

## **CFSP Watch - Czech Republic – by Radek Khol<sup>1</sup>**

### **1. CFSP priorities for the Czech Republic in 2004**

The Czech Republic strongly supports Wider Europe and the New Neighbourhood policy of the EU and perceives it as both vital for stabilising this region and ensuring its prosperity and social cohesion that is interlinked with security and prosperity of the EU itself.<sup>2</sup> The Czech foreign policy also welcomes it as an opportunity for utilising Czech local knowledge and expertise from its transition period. It presented its own assessment on Ukraine and Moldova in 2002-2003 and supports inclusion of Southern Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia) into Wider Europe scope. Czech diplomacy could accept an informal deal where Visegrad format would be used for Eastern Neighbourhood (Eastern Europe – Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova) and Regional Partnership for Southern Neighbourhood (Balkans).<sup>3</sup> Some of the more distant EU external regional policies are less appealing with few exceptions where the Czech foreign policy also perceives to have some of its priorities (like in the Middle East or Caucasus). Regular report presented by MFA to the Parliament *Priorities of the Czech Foreign Policy for Year 2004* stresses the following points relating to the Czech profile in development, formulation and implementation of CFSP:

- development of Wider Europe concept, with special emphasis on Eastern and South-eastern Europe and Middle East
- measures against WMD proliferation and legislative acts for implementing CFSP acquis (EU sanctions)
- support for democracy and human rights<sup>4</sup>

### **2. Czech National Perceptions and Positions with regard to CFSP/ESDP Issues in 2004**

#### **a) Successes and failures of CFSP/ESDP in 2004**

The Czech perception of successes or failures of CFSP/ESDP in 2004 is rather modest. There were no specific public or official assessments, rather expression of support for concrete initiatives. The Czech Republic was keen to support

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<sup>1</sup> *Institute of International Relations, Prague*

<sup>2</sup> See *Draft Basis of the Czech Republic's Direction in the EU framework until 2013*, Government discussion paper, February 2004

<sup>3</sup> See CTK (Czech Press Agency), 12.4.2004 *CR chce mít i ve společné bezpečnostní politice EU své priority (The Czech Republic wants to have in the EU CFSP its own priorities too)*

implementation of the European Security Strategy and especially EU Action Plans linked to it in respective areas (fight against terrorism, WMD proliferation) where thus consensus of EU-25 was defined and could be followed. This orientation on specific activities aiming at new European capabilities or better European structures able to respond to global security threats is seen as marked progress and unified voice of the EU, especially as it can more effectively respond to the US policies or influence them. It has been also welcomed as a far more positive trend than in year 2003 when the EU was internally deeply divided over war in Iraq. The Czech policy also welcomed a resolve in presenting Headline Goal 2010 that specified new demanding targets of European capabilities for the full spectrum of crisis management operations and consequently also for the activities of the EU as a global player. In the same fashion the Battlegroup project was cautiously welcomed if it contributes to the real improvement of European military capabilities.

**b) NATO-EU relations**

Czech security policy from the beginning of its independent existence has seen NATO and the United States as the only reliable protection for its sovereignty. In other words, the Czechs, being aware of their country's size, perceive the Alliance as a basic safeguard against falling victim to

attempted strategy to split “new” and “old” Europe. The US government left behind the feeling of mismanaging its Cent

### *Czech contribution to ESDP*

The Czech Republic declared its contribution to the EHG on the second day of the Capabilities Commitment Conference in November 2000 and later updated it in 2001 and 2003. It consists of a mechanised infantry battalion, a special force company, a helicopter unit (4 Mi-17s), a field hospital or medical battalion, a chemical protection company, and a centre for humanitarian and rescue operations. These units are fully professional and also represent a portion of the Czech units assigned to the NATO high-readiness forces. As a general principle, these units are “double-hatted” for NATO as well as EU operations. In addition, some of these units can also be used for peacekeeping missions under UN command. The total size of the Czech contribution is above 1000 men, with a long-term rotation up to one year secured for the mechanised infantry battalion. All other declared forces are of specialised nature and their participation in an operation can presently be sustained for only 6 months. Overall level of Czech contribution towards EHG is comparable with that of Austria, Belgium or Ireland. The current process of Czech armed forces reform should lead through their full professionalization and reaching Initial Operational Capabilities by year 2006 also to potential qualitative improvement and quantitative broadening of Czech contribution towards current EU Headline Goal 2010. The Czech Republic focuses now on improving interoperability, deployability and su



Balkans in the 2003-2004 period and the intention to participate at appropriate strength (at least a strengthened infantry company, depending on situation with KFOR) in operation Althea in Bosnia from January 2005.

Czech military, police and civilian personnel has participated in all of the recent EU-led missions in the Balkans (EUPM, Proxima and Althea), although the biggest EU-led operation so far (Althea) was somewhat more complicated as the right-wing opposition party ODS obstructed ratification of sending the Czech unit to it in the Parliament. Althea operation is, however, interesting also by being a first example of operational military cooperation with Austria (joint guard unit) and by providing the specialised capabilities (Mi-17 transport helicopters unit) that Europe lacks in sufficient numbers.

There is also a clear preference given by the Czech policy to deployment of EU-led operations in areas other than Africa. CR would in any case be most likely to participate in operations taking place in the Balkans (as it does at the moment), Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Near and Middle East, Central Asia

#### **d) Impact of EU enlargement on CFSP/ESDP**

*Relations with Russia*– The Czech Republic shares with many other CEE EU member states a particular perspective of Russia that is still seen as undemocratic and potential threat (either directly, indirectly through instability export or as a source of energy dependency for the EU)<sup>7</sup>. EU policy is seen as sometimes naive and plagued by special deals or special statuses awarded to Russia without any reference to its progress in building democracy or the rule of law. In trade issues there is still lingering question of Russian debt that was partially bought by third parties and is partially being repaid in raw materials and military spare parts and new equipment. Change of visa regime had a stark impact on bilateral relations when the Czech Republic adopted EU visa policy already in 2001, Czech diplomacy beware of special initiatives by Germany, France or Italy (and of softer visa regimes that Germany and Italy apply to holders of special category of Russian passports ). Czech entry into the EU will no doubt elevate its status in Russian eyes and thus improve current cold relations where the Czech Republic has been mostly ignored by Russia.

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<sup>7</sup> Czech president at that time even declared in his May 2001 speech at Bratislava conference of NATO candidate states („Vilnius Ten“ group) that Russia is not part of Europe or West and should be treated as a distinct partner

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*Relations with Eastern Europe* - The Czech Republic does, however, see for itself (together with other Visegrad countries and Baltic states) a special role vis-à-vis Eastern Europe, defined primarily as Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova. Visegrad countries presented a special action plan for these countries in December 2003, the Czech Republic added a special assessment on Ukraine and Moldova in connection with EU Reports and sees these countries as a special group to be treated differently from Russia. It stresses their prospect for EU membership although it should be based on meeting all criteria and may thus be decades away.<sup>8</sup>

*Relations with the Balkans* – Area of Western Balkans has been a long-term priority of the Czech foreign policy, based on historically close ties especially between the interwar Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. The Czech foreign policy can build on a continuity of local expertise, signi(-1.5J20.37 8.15450 TD-0.0007 Tc0.1259 Tw(Tg)-7.37oup tf

questions during the process of updating *Security Strategy of the Czech Republic*<sup>10</sup>, that was eventually approved by Czech government on 10 December 2003, just two days before the European Council approved *European Security Strategy*. Czech policy-makers were involved in the debate on preemptive and/or preventive engagement concept both as a theoretical tool used in drafting the document and as a practical approach reacting to the US use of “preemption” concept. Czech foreign policy expressed its support for the logic of preventive engagement and comprehensive strategies aiming at conflict prevention (including *inter alia* bolstering the rule of law, economic assistance and military operations). The Czech Republic went even further when it supported US policy during the Iraqi crisis during spring 2003, which was based on the concept of preemption (although later on we can argue it was rather an example of preventive attack as no immediate threat posed by WMDs was found in Iraq). The Czech approach therefore saw the original Solana’s proposal from June 2003 as acceptable when it referred to “preemptive engagement”. As the term proved controversial for some other EU member states, the Czech diplomacy agreed to the new version that deliberately sticks to the “preventive engagement”. Where the challenge of the *European Security Strategy* really lies is in the Czech view of its implementation and lack of necessary political will to act or missing strategic culture fostering early, rapid and when necessary intervention. In the final text the Czech Republic would prefer to see longer and more substantial references to NATO, stressing the “strategic partnership” between the two organisations and the need for keeping strong transatlantic link.

European Security Strategy is compatible with recent major Czech strategic documents (Security Strategy from December 2003 and Military Strategy from June 2004), but general Czech public or political elites have not discussed it in any detail. Even the Czech expert discussion has so far been limited. The Czech diplomacy welcomed the development and gradual adoption of number of EU action plans linked to the document, especially those on fight against terrorism and WMD proliferation. At the same time the Czech Republic faces several obstacles in their implementation as far as European arrest warrant (vetoed by Czech president, then overruled by Parliament again in late September 2004) and financial measures (questioned by Czech National Bank) are concerned. It supports concrete areas

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<sup>10</sup> *Security Strategy of the Czech Republic*, 10 December 2004, available at [www.mzv.cz](http://www.mzv.cz)



where ESS is now being implemented – comprehensive EU policy in Bosnia, strategic partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East, fight against terrorism, effective multilateralism.

### **3. The Result of IGC 2003/2004 on the Constitutional Treaty**

#### **a) Constitutional Treaty - External Representation and Decision-making**

Czech representatives at the Convention presented several speeches, that nevertheless touched on issues of EU External relations, CFSP and ESDP in only limited extent.

The Czech Republic did not consider CFSP/ESDP clauses in draft Constitutional Treaty as presented to IGC for final deliberation as its most controversial points. Czech position concentrated much more on the principle of “one country-one commissioner” and on ensuring increased weight of smaller member countries in QMV formula (ratio 60:60 preferred, but final

Following its own priorities in CFSP the Czech Republic presented during summer 2004 a discussion paper on Kosovo as a member of Regional Partnership, and sponsored also Visegrad declaration on Ukraine. As for other informal initiative carried out outside the Treaty provisions, the Czech foreign policy stresses a need to keep appropriate level of information on all initiatives. As such it is not in favour of *directoire* (composed of France, Germany and United Kingdom) acting on behalf of the EU without consulting it beforehand, as was the case of their Iran initiative from autumn 2003. It is acceptable only if initial talks are closely followed by EU-wide activities. The Czech Republic also recommends a greater use of constructive abstention (especially in CESDP issues) as a way to enhance efficient decision-making and EU activity in those areas where greater use of QMV is either unlikely or undesirable. On the other hand Czech government (unlike Czech president or major opposition party ODS) supported possible extension of QMV in CFSP area, with principal distinction from defence or military issues where unanimity should be strictly kept. It was therefore also open to the proposal of Italian Presidency concerning easier formula of QMV for proposals submitted in CFSP matters by the EU Foreign Minister.

**b) New defence instruments and clauses**

In Czech general political debate certain degree of attention was paid to the Draft of EU Constitutional Treaty that was in CFSP/ESDP-related sections treated very carefully. Especially mutual defence clause in the original proposal from the Convention had worrying implications on NATO and the opposition strongly opposed it as a concrete example of further integration in security and defence dimension of

government recently declared that it would like to take part in it if it can meet criteria so as to remain in the EU mainstream. In other areas the Czech government was in favour of greater use of QMV in CFSP proper (not in issues with military

**d) Crisis management**

Issue of autonomous EU planning cell or even full-fledged operational EU headquarters was seen by Czech military to be of crucial importance and strongly opposed as a step undermining NATO and wasting resources on structures and capabilities that are easily available from the Alliance. Civilian-military cell was in the end interpreted as a reasonable compromise allowing for planning of operations where the EU has a comparat