), pp. 405 – 427.

general strategy for its realization".¹⁵ In this broad sense, ideology does not present only a set of fundamental beliefs but also some sense of the ways to promote them. 'Foreign political ideology' thus not only consists of the deep beliefs about the preferred international order and the role the Czech republic should play therein, but also of the basic strategies of achieving this preferred order.

All political parties included in this analysis essentially agree on the main goal of foreign policy, which is on the need to safeguard security, prosperity, territorial integrity and stability of the Czech Republic. What brings the disagreements on the stage are the different views of the ways on how to achieve these goals. In their study, P. Drulák, M. Kořan and J. Růžička identified four basic ideological pools that serve as a legitimization basis for promoting particular foreign policy choices in the Czech Republic: *Internationalism, Autonomism, Europeanism* and *Atlanticism*¹⁶. Members of these 'epistemic communities'¹⁷ "contribute to foreign policy making and foreign policy public debates, while sharing some basic normative assumptions about international relations and a desirable foreign policy orientation"¹⁸. The basic tenets of the respective orientations are demonstrated in chart 1.

Chart 1: *Basic Tenets of the Fourfold Ideological Division of Foreign Policy Orientations.*

		Deepening Transatlantic Relations	
		Yes	No
Deepening European Integration	Yes	Internationalists	Europeanists
	No	Atlanticists	Autonomists

Source: P. Drulák, M. Kořan, J. Růžička, "Visegrad in Turmoil", forthcoming.

¹⁵ A. L. George *On Foreign Policy: Unfinished Business*. (London: Paradigm Publishers, 2006), pp. 1 and 3.

¹⁶ P. Drulák, M. Kořan, J. Růžička, "Visegrad in Turmoil", forthcoming, see also P. Drulák, "Záhada české zahraniční politiky", *Lidové noviny* July 25, 2006.

¹⁷ For overview of the 'epistemic communities' approach, see P.M. Haas, "Introductions: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination," *International Organization* 46:1 (1992): 1 – 35.

¹⁸ P. Drulák, M. Kořan, J. Růžička, *op. cit.*

Europeanists agree on the need to strengthen Europe and to deepen its political integration. They tend to be quite lukewarm with regard to the USA, often even opposing its foreign policy. Their view of Russia is pragmatic and it focuses on the development of economic relations. This orientation is especially strong in the centre-leftist *Czech Social Democratic Party* (ČSSD). With certain reservations, it accepted NATO membership. However, since the 2000s it embraces more Europeanist positions.^{19,20} A very strong tendency towards Europeanism can be found within the *Green party* (SZ).

Atlanticists represent the mirror image of Europeanists. They stress the significance of trans-Atlantic relations²¹, both at the bilateral and multilateral level, and the development of relations with the United States and the strengthening of NATO. They do not see the EU as a potential competitor to the USA. Therefore, they are wary of any deepening of European integration and prefer its further enlargement instead. In this respect, they are especially critical of the EU's plans for a common defense policy, a goal which they deem incompatible with transatlantic defense. To a variable degree, all Atlanticists are rather hesitant with regard to Russia, perceiving it as a potential threat and prefer to stress the political instead of economic dimension. The bulwark of the Czech Atlanticists is the neo-liberal *Civic Democratic Party* (ODS), champion of the 2006 elections. ODS traditionally supported Czech membership into the EU but at the same time it voices serious doubts about many of its features. While NATO is perceived as being based on common transatlantic values, the EU is ascribed just economic benefits.²²

Autonomism stresses the preservation of national sovereignty and broad autonomy, which they see threatened by both the EU and NATO. Czech Autonomists are represented by the *Communist Party* (KSČM), which has been the third strongest parliamentary party since the early 1990s. The KSČM is constantly hostile towards NATO; its goal is NATO dissolution in a long term perspective and the Czech NATO membership suspension in a short term perspective. Its stance towards the EU is more differentiated. On one hand, it recognizes European integration as unavoidable; on the other hand, it rejects the Czech membership conditions as well as the European Constitutional treaty.²³

¹⁹ The ČSSD for example refused to sign the public letter supporting the US policy before the Iraq war.

²⁰ P. Drulák, M. Kořan, J. Růžička, *op. cit.*

²¹ R. Asmus, A. Vondra, "The origins of Atlanticism in Central and Eastern Europe", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* Vol. 18, No. 2 (2005), pp. 203 – 216.

²² P. Drulák, M. Kořan, J. Růžička, *op. cit.*

²³ P. Drulák, M. Kořan, J. Růžička, *op. cit.*, for a recent reference, see e. g. "Stanovisko KSČM k Berlínské deklaraci", *Česká zahraniční politika: Dokumenty*. (Prague: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, March, 2007), p. 54.

Internationalists deem both the EU and transatlantic relations to be equally important. They do not see any contradiction between a strong NATO and a European constitution with strong European defense capabilities. Both provide means to further liberal-democratic and socio-economic development as well as security; therefore, the USA and Germany are considered essential partners. In case of a clash between the two, such as during the Iraq war, Internationalists tend to avoid a strong stance. There is yet another important dimension of internationalism, one which was left aside by the analysis conducted by P. Drulák and his colleagues. This dimension is best characterized by an adherence to the idea of an active human-rights promotion and worldwide support for democracy dissemination. Internationalists are currently represented by the centre-right *Christian Democratic Party* (KDU-ČSL), a junior party in most governmental coalitions; elements of Internationalism also can be found within the new parliament party, the Greens.²⁴

The ideational landscape resists any clear-cut description – there are important cleavages within the parties themselves. As a result we can see germs of *Europeanism* within the KSČM, those of *Internationalism* within ODS and SZ and so forth.²⁵ Despite this, the party programs as prepared for the 2006 Chamber of Deputies elections clearly reflected the above outlined division. Moreover, the nature of the election programs eloquently points at the fact that the respective positions towards EU integration and transatlantic relations were extremely high on the agenda while other issues (economic diplomacy, human rights, eastern and central European dimension of foreign policy as well as other territorial dimensions) remained rather unstructured and unarticulated.²⁶

In terms of ideology, we can conclude that the essentials of foreign policy's ideational schemes revolves around four basic issues – stance of the Czech republic towards the European integration, strength of its transatlantic ties, the extent of its relative autonomy and its commitment to spreading the democratic and human rights ideal around the world.

²⁴ P. Drulák, M. Kořan, J. Růžička, *op. cit.*

²⁵ The picture is further complicated by the fact that (especially in the second government formed by Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek /ODS/), there are significant foreign policy actors formally untied to any of the political parties and with an outstanding dissident past. The most important of those are Alexander Vondra, Minister of foreign affairs in the first Topolánek's government and Vice-prime minister for European Affairs in the current government together with Karel Schwarzengerg, recent Minister of foreign affairs. At the beginning of the 1990s, both of them were close fellows of Václav Havel and into a variable extent their orientations still reflect the *esprit de corps* of the 1990s.

²⁶ V. Nekvapil, A. Berdych (eds) *Česká zahraniční politika a volby 2006*. (Prague: AMO, 2006).

Taking the 'issue area' approach into account, it is to be expected that all issues related – in one way or another – to the above depicted fundamental pillars have the potential to generate more political interest than others. The 2006 pre-election campaign is in no way capable to demonstrate this point since the campaign was everything else but not about foreign policy (indeed, it cannot be overstated how little attention was paid to foreign policy

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and the European agenda during the campaign). However, as we will see, the post-election development with all its controversies over the EU constitutional treaty and the US anti-missile radar emplacement proves this point more than sufficiently.

Impact of Foreign Policy Ideology

An assessment of the relative influence of respective ideational orientations on the actual foreign policy output is made difficult by several factors. First, it is the general weakness of social science based on a single qualitative observation that it is unable to measure the 'causal weight' of relevant variables. Single qualitative observation (e. g. a single case study)

does not allow substituting the laboratory experiment by rigor comparison or by large-N quantitative research. As such, single qualitative observation does not champion in specifying the extent to which the supposed causal mechanism influences observable outcomes; rather, it scores better in specifying the *ways* in which casual mechanism and scope conditions affect the outcome.²⁷

Second, and for the matter more importantly, the bearers of the respective ideological orientations do not enter the foreign policy making arena with the exclusive right to translate them into the actual foreign policy outcome. The Czech political system so far did not allow any political party to form a single-party majority government. There have been only two forms of government – minority government (social-democrat's government of the 1998 – 2002)

²⁷ See, A. L. George, A. Bennet *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Science*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004).

and coalition government (all others). Neither of these forms of government let the actors to formulate their foreign policy goals precisely in accordance with their fundamental beliefs.

Third, after assuming the governmental responsibility and after entering the international stage, the actual foreign policy behavior undergoes a process of 'learning' which often contributes to behavioral changes.²⁸ While it is still rather early to focus on the 'learning' factor, the next part will focus on the way foreign policy goals and strategies are formulated in the current government with respect to its coalition nature.

After a long and torturous process (and after one unsuccessful attempt), the current government was endowed with confidence in January 2007. It is formed by a coalition of three parties – ODS, KDU-ČSL and SZ. The government program is largely based on a coalition agreement, agreed by so called 'coalition nine' (consisting of the three top-ranking party leaders from each party). The biggest ideational split in matters of foreign policy exists between the Civic Democrats (ODS – roughly two fifths of deputies) and the Greens (slightly above one tenth of deputies). Both respective positions can be even characterized as fundamentally opposed to each other. Yet, the coalition agreement and governmental program statement presents a compromise, somehow integrating both irreconcilable stances together.

To begin with, the coalition agreement and the program is framed by a statement that the government will "promote an active, realist and practical foreign policy, observing the geographic reality of the Czech republic, yet, at the same time exerting enough creativity and offensive behavior, *for example with respect to human rights advocacy*."²⁹ This statement corresponds both to the traditional 'realist' and geopolitically determined understanding of foreign policy of the ODS and to the internationalist reading of foreign policy as asserted by the SZ and by the KDU-ČSL in particular. A closer look even reveals that pasting the "human rights advocacy" part substantially twists the original position of the ODS which supports 'creative and offensive behavior' but unambiguously rejects any altruist and idealist elements in foreign policy.³⁰ This statement, thus, can be read as a considerable concession on the part of the ODS to its more internationalist coalition partners. In the part dedicated to the priorities of the Czech EU presidency (CZ-PRESS), the

²⁸ For overview, see J. S. Levy, "Learning and Foreign Policy: Sweeping a Conceptual Minefield", *International Organization* Vol. 48 (Spring 1994).

²⁹ See, "Koaliční dohoda" and "Programové prohlášení vlády České republiky". It has to be noted that (with some exceptions) both documents largely resemble each other.

³⁰ See, J. Zahradil *Realismus místo iluzí*. (Prague: Hlavní kancelář ODS, 2004).

document is fairly close to the Civic Democratic line: the emphasis is placed on the overall liberalization of the EU without any allusion to deepening its political dimension. The accent on 'liberalization', peculiar to the ODS, is also reflected in the statement that government will "assert a liberalization of the world trade". On the other hand, the government made its commitment to "preserving the social and ecological feature" of the EU as well as to "sensitive implementations of the world trade changes"³¹. Note that both of these supplements are entirely opposed to the longtime positions of the ODS.

The program document also includes other foreign policy positions of the *Civic Democrats*. First, it is the stress on further development of the transatlantic dimension of Czech security, specifically mentioning that "assuming greater responsibility for security matters by the EU members [cannot] vitiate the existing [transatlantic] security framework." Second, it is the delegation of European affairs agenda from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to a specific governmental agency³² (materialized in establishment of the office of the vice-premier for European affairs) Third, it is an elimination of the fragmentation of the policy of the Czech Republic's presentation abroad³³ (materialized in establishment of the office of deputy-minister of foreign affairs for the Czech Republic's presentation). However, contrary to the 'pragmatic' and 'realist' reading of foreign policy, the governmental program concludes by once again accentuating its obligation to promoting human rights and democracy around the globe.

Constitutional and Institutional Framework for the Foreign Policy Process

After pointing at the different ideational influences on the general foreign policy orientation we can move to at least a brief introduction of the institutional setting. The setting provides the Czech foreign policy process with its structural frame. This step is necessary in order to understand the ways how the above outlined position are actually translated into foreign policy outcomes.

According to the constitutional design of the Czech Republic, executive actors – the president (currently Václav Klaus) and the government – are the most vital actors in foreign policy. The constitution specifies only few

³¹ "Programové prohlášení..."

³² See, J. Zahradil, *op. cit.*, p. 21. The same position is also a longtime mantra of the Czech president Václav Klaus (see for example interview for BBC Czech, June 9, 2003).

³³ J. Zahradil, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

areas that are directly concerned with foreign policy (see bellow). Therefore, the foreign policy structure is rather driven by the overall constitutional relationship between the executive bodies. Of the two executive actors, it is the government that is the supreme body of the executive power and is responsible for the second chamber of parliament (Chamber of Deputies, PSP ČR)³⁴. While the president is not responsible for any other governmental body, this is the provision that molds the basic platform of the relationship between the president and the government. It is true that the constitution recognizes the president as a head of state and entrusts him with certain (and considerable) foreign policy competences.³⁵ Yet, in order to proceed with these competences, the president needs a countersignature of the prime minister or of the particular minister in charge. And it is the government as a whole who then assumes responsibility for that decision.³⁶ It is precisely this argument that helps to keep the reins of foreign policy in the hands of government in the case of any emerging dispute.³⁷

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On the other hand, for all other less formal activities in the field of foreign policy (official visits, speeches, statements, international organization's meetings and so forth) the Czech president does not need any governmental or parliamentary consent and can act in a fairly autonomous way. In the past, this lack of clear distribution of power and lack of responsibility delineation has generated a considerable amount of controversies and tensions between

³⁴ Article 67, §1 and Article 68 §1 of the constitution.

³⁵ 1) external representation of the state; 2) international treaties' negotiation and ratification; 3) chief command of the armed forces; 4) receiving heads of foreign diplomatic corps; 5) commissioning and retiring heads of the Czech diplomatic corps; (Article 63, §1 of the constitution).

³⁶ Article 63, §4 of the constitution.

³⁷ It should be noted, that president Klaus alone many times acknowledged the supreme role of the government in foreign policy matters. As he for example stated in a speech given on the floor of the Chamber of Deputies in October 2003: "The role of president [...] is not dominant, the responsibility rests on the government and parliament", see, V. Klaus, "Projev v Poslanecké sněmovně", Poslanecká sněmovna PČR (October 15, 2003). On the other hand, especially with respect to the European agenda his approach has been more and more agile (see e. g. V. Klaus *Rok druhý*. (Prague: Euromedia Group K. S., 2006); "President's New Year's Speech", *Zahraniční politika české republiky, Dokumenty*. (January 2007), p. 3.

the government and the president.³⁸ It follows, that the only mechanisms in these matters are careful and sometimes painful negotiations and bargaining between both actors.

In general, it is the government who is responsible for the day-to-day foreign policy conduct; yet, the nature of its communication and power sharing with the president heavily depends on the actual political milieu and a particular 'issue area'. Thus, in the virtual interim of the second half of 2006 when Czech politics were deeply stalled in the after-election deadlock, the president acquired an ever more assertive approach to foreign policy. Yet, while the president has acted very proactively in European issues (and with a growing tendency also in the issues of global climatic changes), with regard to the US anti-missile radar he explicitly denied any role for himself and declared that this decision is a political not executive matter.³⁹ In any case, the president would strictly follow a governmental line.

According to the constitution, the government has the power to establish ministries and other specific administrative bodies.⁴⁰ Traditionally, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has been the key actor in foreign policy matters. According to the act 2/1969 Sb. (so called Competency Act) the MFA assumes responsibility among others in the following fields:

- 1) coordination of operation of relevant ministries and other central state administration organs in the field of foreign policy;
- 2) provision of security for Czech citizens abroad;
- 3) control and management of Czech diplomatic missions;
- 4) provision of preparation, negotiation and intra-state negotiation of international treaties;
- 5) monitoring the international treaty abidance;
- 6) conferment of approval for export and import of military material.⁴¹

This formal listing does not allow grasping the real impact the MFA exhibits in the process of formulation of Czech foreign policy. Especially, the MFA owes its influence to the extensive expertise of its administrative

³⁸ Hitherto, the peak of such controversies occurred in May 2005 after a series of sceptical statements of president Václav Klaus with regard to the EU Constitutional Treaty. These statements were opposing the governmental line of the ČSSD and the prime minister Jiří Paroubek. The latter even issued a menace to the president that "if the president will not accept the governmental guideline, he might face a restriction of his official foreign visits" (*MF Dnes*, May 27, 2005).

³⁹ See e. g. *Zahraniční politika České republiky: Dokumenty*. (Jan. 2007), p. 18.

⁴⁰ Article 79 of the constitution.

⁴¹ MFA website, <http://www.mzv.cz>.

and diplomatic staff. This 'knowledge superiority' for example meant that the entire process of the Czech EU accession was handled almost exclusively by the MFA while the other sector ministries did not contribute in any substantial way to this enterprise⁴². Moreover, the MFA heavily contributes to the 'agenda setting' for most of the diplomatic exchanges or meetings of government. On the other hand, again, the actual influence is always derived from the particular interrelationship between the relevant actors and the issues at play. In this regard, the recent development is not exactly favorable for retaining the MFA's privileged position in foreign policy affairs. With respect to European affairs, after the accession the other ministries managed to master the EU agenda and sliced off a considerable part of the MFA's competences.

Even more importantly, as it was already mentioned, it has been a longtime posture of the ODS to separate the EU issues from the MFA. Reasons given for this step were of practical as well as of ideological nature. First, it was thought to enable to clearly sort out the competences in European agenda. This need grew more poignant especially with the CZ-PRESS drawing nearer. Second, subjecting the EU affairs under a special governmental agency was thought to convey a clear message to the public: the EU is nothing abstract and external; instead it touches anyone's everyday life. As a consequence, the office of vice-prime minister for European Affairs was established⁴³. As the

What we are looking at is a picture of a considerable ideational heterogeneousness: the president is assertive in preaching his EU hesitant stance; the prime minister is aroused out of the Atlantist and 'EU-realist' civic democrat background; there is a strongly Atlantist vice-prime minister for European affairs who is still magnetized by the touch of dissident-like internationalism; minister of foreign affairs is a nominee of the strongly Europeanist Green Party, who sometimes openly advocates his internationalist past which is close to Václav Havel's legacy.

⁴² Interview with a high MFA official, June 26th, 2007.

⁴³ The idea of establishing a special governmental body for the EU affairs was already materialized in the first social-democrat minority government (1998 – 2002). However, after only a few months the vice-prime minister for European affairs Egon Lánský resigned and the office was assigned to the minister of foreign affairs, then Jan Kavan.

coalition agreement attributed the office of minister of foreign affairs to the Greens' candidate (Karel Schwarzenberg), the vice-prime minister job was assigned to Alexander Vondra (foreign affairs minister in the first Topolánek's government). Clearly, this move brought yet another major executive actor on the stage.

This situation, where the usual intra-executive ambiguities are even further sharpened by the existence of an additional key actor, is often portrayed as gravid with the menace of pernicious foreign policy fragmentation. Indeed, what we are looking at is a picture of a considerable ideational heterogeneity: the president is assertive in preaching his EU hesitant stance; the prime minister is aroused out of the Atlantist and 'EU-realist' civic democrat background; there is a strongly Atlantist vice-prime minister for European affairs who is still magnetized by the touch of dissident-like internationalism; minister of foreign affairs (Karel Schwarzenberg) is a nominee of the strongly Europeanist Green Party⁴⁴, who sometimes openly advocates his internationalist past which is close to Václav Havel's legacy.⁴⁵

On the other hand, all the actors just mentioned on every occasion stress the need to cooperate and to build a coherent 'single-voice' foreign policy⁴⁶. Shortly after the second Topolánek government entered into office, the president invited the prime minister together with the vice-prime minister for European affairs and minister of foreign affairs for an informal meeting. These consultations have taken place several times since. However, the impact of this meeting, despite the stress its participants place on it, cannot be overemphasized. The real 'consensus-building' mechanism rests a bit elsewhere. Before I turn to this point, let me very briefly introduce some aspects of another potential foreign policy actor – the legislative.

Legislative power belongs to the parliament, which consists of two chambers – Senate and Chamber of Deputies (PSP).⁴⁷ The constitution identifies

⁴⁴ Note that K. Schwarzenberg sees his role not as much as an envoy of the Greens but as a representative of the government of the Czech republic, see, Interview for the Czech TV on January 21, 2007, *Zahraniční politika České republiky: Dokumenty*. (January, 2007), p. 54.

⁴⁵ See e. g. Interview for the Czech TV on January 21, 2007, *Zahraniční politika České republiky: Dokumenty*. (January 2007), p. 54.

⁴⁶ See A. Vondra, "Tři principy, trojí směřování a tři témata", *Mezinárodní politika* Vol. 30, No. 11 (Nov., 2006), p. 16; A. Vondra, *Lidové noviny* April 28, 2007; V. Klaus, interview for the Czech TV (*Dokumenty české zahraniční politiky*, April 2007, pp. 4 – 7); K. Schwarzenberg's interview for the Czech broadcast (Český rozhlas) conducted on January 8, 2007 (<http://www.cro.cz>) or Interview for the Czech TV, *Zahraniční politika České republiky: Dokumenty*. (January 2007), p. 54.

⁴⁷ Article 15 of the constitution.

two specific areas of foreign policy with the supreme competence of the legislative: first, it is an area of international treaties ratification⁴⁸; second, it is the need of consent with an emplacement of foreign military troops on the Czech soil and sending Czech troops abroad⁴⁹. Furthermore, as we could see, in the day-to-day foreign policy making, the parliament does not possess overly extensive competences. However, it can access foreign policy making through the general constitutional and legal design and by using informal channels of influence.

The constitutional design gives a considerably greater space to the lower house of parliament, Chamber of Deputies. It is so not only because the government is responsible to the PSP and not to the Senate and that the PSP's decrees are of a binding nature whereas the Senate's bind only of facultative nature. What is more important for the everyday foreign political conduct is the fact that any member of government is obliged to attend the PSP session when asked to⁵⁰. This so called 'interpellation right' is widely used. However, with regard to foreign policy matters it does not seem to have any relevant impact. Interpellation does not possess any enforcing authority. It is true that in the first half of 2007 the 'US-radar' and 'EU-constitution' debate invoked a long series interpellation that forced members of government to disclose some previously unknown information. Yet, as interpellations – and parliamentary sessions in general – do not attract any constant and knowledgeable attention of the public or media, these events cannot be said to have any impact to speak of on the stance of the government. Rather than as an instrument of an actual foreign policy inducement, the plenary session's interpellations serve as a tool for opinion expression and for party politics.

The interaction between the government and PSP in the affairs of foreign policy is more viable and matter-oriented on the ground of the parliamentary committees. According to the constitution, the member of government is obliged to attend a meeting of a committee.⁵¹ There are two committees explicitly entrusted with the foreign policy agenda within the PSP: the *Foreign Policy Committee* and *Committee for European affairs* (VEZ). Gradually, it is the

⁴⁸ If the treaty is to be necessarily ratified by both chambers of the parliament it has to: divert national competences to an international level (Article 10 of the constitution); or to modify rights and liabilities of the persons; or to raise alliance, peace and other political obligations; or to ensue membership in international organization; or to be of an generally economical nature (Article 49 of the constitution).

⁴⁹ Article 43 of the constitution.

⁵⁰ Article 38 §2 of the constitution.

⁵¹ Article 37 §2 of the constitution. unless the committee does not specifically require the presence of the minister, he can be substituted by his deputy or other member of government.

latter that assumes a greater role within parliamentary politics. The general reason is obvious – after the EU accession, the European agenda tends to dominate Czech foreign policy in nearly every aspect. VEZ is also responsible for overview of all the legislature coming from the EU and it has to be stressed that a good part of this bulky agenda does not even make it to the plenary session. What is also important is the fact that while the European committee is presided by Ondřej Liška, member of the coalition Green party, the Foreign Policy Committee is for a long time presided by the ČSSD members (currently Jan Hamáček). According to O. Liška, anytime the European committee needs to get a member of the government on the committee floor, it is successful⁵². On the contrary, the Foreign Policy Committee (despite the initial promises on behalf of Karel Schwarzenberg) has so far made a different experience, one of lack of interest from the executive actors⁵³. What also contributes to a better communication between the committee and the executive is the fact that the members of both committees are usually (but not always) more familiar with the foreign policy agenda than other deputies.

The constitutionally assigned duty of the committees is to inform the parliament and to take stances towards relevant issues and many times. These stances are often a result of a direct engagement with the top executive actors and as such they at least establish some form of communication. Moreover, committees are formed on a proportional basis, that is, their composition reflects the power share in the PSP. Therefore, what is once agreed on the committee floor, hardly ever hits any substantial opposition in the plenary meeting.

Despite this, the role of PSP should not be overemphasized. The most direct influence deputies exercise in the foreign policy making is so called 'parliamentary diplomacy'. This term refers to official meetings of various parliament members with external representatives of other countries.⁵⁴ In this area of foreign policy, both PSP and Senate's competences merge. Not only merge, they often collide with each other. Since the communication and cooperation between the PSP foreign policy and European committees and their Senate counterparts is almost non-existent, it is not an exception that official visits abroad are scheduled roughly around the same time for both chamber members independently.

With respect to the immediate post-election development, the Senate tried to play a more assertive and positive role in foreign policy. While the

⁵² Interview with Ondřej Liška, June 28, 2007.

⁵³ Interview with Kateřina Konečná (KSČM), June, 28, 2007.

⁵⁴ Interview with Kateřina Konečná (KSČM), June 28, 2007.

PSP was drowning in endless debates about the future government, the Senate sensed its opportunity to act as *the* guarantee of consensus, stability and continuity and turned its focus to foreign policy issues. It has to be noted that this Senate's self-conception is not new⁵⁵. However, it was the 'interim' of summer 2006 that allowed the Senate to clearly act in this way. What else contributes to the Senate's greater role in foreign policy matters after the elections of 2006 is the fact that both K. Schwarzenberg and A. Vondra are senators themselves and M. Topolánek was one. According to the chairman of the Senate's European affairs committee Luděk Seřzig, this considerably improves the nature of communication between the top executive and the Senate.⁵⁶

Recent Foreign Policy

The following part will focus on some selected foreign policy issues, attempting to identify the specifics of the foreign policy process after the 2006 elections, as well as to point at some rather long term and/or externally induced trends. This part will also portray in greater detail some of the mechanisms outlined above.

Constitutional Treaty

With respect to the above defined fourfold ideological division, it is to be expected that any more or less substantial European issue is likely to lead to a fundamental intra-political debate. As it is widely known, the EU Constitutional Treaty is a perfect case: it has generated an enormous deep division within the Czech political arena. This division was deep enough not to allow the pro- and anti-constitution camps even to agree on the ratification procedure (e. i., whether to subject the treaty to a general public vote or not). With the German EU presidency (prioritizing the future destiny of the treaty) coming nearer it was clear that the Czech Republic should adopt at least some stance towards this document.

However, it was not until the establishment of the second Topolánek government (January 2007) and more particularly until the visit of German chancellor Angela Merkel (January 26, 2007) to the Czech Republic that any discussion actually began. The opposition social-democrats stuck firmly to

⁵⁵ Since the EU entry, for example, the Czech Senate's European affairs committee is one of the most active in comparison with other similarly constitutionally positioned parliamentary committees across the EU.

⁵⁶ Interview with Luděk Seřzig (ODS), June 28, 2007.

their initial support for the constitution. Where a more policy relevant struggle was to be expected, though, was within the government coalition itself. There was the ODS with its unambiguous rebuttal of the entire idea, pleading for a brand-new document; one which would cast away all reminders of anything 'constitutional'. Moreover, the civic democrats insist that the EU is not in crisis, instead it can still function onward in the present-day institutional fashion.⁵⁷ According to the ODS, what is really needed is the reform of the deformed free internal market.⁵⁸ On the other side of the ideational spectra lies the Green Party, a long time advocate of deepening the EU in all its aspects.

What ignited the actual breach between both camps was an appointment of EU-skeptical EP deputy Jan Zahradil (ODS) to be the Czech envoy in the renewed process of EU (constitutional) treaty negotiation.⁵⁹ Not only did this move upset the opposition; appointment of J. Zahradil was sharply refused by the coalition partner – the Green party and even the otherwise moderate minister of foreign affairs K. Schwarzenberg displayed reservations to certain aspects of Zahradil's attitudes.⁶⁰ On the other hand, this move – albeit unwillingly – initiated enormously deep discussion about the position of the Czech government. According to many foreign policy actors (interviewed in June 2006), this debate was rather unprecedented. It began at the end of February 2007 and flew into an extremely tight mandate the prime minister had at the June EU summit. This mandate presented a careful compromise between both positions.⁶¹ It abandoned the initial civic democrat's total refusal of the existing constitutional treaty; instead, it was agreed on the need to proceed with reform of the existing document. Furthermore, the Czech

⁵⁷ See e. g. M. Topolánek, "Česká republika – člen EU", *Zahraniční politika České republiky: Dokumenty*. (April 2007), p. 28, M. Topolánek, "Speech at the Senate's conference: Jak dál v Evropské unii a pozice České republiky", *Česká zahraniční politika: Dokumenty*. (February 2007), pp. 26 – 27.

⁵⁸ In order to gain more support within the EU for its EU-Constitution hesitant stance, with the end of the year 2006 the MFA had to ensure a considerable intensification of bilateral ties to several west European countries which were thought to be a natural ally (the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Great Britain). Regarding the fact that the Czech foreign policy towards western Europe is largely undifferentiated, this intensification is an eloquent sign of the ways important issues can enter an area that is seemingly irrelevant (bilateral issues vs. EU politics). Interview with high MFA official, June 26, 2007.

⁵⁹ Jiří Šedivý, deputy vice-minister for European affairs was appointed as the second envoy.

⁶⁰ K. Schwarzenberg's interview for the Czech broadcast (*Český rozhlas*) January 8, 2007 (<http://www.cro.cz>).

⁶¹ According to O. Liška (SZ) the mandate was negotiated 'word by word', mostly on several 'coalition nine' meetings. Interview on June 28, 2007.

delegation was obliged not to issue a veto with respect to the Polish voting-procedure proposal. On the other hand, the Czech delegation clearly acted and presented itself as an advocate of the inter-governmental nature of the EU as well as it was ready to issue a veto should the new document include any constitutional or quasi-state elements.⁶² This position clearly reflected the spirit of the ODS and meant a sharp break from the policy of previous government.

Somewhat paradoxically, after returning from the summit, the government was criticized for its excessive humbleness despite its initial heroic statements. However, the major opposition party – ČSSD – stated that it is ready to support the reformed treaty. To sum up, it can be said that in this test, despite all the fundamental disagreements across the political spectra, the Czech foreign policy proved its ability of a consensual and constructive approach. The basis for this consensus lays not so much in the ability to communicate across the coalition vs. opposition divide, but in the coalition itself.⁶³

In a way, this process of policy making brought some new elements in to Czech foreign policy. The 1990s up to the NATO and EU entry were characteristic by the general foreign policy consensus; the years between 2004 and 2006 parliamentary elections were driven by an inertial afterglow of the previous era and by a shallow consensus within the coalition. Occasional collisions between the prime minister and MFA did not need any sustained and thorough communication. With some exceptions (e. g. the question of Kosovo on which the Prime Minister Jiří Paroubek had an imminent interest), foreign policy rested in the hands of KDU-ČSL and/or MFA. The recent intra-coalition ideational division brought about the need for a profound debate and for a consensual model of decision-making. As a result, what might be expected is a more solid anchorage for the Czech foreign policy. However, there are yet other tests to this assertion in the way – the CZ-PRESS priorities and the US anti-missile radar system emplacement.

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⁶² ČTK, June 20, 2007.

⁶³ Indeed, the question of government position towards the EU constitution/reform treaty was a matter of the very persistence of the *Greens* in the coalition. See *Zahraniční politika České republiky: Dokumenty*. (February 2007), p. 14.

Czech EU-Presidency Program

As of the Czech presidency program, it is too early to provide any meaningful analysis while the entire process of its formulation is still in its infancy.⁶⁴ However, there exist some contours and these contours are quite eloquent. The chief motto of the presidency is: 'Europe without barriers'. The overall message is clear: the Czech government is ready to push forward the traditional orientation of the civic democrats. That is, the main goal should be a stress on a further liberalization of the four basic European freedoms, accentuating the internal market. Furthermore, there is a priority of further opening the EU towards the eastern dimension of the ENP (Moldova in particular) and towards the Western Balkans (Croatia in particular). It is already clear that the Green party will try to reformulate the priorities so that it would be less reflective of the ODS-like neo-liberal economic dimension.

US Anti-Missile Radar Emplacement

Shortly after the 2006 elections, the outgoing government was discovered to have held secret talks with the US government about emplacement of an overseas fraction of the US National Missile Defense program. When in power, the ČSSD was rather ambiguous about this plan; however, they started campaigning against it once they ended up in an opposition.⁶⁵ The Atlantist ODS provides a consistent support for the project while the internationalist SZ is ready to support the base only under the condition that it would become part of NATO defense structures and that there will be an extensive dialogue with other European countries. As a result, again, there is a deep division within the coalition itself.

The situation is particularly delicate since it is the MFA who holds the fundamental negotiations with the US (particularly deputy minister T. Pojar) and it is the MFA officials who hold the talks within NATO structures. Since the minister of foreign affairs is a Greens' nominee, these conditions are

⁶⁴ According to the vice-prime minister A. Vondra, the date of the actual beginning of the program polishing and of the intensive communication with the other partners of the 'Troika' (France and Sweden) is scheduled for November. See, 'Ostrý start přijde na podzim', *Lidové noviny*, April 12, 2007.

⁶⁵ P. Drulák, M. Kořan, J. Růžička, *op. cit.*

highly demanding with regard to the mutual communication. So far, the Greens were able to push through their demand that the diplomatic note to the government of the USA includes a provision that the anti-missile radar should be part of the NATO framework.

East-European Dimension of the Czech Policy

The possible emplacement of part of the US National Missile Defense program in the region of Central Europe has generated a considerable concern on the part of Russia. This brings our attention to another dimension of Czech foreign policy – its policy towards Eastern Europe. It has been a common narration that the Czech Republic completely lost its interest in the eastern region throughout the 1990s and slowly is regaining one after its EU accession in 2004.⁶⁶ Since 2004 the Czech eastern policy has become more robust⁶⁷, more differentiated and more precisely articulated.⁶⁸ The Czech Republic is also more active within the Visegrad Group.⁶⁹ The reason for these shifts does not lie so much in the realm of domestic dimension of the foreign policy; rather, it is the external development what forces the Czech Republic to assume a clear stance. This is so because of two reasons:

- 1) while prior to the EU accession, the Czech Republic streamed its interests on acquiring its EU membership, as a member of the EU, it has to develop and communicate its positions towards the EU's external milieu;
- 2) the development in the eastern region itself forces not only the Czech Republic, but the EU and NATO themselves to respond in an unprecedented way. In the recent past (two to six years ago) there have never been such intensive consultations over the development in the post-soviet Eastern European region.

The current Czech government continues in this trend. However, in accordance to the Atlantic leaning of the biggest coalition party and in accordance with the internationalist past of the minister of foreign affairs, there is a subtle change to be detected. This change lies in a greater stress

⁶⁶ See e. g. P. Kratochvíl, "Existuje česká východní politika? Od úprku z východní Evropy k opožděnému návratu", *Mezinárodní politika* Vol. 31, No. 4/2007, pp. 16 – 18.

⁶⁷ There are unmistakable signs of this process, for example establishment of several new Czech diplomatic mission, namely of an embassy in Moldova.

⁶⁸ According to a high MFA official, there even exists a plan to shift some diplomatic personnel to the Eastern countries. Moreover, it has been made clear that in the case of the MFA's budget cuts, the eastern dimension will not be affected in any way (interview conducted on July 29, 2007).

⁶⁹ The promotion of the Eastern dimension of ENP and of the Western Balkans is one of the priorities of the Czech V4 presidency (material made available to the author by MFA official).

on the human rights and democratization agenda. Of course, the 'human rights' concern has always been somewhat a niche of the Czech foreign policy. However, should this change prove to be more vigorous, there will be another challenge for the Czech foreign policy, one of balancing the economic interests in the region with the pursuit of a 'human rights' agenda.

Conclusion

The article began with identifying four basic ideological pools that are thought – according to the 'issue area approach' – to have a decisive impact on the process and outcomes of foreign policy making. It was further argued that the ideological schemes are translated only through the structure of foreign policy making and is also heavily affected by the actual power sharing and relationships between the relevant actors. The analysis showed that these factors were highly relevant for the foreign policy of the Czech Republic after the elections of 2006. Moreover, it was found out that the deep ideological intra-coalition division provoked a debate about foreign policy that supplied Czech foreign policy with an extensively solid anchorage. This actual consensus should not be overemphasized, though: there is a stack of unresolved issues that can prove otherwise. What was also found out is the fact that the Czech foreign policy is in a substantial way molded by the external environment. However, the domestic political setting allows the actors to react in a way that corresponds to their fundamental foreign political beliefs.

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