

CFSP WATCH 2003

NATIONAL REPORT THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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1. Basic Views of CFSP/ESDP in the Czech Republic

While the Czech attitude towards CFSP and especially ESDP cannot be labelled as overly enthusiastic, the Czechs are nevertheless ready to take an active part in its development after their joining the EU, which they have already demonstrated in a number of institutional and practical measures.¹

The Czech Republic (CR) expressed interest in the development of ESDP as an indispensable element and instrument of CFSP. The CR actively participates in respective political dialogues. It believes there should be a close link between ESDP of the EU and ESDI of NATO, and advocates the establishment of European military forces.

Every single Czech administration thus far has regarded the membership in EU as its supreme priority. The keystone for full acceptance of CFSP is the sharing of common values, on which the EU and CFSP are based upon and implementing its *acquis* in the form achieved until the moment of our entry into the Union. The CFSP Chapter 27 was among the least controversial and it was closed without any problems in early stages of accession talks.² CFSP is expected to contribute not only to peace and stability in Europe and in the world in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law but it also makes a potent contribution to the Union's international credibility. However, there exists certain tension between the Atlantic and the European security identity in the Czech political and security mentality, which was distinctively highlighted during the Iraq crisis.

The Czech Republic considers the CFSP to be an essential stride in further development of the European integration process. The Czech Republic declares its will and readiness to accept all the accompanying principles and goals, and is willing to participate in carrying these out with commensurate measures and functional mechanisms. Institutionally, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the CR insures the participation of the Czech Republic in CFSP – a new department for CFSP matters, under the control of the Political Director, was set up in May 2002. An electronic database on CFSP affairs is being developed and link to ACN has been established in December 1999.

In the sphere of CFSP the Czech Republic attained full compatibility with the *acquis* in the framework of conducting everyday foreign policy. As regards the alignment with EU statements and declarations, the CR has regularly aligned its positions with those of the Union and when invited to do so, has associated itself with the Union's common positions and joint actions. The CR supports the non-proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and is a signatory to all relevant international agreements.

2. Czech National Perceptions and Positions with regard to CFSP/ESDP Issues

The crisis and later war in Iraq have sharply demonstrated a number of weak points and tensions that have surfaced within the Atlantic community throughout the 1990s. The pattern of Europe failing to formulate viable and respected alternative strategies within the EU's second pillar with respect to grand issues of international relations – be it e.g. the wars in ex-Yugoslavia or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – continues to exist even after the war in

Iraq ended. The capability gap between the US and Europe is further widening and is regularly acknowledged in the Czech debate. The CFSP suffers a deep credibility crisis.

A new gap of confidence has opened up not only between America and Europe, but also within Europe itself. Faster than ever since the end of the Cold War, the social capital of the West constructed as the community of trust and the international public good enshrined in international organisations based on principles of liberal multilateralism – both that have been accumulated and cultivated after WWII -- have been wasted. Some say that the damage is irreversible.

The current circumstances of the future members of the EU and especially those who are already part of NATO -- i.e. the so called Non-EU European Allies (NEEA) – reminds that of a person balancing on two boats -- one foot on each – whilst those boats steadily drift apart. So far the candidates have maintained a pro-Atlanticist bias in that balancing act. But as the gap between the boats – i.e. America and Europe – widens, maintaining equilibrium will be ever more difficult. What we want to avoid is a situation culminating at a point when we are forced to choose between either of the two organisations. What we cannot accept are hints of blackmailing pressures to choose Europe that has been made during the crisis.³

In Europe the fissure between the so-called “gang of eight” and the Franco – German “axis of peace” emerged. French President Chirac’s euromachism vis-à-vis the future EU members gave us a whiff of recidivism of Gaullist bullying manners in European politics, verging on political blackmailing. One cannot omit his comments after the Brussels European Council in February that stirred up public opinion quite strongly. The deputies had to deal with many complaints from citizens who viewed this as an assault on Czech sovereignty and many experts feared that this could damage the popular mood before the upcoming referendum (June 13 and 14). In fact, this did not turn out to be the case. Nevertheless, it left huge doubts in the Czech population as to how much the Czech Republic will really be able to influence the EU foreign policy once it becomes an EU member.⁴

Consequently, the feasibility of projects and initiatives launched at the Prague summit -- namely a NATO Response Force (NRF) – is now weaker. The impact of the crisis is particularly corrosive in light of the fact that the only way to increase the output of the European forces, and at the same time sustain minimum interoperability linking the US and Europe – hence, closing at least partly the capability gap between Europe and the US-- is functional integration within the framework of multinational force and the gradual removal of the numberless duplications of military capability that exist between the European states by means of specialisation, division of labour, and so on,. The imperative of functional integration of military forces as the multiplier of military output applies to the ESDP as well. Reasonable specialization thus became one of the key principles of Czech military reform aimed at the creation of full professional military by 2007.⁵

The first attempt to establish a “core” of European security took place at the mini-summit of Belgium, France, Germany and Luxembourg on 29 April in Brussels. This is viewed with surmise in the Czech Republic, as well as in the majority of other candidate states. Most of the initiatives spelled out in the seven-point plan adopted by the summit are indeed positively contributing to the further development of European military capabilities and are already established Union’s targets. Yet the intention to establish a military proto-staff outside the already existing institutional settings, i.e. both within the EU and between the EU and NATO, threatens to duplicate existing structures and eventually undermine NATO.

The timing and the format of the meeting were not helpful either: We have not even begun a healing process after the Iraq war; furthermore, the fissure within the West is now reproduced in the haggling about the role for the UN in the post-conflict reconstruction. Moreover, the fact that the UK was not invited compromises credibility and workability of the scheme. One should recall that it was the UK’s leading role in ESDP since St. Malo that

soothed the initial suspiciousness on the NEEA's part vis-à-vis this project. Therefore, instead of trying to mend the fences damaged during the Iraq crisis, we witness a sort of institutionalisation of the European and Transatlantic fractures.

NATO is naturally perceived as the first and foremost defence anchor for the country. On the other hand, CFSP and ESDP projects are viewed with certain reservation as to their credibility and effectiveness. The crisis around Iraq and the multiple fracture that has emerged within the EU and NATO have only added doubts concerning the future development of the EU's second pillar.

Once again, for the Czechs, NATO plays the key role in maintaining such a security environment in which the EU, especially its second pillar, can continue to develop, and hence it can be said that it limits the manner in which a variety of security threats can affect the CR. The fact that there would have been no EU without the US stimulus the Marshall Plan gave to European integration and without the protective shield of NATO is well understood and appreciated in the Czech Republic. In other words, the Czechs, being aware of their country's size, often perceive the Alliance as a basic safeguard against falling victim to any hegemonic plans in Central Europe – a pattern with a long history in Europe and one that the Czechs have experienced on several occasions in the twentieth century.

It is therefore hardly surprising that a pronounced interest in keeping the EU-NATO link vital is an immutable priority of Czech foreign policy, and is likely to remain so even after the country's accession into the EU. The foreign and security policy of the Czech Republic focuses chiefly on European and transatlantic integration. The CR supports the strengthening of NATO-EU relations and their complementary performance in the political-security sphere. Together with other NATO and EU member states, the CR participates in negotiation of agreements, which shall ensure intense co-operation and co-ordination by both organisations in prevention and crisis management. The CR hopes that such agreements will not only be the cornerstone of strategic partnership of NATO and EU but also that the ESDP project will attain the imperative operating efficiency.

In the respect of the future EU members that are already part of NATO, one could detect a growing tension between two identities. On the one hand, NATO (and the US as the main engine of NATO reform and enlargement) was and remains the main reference point in the security field for them. The US support for the case of the NEEA's participation in the ESDP development from its inception further underpinned the NEEA's Atlanticism.⁶

One of the reasons for the current tension between the so-called old and new Europe in the framework of the Iraq crisis is the fact that the NEEA have been denied the same level of political access and practical participation in the ESDP, which they enjoyed as Associated Members of WEU in 1999 and 2000. On the other hand, the full transfer of the WEU acquis in the EU could have provided for a better communication and co-ordination between current and future members of the EU in the security field.

Looking to the future, one can assume that the Czech Republic as well as majority of new members will remain more reserved in the security area in comparison with the EU mainstream, and much closer to the intergovernmentalist and Atlanticist end of the security debate within the EU. This security conservatism is a minor paradox since in other dimensions of the EU finalité debate, the future members' penchant – with the Polish exception indeed – is for strengthening the EU's supranational elements and institutions that are smaller states' best friends. Still, a gradual re-balancing of the current pro-Atlantic bias can be expected in due course, with their full integration into the EU. The more pre-accession channels of socialisation and participation are established between the Union and its future members, the better for the smoothness of the post-accession transition. However, NATO will remain the basic security anchor for NEEA in the foreseeable future. Besides its political values and military efficiency, the Alliance remains an indispensable instrument for keeping

Americans in Europe. This will remain so until Europe is able to show political will and practical capability to address its comparative deficiencies.

3. European Convention: Reform of EU External Relations, CFSP/ESDP

The CR insists on preserving the principle of one Commissioner per country, as it believes it to be one of the pre-requisites for maintaining the principle of equality among the member states. It asserts that increased number of Commissioners does not necessarily have to lead to less efficiency, given that the portfolios are distributed adequately and the Commission President is given more autonomy in this respect.

As for the European Commission, the government is in favour of the election of the President by the European Parliament, however, from the list drawn by the European Council. This reflects the unwillingness to transform the Commission into a purely “parliamentary cabinet”. Also, the individual commissioners would be selected by the President (presumably in co-operation with the European Council), thus basically preserving the status quo.

The reform of the Council is in many respects the focal point of the Convention itself and the Czech government is flexible towards reform.⁷ Although the Czechs reject the idea of permanent European Council President, we are of the opinion that the current system could be replaced by a team presidency consisting of three member states with 18-months term of office. The team presidency should uphold the balance between smaller and larger, as well as more and less affluent member states. Therefore, each of the countries would hold presidency over three sectoral Council formations (e.g. the CR would preside over the transport, regional development, and agriculture sectoral councils). Main opposition party ODS and Czech president Václav Klaus are however much more critical towards idea of permanent European Council president and other ideas, including creation of new EU Foreign Minister. They are also deeply sceptical about the possibility to create a single foreign policy of the EU, let alone use QMV in the area of foreign, security and defence policies.⁸

In other respects, the Czech governments’ views are quite similar to those of many other Convention members – the Council sessions should be public when legislating, and there should be an increased use of the QMV, and in those areas where it does not seem feasible at the moment (especially CFSP, ESDP) the use of constructive abstention should be enhanced.⁹ The Czech government would also be quite content with the merger of the functions of the High Representative of the European Union for the CFSP and the Commissioner for External Relations into the post of EU’s Foreign Minister who would be both a member of the Council and Vice-President of the Commission.¹⁰

Making use of the flexibility provisions for enhanced co-operation within the CFSP will be one of the possible solutions of the dilemma. Accepting in part the leadership role of the EU’s core states (the great powers, if you will) in European security and military affairs will be inevitable. Critical in this respect is the Franco-British co-operation. Without their concord, no real progress can be achieved. On the other hand, as St. Malo process clearly demonstrated, as long as these two actors find a common security ground, the rest of Europe follows them.

Integration by ‘objectives’ rather than by ‘directives’, i.e. a softer method of setting common EU benchmarks while leaving the method of reaching them up to the respective states, will be helpful. In this context, the idea of convergence criteria – input in terms of the structure of defence budgets, output in terms of the structure of forces – should be further explored for ESDP.

The emphasis on the primary role of NATO in most of the candidate states and their pro-US inclination will probably also influence their position in debates on the possibility of

widening the geographical/operational scope of ESDP beyond the external periphery of the EU. They are more reluctant than some of the EU states to accept the idea of Europe as a global power. On the other hand, as the Czech and Polish case has shown, they would be willing to deploy their forces outside the EU's immediate area if there is a clearly formulated cause (the campaign against terror) and unambiguous leadership (provided by the US in this case).

Czech Role and Contribution to Crisis Management

In order to contribute to collective security efforts in post-Cold War Europe the CR has participated in peacekeeping and peace support operations at a substantial level, specifically in the NATO-led IFOR/SFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina, KFOR in Kosovo and Operation "Essential Harvest" in Macedonia. The fact that the deployed Czech unit was the first to enter the territory of Macedonia was appreciated as a vital symbol of the Czech capabilities.

In other words, within the framework of NATO, the CR was considerably active in the course of the establishment of closer co-operation with the democratic government of Macedonia. More recently the Czech Republic was instrumental in the course of the formulation of the new relationship of the Alliance with the Russian Federation (see below).

Besides taking part in peacekeeping operations, the Czechs are helping in state-building efforts in post-conflict areas – be it the Balkans or Iraq – employing their unique experience and know-how derived from their own transition from a totalitarian to democratic regime.

Defence

It is vital now to re-rationalise our political and security discourse. We must stop the escalation of irrational posturing, both in Europe and across the Atlantic. Unfortunately, the autistic foreign policy behaviour of Washington does not help much in that respect.

We must continue in the process of functional integration on the level of ESDP and political integration on the level of CFSP. Europe has only two choices: either integration or international irrelevance. It is encouraging that below the level of high policy collisions, even during the peaks of Iraq crisis, reasonable co-operation continued. The Franco-British summit in Le Touquet has set out plans for a joint basis for building and running aircraft carriers, as well as for a new EU armament procurement agency. After more than two years of negotiations and impasses, the EU and NATO signed a package agreement enabling the Union the access to NATO capabilities. And, last but not least, the EU took over from NATO the Macedonian mission, which is historically the very first peacekeeping military operation conducted under the EU's flag.

The method of constructing European identity on a negative image of the US, in terms of balancing the "hyperpuissance", will be refused in Central Europe. Such an approach would only replicate the eventually tragic Westphalian approach to state and nation building, and it would furthermore compromise the exceptional character of the EU as a post-modern *polis* in its own right.

There cannot be a truly 'common' ESDP without a 'common' foreign and security policy, and this still seems a long way off. Yet ESDP's functional maturation – despite all its flaws and retardation -- appears to be outpacing the CFSP's political development. If functionalist theories of integration prove valid, a spillover effect from the functional area of the former policy into the political space of the latter should follow in time.

Further innovative steps in military reform, such as encouraging the development of niche capabilities; international pooling of military capacities, joint procurement projects and cross-border military integration should be therefore encouraged.

The future EU members themselves should be innovative. On the military level they should promote multinational military arrangements, for instance, in terms of offering prepared joint force packages/modules based on a deeper division of labour, service complementarity and multinational rotation, as a contribution to the EU Headline Goal forces. The establishment of a Czech-Slovak peacekeeping unit for KFOR and the plan to build a joint Czech-Polish-Slovak brigade as a military expression of Visegrad sub-regional co-operation (V-4) may be good examples of such an approach. The possibility of organising a deployable HQ should be explored as the next step in this project once the brigade becomes operational in 2004.

4. Mapping of Activities in CFSP-related Research

Institute of International Relations, Prague –

Experts: CFSP/ESDP Issues - Radek Khol, Jiří Šedivý; Balkans – Filip Tesař Foreign policy making – Petr Drulák, Lucie Königová;

projects: ESDP – national perspectives
RTN project “Bridging Accountability Gap in ESDP”
Perspectives of Multinational Military Cooperation in Central Europe
EU in wider world
Role of regional self-government in formulation of Czech foreign policy
Balkans
V-4 profile in CFSP/ESDP

Europeum, Charles University, Prague

Experts: CFSP/ESDP/External Relations Issues - David Král; Lukáš Pachta, Magdalena Pokludová, Tereza Hořejšová

Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Brno

Experts: European security issues - Zdeněk Káň, Petr Suchý

Association for International Affairs (Asociace pro mezinárodní otázky, AMO)

Experts: Eastern Europe, Russia, CIS area - Jan Marian, Jan Šír, Luboš Veselý, Ondřej Soukup

West Bohemian University, Pilsen

Experts: International security issues - Šárka Waisová

¹For broader discussion of the Czech perception of CFSP/ESDP see Radek Khol, ‘Czech Republic’, in Antonio Missiroli (ed), *Bigger EU, wider CFSP, stronger ESDP? The view from Central Europe*, Occasional Papers, no 34, Paris: EU ISS, April 2002; Radek Khol, Vladimír Handl in “Die Europäische Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik” Die Deutsche Bibliothek – CIP-Einheitsaufnahme, Baden-Baden 2002, pp. 113-127.

² See the following three documents: “Position Paper of the Czech Republic on Chapter 27: Common Foreign and Security Policy”.

“Zpráva o české zahraniční politice 2002” (Report on the Czech Foreign Policy 2002) to be found at www.czechembassy.org/www/mzv

“Conceptual Basis of the Foreign Policy of the Czech Republic for the 2003-2006 period” as approved by the government of the Czech Republic on March 3, 2003.

³ See also EPIN comment (April 2003) on Czech Iraqi debate by David Král at www.europeum.org

⁴ For the ensuing debate that took place in the media see:

Jánská Zuzana, Ehl Martin. “EU demonstrovala vůči Iráku jednotu.” *Hospodářské noviny* daily, (EU Demonstrated Unity Towards Iraq) February 18, 2003; Sládek Jiří, “Chirakova slova odrážejí pnutí v unii.” *Hospodářské noviny* (Chirac’s words reflect a tension in the Union) February 18, 2003; Interview with Cyril Svoboda: “Chirac niěemu nepomohl.” *Hospodářské noviny* (Chirac did not help) February 18, 2003; Menschik Tomáš, “Ěsko odmítlo slovní výprask od francouzského prezidenta.” (The Czech Republic rejected the speech whipping from the French president), *Ibid.*

⁵ For more details on Czech military reform see the following documents:

“Koncepte výstavby profesionální Armády Ěské republiky a mobilizace ozbrojených sil Ěské republiky” (The Concept of the development of Czech professional army and mobilisation of the Defence Forces of the Czech Republic); “Vojenská strategie Ěské Republiky”, Prague 2002 (The Military Strategy of the Czech Republic).

⁶ This point is further elaborated by Jiří Šedivý: ‘The constraints and the opportunities’, in Antonio Missiroli (ed), *Enlargement and European defence after 11 September*, Chaillot Papers, no 53, The European Institute for Security Studies, Paris, June 2002, p. 11-27; Jiří Šedivý: ‘The Ins and Outs of ESDP: the question of participation’, *World Defence Systems*, vol. 3, no 2, Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies, London, 2001, p. 42 – 45.

⁷ For initial negative reaction to the proposal in Czech press see “I malý mají sílu ěelit velkým.” (Even the small ones have the strength to stand up to the large ones), *Ekonom* weekly, April 24-29, 2003; “Malé státy nechťí jí prezidenta EU.” (Small states do not want EU president), *Lidové noviny* daily, April 25, 2003

⁸ Cf.: Plecítý Petr. “Rizika budoucí ústavy EU.” (The risks of the future EU Constitution). *Revue Politika*, June 2003; Rovenský Jan. “Giscardovy návrhy k Unii vyvolaly bouř.” (Giscard’s proposals for the Union provoked a storm). *Právo* daily, April 25, 2003

⁹ Spelled out in the “Non-Paper on the Reform of EU Institutions”, a contribution of State Secretary for European Affairs Mr. Jan Kohout to the Convention WWW.mzv.cz/missionEU/Czech/non-paper-reform-institutions.doc

¹⁰ For further analysis, please see a contribution by Petr Drulak -, “A look at EU future from candidate countries” at www.iir.cz/cz/czcea/czcea.htm and “The Future of European debate in the CR” by Lucie Konigova (to be found at www.iir.cz/cz/czcea/czcea.htm address above)