



6th International Symposium “Czech Foreign Policy” - *25 Years of a Free Foreign Policy* **CONFERENCE REPORT**

The Institute of International Relations, together with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (Prague), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, International Visegrad Fund, Think Visegrad, the Czech-Polish Forum and ČSOB, organized a conference titled the *6th International Symposium “Czech Foreign Policy” – 25 Years of a Free Foreign Policy*. The conference was held on the 19th and 20th of November, 2014 in the Czernin Palace of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic in Prague.

First Day

The aim and purpose of the first day of the conference was to analyze the security aspects of the defense co-operation between Germany and the V4 countries and also to promote the future potential of the regional cooperation between Germany and the V4 countries. The topics were especially attractive due to the still ongoing crisis in Ukraine. The participants also discussed the Czech-Polish cooperation in defence, security and military areas. Among the topics was also the question of what opportunities it brings to the Czech foreign policy.

During the first day of the conference five highly professional panels took place:



- The Crisis in Ukraine and the Security Aspects of the Defence Co-operation Between Germany and the V4
- Chances for an Effective German-V4 Co-operation in Security and Defence Production
- The Czech-Polish Cooperation in Defence, Security and Military Areas
- The V4 and Germany: Potentials and Limits for Future Regional Cooperation
- China: New Opportunities and Challenges for the Czech Foreign Policy?

The conference was met by great interest from the public. Among the conference participants were academic researchers, civil servants of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, journalists, representatives of various NGOs, university students, academic teachers and also representatives of the diplomatic corps in Prague.

The conference was opened by Dr. **Michal Kořan** (Deputy Director of the Institute of International Relations, Prague). Then the keynote speech about Germany and the V4 was given by **Daniel Koštoval** (State Secretary, Ministry of Defence, Prague) and Dr. **Karl A. Lamers** (Deputy Chairman of the Defense Committee of the German Bundestag, Vice-President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Berlin). Among the foreign leading experts were **István Balogh** (Director General, Department for Security Policy and Non-Proliferation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary), **Dušan Fischer** (Junior Research Fellow, Slovak Foreign Policy Association, Bratislava), Dr. **Marco Overhaus** (Acting Deputy Head of the Research Division “The Americas”, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin), **Marcin Terlikowski** (Head of the European Security and Defence Economics Project, the Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warsaw), Dr. **András Hettyey** (Junior Lecturer, National University of Public Service, Budapest), **Konrád Poplawski** (Senior Fellow, Department for Germany and Northern Europe, Centre for Eastern Studies [OSW], Warsaw), Dr. **Vladimír Bílčík** (Senior Researcher, European Studies Program, Slovak Foreign Policy Association, Bratislava), Dr. **Benjamin Tallis** (Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Perspectives*, Prague), **Jakub Groszkowski** (Senior Fellow, Central European Department, Centre for Eastern Studies [OSW], Warsaw), Dr. **Tomasz Szatkowski** (President, National Centre for Strategic Studies, Warsaw) and **Andrzej Wilk** (Senior Fellow, Centre for Eastern Studies [OSW], Warsaw). The Czech participants included, among others, Dr. **Ondřej Ditrych** (Assistant Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University, Research Fellow,

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Institute of International Relations, Prague), **Vít Dostál** (Director of the Research Center, Association for International Affairs [AMO], Prague), **Michal Šimečka** (Associate Research Fellow, Institute of International Relations, Prague), Dr. **Jan Jireš** (Defence Policy Director, Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic, Prague), Dr. **Richard Hlavatý** (Head, Foreign Economic Policies Department, Ministry of Industry and Trade, Prague), Dr. **Vilém Kolín** (Project Officer for Defence and Industry Analysis, European Defence Agency [EDA], Brussels), Dr. **Vít Střítecký** (Lecturer, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, Prague), **Dušan Švarc** (Adviser to the President of the Defence and Security Industry Association of the Czech Republic, Prague), Dr. **Vladimír Handl** (Research Fellow, Institute of International Relations, Prague), **Václav Kopecký** (Association for International Affairs [AMO], Prague), Dr. **Rudolf Fürst** (Research Fellow, Institute of International Relations, Prague), **Michal Paulus** (Institute of Economic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University, Prague), **Alice Rezková** (Association for International Affairs [AMO], Prague) and Dr. **Vilém Semerák** (CERGE-EI, Prague).

The presentations of individual speakers were followed by lively discussions. The most actively debated topics were those related to the crisis in Ukraine. In regard to the case of the crisis in Ukraine the participants talked about the annexation of Crimea, the sanctions against the Russian Federation and the role of Russia in the Ukrainian crisis. They agreed that the Russian Federation poses a real threat to our region and also that the present situation is a challenge to our security (especially for NATO and its allies), but according to Dr. Lamers, “NATO and the EU understood the wake-up call from Russia, and NATO and the EU reacted”.

Mr. Koštoval (State Secretary, Ministry of Defence, Prague) was of the opinion that our security environment had deteriorated. Also, various participants mentioned the sanctions against Russia as a very successful tool because the current economic situation in Russia is not good at all. Furthermore, it was mentioned that the crisis showed us that the member countries of NATO do need to be able to invest more money from their budget into defence cooperation and defence industry. Mr. Terlikowski (Head of the European Security and Defence Economics Project, the Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warsaw) mentioned the differences in investments into defense: the Czech budget for defense is 1% of the GDP

whereas Poland's is 2%, and it is about to rise. The participants further confirmed the observation of there being disunity among the V4 and stated that the Ukraine crisis brought a visible wedge between the V4 member countries.

The participants were then focused on the member countries of the V4 and their role in the crisis in Ukraine. According to Mr. István Balogh (Director General, Department for Security Policy and Non-Proliferation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary) Hungary had, at present, not yet considered the deployment of allied forces in its territory, but it understood the situation and backed up the voice of its eastern allies, who had demanded such a deployment and an effective action plan to secure their safety. It was then mentioned that in contrast with it Poland stressed the importance of NATO's collective defense and also Poland's own capabilities. Then in regard to the Czech Republic, Mr. Dostál (Director of the Research Center, Association for International Affairs [AMO], Prague) suggested that we could see a possible threat for the Czech Republic if we looked into our security strategy or our different approaches to the EU's sanctions against Russia.

Another problem that was mentioned was that of explaining the differences of opinions in regard to the Ukrainian crisis within the EU and mainly within the V4 countries. The key, according to Mr. Terlikowski (Head of the European Security and Defence Economics Project, the Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warsaw), was the perception of threat, as this is the main issue on which the countries are divided. But it is understandable that regional differences in terms of defense policy occur. For one country it is a political question, and for another it is a practical question. Mr. Šimečka (Associate Research Fellow, Institute of International Relations, Prague) then said that he had not seen any discussion on how to revise the Czech national security defense policy. He said that his biggest worry in this respect is about the disunity at the top of politics.

Almost all the participants hoped that Germany would become a strategic leader in the EU in matters of defense and military affairs. In regard to the topic of Germany and the V4 Mr. Bilčík (Senior Researcher, European Studies Program, Slovak Foreign Policy Association, Bratislava) was of the opinion that the bilateral agenda between Germany and the V4 is without any problematic points, but the V4 is low on the list of Germany's policy preferences.

Various participants then stated that they had been sceptical about the cooperation between Germany and the V4 some years ago, but today the V4 is a more attractive partner for Germany. But Germany still seeks a greater potential in its cooperation with the V4.

In the panel about “The V4 and Germany: Potentials and Limits”, Dr. Hlavatý (Head, Foreign Economic Policies Department, Ministry of Industry and Trade, Prague) said that he thought that Chancellor Merkel’s initiative can practically solve the conflict in Ukraine. In the panel the participants also talked about economy. Mr. Poplawski (Senior Fellow, Department for Germany and Northern Europe, Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW), Warsaw) mentioned that Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic should have entered to the Eurozone, and that Germany should have been interested in the stability of the V4 banking sectors.

The last panel of the first day of the conference was about China and the opportunities and challenges for the Czech foreign policy which it brings. In this panel it was stated that there were recent shifts in the Czech foreign policy towards China, especially those caused by the statements that President Miloš Zeman made during his recent visit to China. Zeman had been highly criticized in the Czech Republic after this visit. But the Czech Republic still retained its trouble approach towards China, and hence it provided visas for Tibetans. It was also mentioned that rather than simply being an issue of the Czech foreign policy, the relations with China are becoming a topic of domestic policy as well. In this panel the participants also talked about economy. In connection with this, Ms. Rezková (Association for International Affairs [AMO], Prague) talked about marketing, PR and how the Chinese invest in Europe. She said that China’s investments in Europe usually start with small-scale projects, then the investors move on to larger projects and finally they move on to the high potential sectors (e.g. the case of Chinese investment in agriculture in Ukraine). She added that these types of economic could be an inspiration for many countries. Then in the same panel Mr. Paulus (Institute of Economic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University, Prague) and Dr. Semerák (CERGE-EI, Prague) presented the impact of the EU’s sanctions against Russia. They said that the effects of the current sanctions on the Czech economy are negligible. The Czech export to Russia is small, and the expected losses for the export to Russia are about 100 mil. Euros, which is 0,1% of the Czech export in general. And also if China retook the gap, although it would be difficult due to the structural difference, it would have a negligible effect - even on China itself.

Second Day

The aim and purpose of the second day of the conference was to analyze the last 25 years of the free Czech foreign policy. The topics focused mainly on the values in Czech foreign policy and also on the legacy of November 1989. The participants discussed realism and idealism in the Czech foreign policy and analyzed the Czech foreign policy from the outside.

On the second day of the conference four highly professional panels took place:

- Values and Foreign Policy: Polish and Czech Views
- The Legacy of November 1989 and the Future of Foreign Policy
- Czech Foreign Policy: Views from the Outside
- 25 Years of a Free Foreign Policy: Lessons for the Future

On the second day of the conference the keynote speech was given by Dr. **Lubomír Zaorálek** (Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic). Among the leading foreign experts at the conference were Professor **Rick Fawn** (Professor, School of International Relations, University of St. Andrews, UK), Dr. **Leszek Jesień** (Head of the Institute of International Relations and Sustainable Development, Collegium Civitas University, Warsaw), **Konrad Szymański** (former Member of the European Parliament, Warsaw) and **Tomáš Strážay** (Senior Researcher and Head of the Central and Eastern Europe Program, Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, Bratislava). The Czech participants included, among others, Professor **Pavel Barša** (Institute of International Relations, Prague), **Jiří Schneider** (Senior Fellow and Director of Special Projects, Prague Security Studies Institute, Prague), Associate Professor **Břetislav Dančák** (Dean, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Brno), Dr. **Michal Kořan** (Deputy Director of the Institute of International Relations, Prague), Professor **Petr Drulák** (First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs), Professor **Petr Fiala** (ODS), Dr. **Ivan Gabal** (KDU-ČSL), Professor **Jiří Zlatuška** (ANO), Dr. **Vladimír Handl** (Research Fellow, Institute of International Relations, Prague), **Jan Kavan** (former Minister of Foreign Affairs and former President of the U.N. General Assembly, Prague), **Karel Kovanda** (former Deputy Director-General, DG External Relations, European Commission Belgium/Czech Republic, Brussels) and Dr. **Alexandr Vondra** (former Minister of Foreign Affairs and former Minister of Defence, Prague).

In the first panel of the second day of the conference the participants talked about the values in foreign policy. They mentioned the difference between idealism and realism in foreign policy and also human rights as a concept in foreign policy. The Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Zaorálek said that we had to find a way to talk about human rights and also a way to implement them worldwide. He said that in the past we could have seen realistic acting in Czech foreign policy - for example, former President Václav Havel acted as a realist when he was supporting our membership in NATO whereas former President Václav Klaus acted as an idealist towards the EU. He also stated that when we talked about values in foreign policy we should have also mentioned our national interest. In response to this, Professor Barša (Institute of International Relations, Prague) mentioned the differences between Nečas's government and Havel's opinions on the intervention in Libya. Nečas's government did not support the intervention in Libya but Havel was strongly for it. Overall Nečas's government focused more on the national interest than the interest of the EU. Nevertheless, Mr. Schneider stated that our national interests are formulated with respect to values, traditions and predecessors.

The second panel was devoted to the legacy of November 1989. The participants talked about the changes, progress and significant events in the Czech foreign policy that occurred since the Czech Republic had joined NATO, the OECD, the EU, the V4, etc. According to Professor Fiala (ODS), since 1989 there had been two milestones in the Czech foreign policy: the first of them was the Czech Republic's membership in NATO, and the second one was its membership in the EU. In his view, the legacy of November 1989 brought to us the fulfilment of a humanistic tradition which stands for civic and political rights, which are the most important rights, as only after we have them may we talk about social, gender and environmental rights. Then he stated that the Czech foreign policy aim should be to support democracy and freedom, and therefore civic and political rights. Also he said that we have to support our prosperity through economic diplomacy and maintain our allies, and that economic diplomacy, which serves the prosperity of the country, needs more attention. Nevertheless, Professor Zlatuška (ANO) said that he hoped that the Velvet Revolution had not been based on our economic well being but on democratic values and civil society. In his view, we should have connected our economic perspective and our solidarity towards human

rights. Thus, our Czech foreign policy faces a real problem now. Then Dr. Gabal (KDU-ČSL) stated that we broke out of our role and lost our significance, and he also mentioned our utter dependence on the collective defense of our allies. In conclusion he said that the Czech Republic must not change its foreign policy, which should be stable, continuous and predictable.

In the panel called “Czech Foreign Policy: Views from the Outside” the participants focused on the period between 1989 and 1992. It was mentioned that this period was a foundational time for the Czech foreign policy. Moreover, it was also mentioned that this policy was deeply influenced by the ideas, thoughts, and attitudes generated by political dissidents before 1989. Concepts such as solidarity, apology, forgiveness, legality, symbolism, gradualism and legitimacy of force all left a mark on the Czechoslovak policy (and later the Czech policy) and can be seen in several policy decisions made during those three years. An example of this that was given during the panel was Vaclav Havel’s solitary support amongst other statesmen for the German reunification, as well as the importance he had placed on apologizing for the post-war expulsion of ethnic Germans from the Sudetenland. These expressions of solidarity and apology were matched by the forgiving and inclusive attitude that was adopted by Czechoslovakia towards the Soviet Union following its independence. It was also stated that the V4’s regional relations in general were marked by creativity and inventiveness, leading to the creation of the Visegrad Group. According to what Professor Rick Fawn (Professor, School of International Relations, University of St. Andrews, UK) said, the Czech foreign policy at this time had four main features, which were Germany, the Soviet Union/Russia, regional relations and the Euro-Atlantic. In reviewing the policies adopted between 1989 and 1992, a great amount of alacrity and adaptiveness can be identified. Professor Fawn described the Czech activities and experiences during this period of time as a fantastic pedigree that the Czech government would be wise to both protect and commoditize.

The last panel dealt with the 25 years of the Czech Republic/Czechoslovakia’s free foreign policy. In the beginning Mr. Kovanda (former Deputy Director-General, DG External Relations, European Commission Belgium/Czech Republic, Brussels) summed up the important milestones of setting up the Czech foreign policy. Mr. Kovanda again mentioned the Czech Republic’s successful struggle to become a member of important structures such as

NATO and the EU. Its accession to the EU, according to Mr. Kovanda, was possible mainly thanks to Mr. Pavel Telička's effort. Mr. Vondra further stated that when the Czech government had created the Czech foreign policy for the first time, it agreed on an orientation towards the USA and the EU, but definitely not towards Russia, but right now, the USA is introverted, and Europe has great problems. The participants then criticized euro-scepticism and stressed the importance of solidarity and human rights policy. According to Mr. Kavan (former Minister of Foreign Affairs and former President of the U.N. General Assembly, Prague), the Czech foreign policy should have been more concerned about human rights and the goals of economic diplomacy that could be achieved while still focusing on the importance of human rights. Then Mr. Vondra (former Minister of Foreign Affairs and former Minister of Defense, Prague) argued that the Czech Republic needs to stay on the idealist route, continuing in its spreading of the message of former President Václav Havel. But according to him, while the Czech Republic has a lot to offer in the particular idealist view, if we shift to a realistic view, it becomes hard to find something that the Czech Republic can offer.