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Views on American Foreign Policy

The Atlanticism of Political Parties in Central and Eastern Europe

David Král, Věra Řiháčková, Tomáš Weiss

2008

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CONTENT

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WORD FROM THE AMBASSADOR

Dear readers,

The world today is characterized by increasingly multipolar communication, where the ideas and agendas of respective players interact and overlap on the global stage. In no arena is this more evident than in politics. The transatlantic interaction between European countries and the United States is a prime example. Americans value the long-standing partnership with our European allies. The Transatlantic ties between our cultures are far more varied and far deeper than the requisite communication between nations. Although our governments' policies may not always align, our concern for the welfare and views of all elements of society – be they political, economic or individual – remains constant.

I am therefore very pleased to see this substantial year-long research project conducted by Europeum. The U.S. Embassy in Prague is happy to help publish its contents in this book. We hope you find it enlightening.

Richard W. Graber
Ambassador of the USA
in the Czech Republic

OVERVIEW OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE:

Cleavages and Foreign Policy Attitudes

The object of this study is the foreign policy agenda, orientation, and behaviour of political parties in selected Central and Eastern European countries. More specifically, the authors assess the position of major political parties in six countries of Central and Eastern Europe that have recently become members of the European Union (2004 in the case of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary; 2007 in the case of Bulgaria and Romania) vis-à-vis the United States. The attention was not devoted to the examination of particular issues in bilateral relations between the countries at stake and the United States, but mainly to topics that became somehow contentious in a wider international context, where US policy diverged from that of the other international actors, notably some EU member states.

The reason why we selected to examine the attitudes from the new member states of the EU is given by their recent accession to the European Union. In the previous studies that we examined, inter alia, what is likely to be the behaviour of the new EU members in shaping (or not shaping) EU foreign and security policy (Král and Pachta 2005). The experience of previous accessions, as well as the accession process itself, suggests that the acceding countries are by nature reshaping their foreign policies in a process known as "Europeanisation." This is explicable in terms of the necessary alignment of the foreign policies of the acceding countries along with the common positions of the EU within the framework of the CFSP, adjusting the framework of foreign policy-making to the EU requirements, necessity to engage in more foreign policy issues than the traditional priorities of the individual countries would dictate, etc. In a sense, this adjustment in the area of foreign policy was not less important that in other

policy areas, despite the low amount of "acquis"[1] in this field that might suggest the opposite. The whole process of the "Europeanisation" of the acceding countries' foreign policy was facilitated by the fact that there was a wide national consensus that the EU accession itself was the foremost foreign policy goal, although we can still see differing degrees of this consensus among individual countries. What is, however, also very important in this context is that all the countries surveyed were trying to achieve another foreign policy goal, which was integration into NATO. For all the countries surveyed, these two goals were seen as complementary, not competing. In the Central European discourses, the description of the primary foreign policy goal was integration into "Euro-Atlantic" structures,[2] which basically meant the twin goal of acceding both to the EU and NATO without hierarchy, i.e. putting one of the objectives ahead of the other. In addition, for most of the countries covered in this study, these twin goals of EU and NATO accession were not achieved at the same moment, with the exception of Slovakia.

The existence of these twin goals plays a crucial role in examining the Transatlantic dimension of the foreign policy adjustment. It was one of the key factors in describing the foreign policy of the EU accession countries as 'Atlanticist.' Precisely because NATO and EU accession were viewed as complementary and equally important throughout 1990's, it was difficult for the political elites that supported the both processes to recognise possible controversies between them. Thus, there was a large degree of stability in the behaviour of foreign policy during the course of the 1990's that would presumably continue even after accession to the EU. In reality, however, cleavages had already started to appear before the countries joined the EU; although, to an external observer, they were not always overly visible.

The key question that must be asked, therefore, is whether a foreign policy consensus exists even after the twin goals of Euro-Atlantic integration have been achieved. In this respect, it is the political parties that come into the play. With the changing governments in Central and Eastern European countries, the examination of their foreign policy agendas, including their relationship to the United States, might change as well. The research, thus, builds on a premise that, as the new member states integrate more deeply into the European Union after the accession, it is likely that we will see similar cleavages in the relationship vis-à-vis the United States that we see in Western Europe.

1) By the term 'acquis,' we refer to the binding instruments adopted by the European Union applicable inter alia to its member states.
2) With the exception of the position of the BSP in Bulgaria and the PSD in Romania until the mid 1990's, when these post-communist parties made a policy U-turn.

The basic premise or hypothesis is that, in a Western European typology of political parties, there is a distinction in foreign policy behaviour from the right and left-wing parties. It is also reflected with the main issue in question of this paper – the relationship and attitudes towards the United States. While the right-wing parties tend to align more with the foreign policy goals, objectives, and means of the United States, this applies to a far lesser degree to their left-wing counterparts. As we see in the previous section, this is a simplified premise; nevertheless, at least in the case of some countries, this description is largely accepted and was used as a starting point for a comparison with the situation in Central and Eastern Europe.

One challenge that must be tackled at the beginning is the specificity of partisan systems in Central and Eastern Europe as a result of different histories and transformation processes. As we will shortly explain, different cleavages endure that determine the partisan scale in the new EU member states, making the political scene different from Western Europe. Nevertheless, as the transformation process is in the final phase (or nominally considered to be completed) and as those countries integrate more deeply into the EU, it is assumed that their partisan systems will also move more closely towards the traditional cleavages existent in the majority of Western European party systems, which is already quite visible in some countries (the Czech Republic or Hungary), while it might still take longer in others.

As for the methodology employed, the authors examined, primarily, the positions of those political parties represented in Parliament during the critical period when the issues determined as case studies were debated and discussed. The review of a party's positions relied on three main sources: firstly, the official documents of the party, such as election manifestos or long-term party programmes (complemented with desk research monitoring the statements of party members in the media) and self-placement of political parties on the political spectrum; secondly, the approach relied on questionnaires that were developed and sent to the surveyed parties' representatives, especially to those identified as important foreign policy experts whose positions are instrumental for the overall approach of the respective political parties (however, it must be acknowledged that the response rate was very low, thus putting into question the relevance of this too); finally, the authors also relied on interviews with leading foreign policy experts in individual countries, who can often provide a very good account of the partisan positions on the foreign policy issues examined and give the researchers the possibility to cross-check the credibility of the assessments and sufficient representativeness of these foreign policy experts.

Right – Left Cleavage as a Variable in the Political Parties' Foreign Policy Positions

The basic cleavage along which the positions of the political parties were examined was the one dividing the right-wing parties from those of the left-wing, described by classical conflict lines proposed by Stein Rokkan (namely, the socio-economic cleavage of owners vs. employees or centre vs. periphery [Lipset and Rokkan 1967]). Although its applicability to transforming societies in Central and Eastern Europe is disputed by many political scientists, it is, nevertheless, the most influential classification developed thus far, and, as such, is a good starting point for this research. It is useful to illustrate how this cleavage translates into the foreign policy attitudes of political parties. The division suggests that right-wing parties, when formulating a foreign policy agenda, put an emphasis on two issues: security and defence of what they believe are universal values (democracy, rule of law, fundamental human rights and freedoms). As they also largely believe that, when the universal basic principles they project through their foreign policy are at stake (for instance, the security of the country or that of the 'international community' in general), it is necessary to deploy force to achieve these goals because they are universal and unalienable. This largely explains their tolerance for the use of hard power and scepticism towards dealing with countries or regimes that are not based on the same values and principles. Moreover, they are more suspicious that, when hard power should be deployed to protect these fundamental principles, the approval of a wider international community (particularly, the United Nations and its Security Council) is always necessary. This is explained by distrust towards such communities where decisions are also being taken by countries that disregard these universal principles. This viewpoint, portrayed in more philosophical terms, could mean that right-wing parties do not believe that all the humans are good in their nature, and that this opinion, in the international arena, is also applicable to states and regimes.

In the context of this paper, the position towards the United States plays an important role as well. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, the European right-wing parties saw the United States as the protector of these universal principles. One can also claim that they embraced the idea of a unipolar world more easily, although exceptions obviously exist here. Because the United States represented the values and principles that the West was fighting for during the Cold War, they assume that Europe, which stands for the same values, should align itself with the United States in pursuing the worldwide application of

these universal principles. The image of the United States among the European right-wing parties is generally more positive than among their left-wing counterparts. One point that certainly plays a role is that the European right-wing parties, many of whom are derived from Christian-democratic rules, view the "West," i.e. Europe and the United States, as a community built around the values of Christianity.

Left-wing parties, on the other hand, build their foreign policy presumptions on foreign policy relativism. Despite the fact that – at least in Western Europe – they believe in the same universal values as well as in their inalienability, they do not necessarily share a common view on how to project them. They believe that the way for the international community to embrace these same values is through different means, which can generally be described as engagement. This would be explicable in terms of economic co-operation, dialogue, and the power of diplomacy and persuasion, rather than coercion. For this reason, the European left- wing parties do not share the same distrust towards the international community because they believe that it is within the realm of where international institutions (particularly, the United Nations, but international organizations, in general) where democratic countries – or the West – should act. Thus, the overall perception of what we can call a post World War II normative international order, including the role of the UN and international law, is much more positive.

In terms of relations with the United States, the positions of the European left-wing parties also diverge from their right-wing counterparts. Firstly, they view more negatively the notion of US hegemony – not only of their military, but also of economic and cultural dominance. They, unlike the right-wing parties, do not necessarily believe that Europe and the US even share the same values, often pointing out issues such as the execution of capital punishment in the US that is banned in Europe, the abuse of human rights by US operations worldwide, the role that religion (especially Christianity) plays in society (building on the idea of a secular Europe versus a religious America), and more emphasis on solidarity in Europe, as opposed to the individualistic behaviour of the Americans or the allegedly irresponsible attitude of the US to global challenges such as climate change or international criminal justice. They often like to point out opinion polls, showing that Europeans and Americans look very differently at the role of international organisations, the use of force in international relations, or the justification of war. This all leads to the presumption that a unipolar world, dominated by the United States, who diverge from Europeans in their views of handling global problems, and, moreover, project

their view of the world in a manner not acceptable to many Europeans, is not a good solution. Here fits the idea of a multi-polar world, where Europe, as well as other possible sources of power, would balance out and tame the excessively unilateral and militaristic view of solving world's problems that is represented and pushed for by the United States.

One can obviously suggest that this is a simplistic description of the division between the right and left-wing parties in terms of foreign policy and relations with the USA in Western Europe. Even the former EU-15 represents a large variety of countries with political parties that might not fit this discourse. If we take, for instance, only the 'Big Three' in the EU (i.e. Germany, France, and the UK), we will see that it is only with Germany that this system fits. In France, the right-wing is associated with de Gaulle and parties claiming his legacy (currently the UMP); one can hardly assert that the afore-mentioned description of foreign policy and pro-US positions applies to the French right, although the situation has clearly changed with Sarkozy. Similarly, the UK, despite some differences between Labour and the Conservatives along the lines we suggest, cherishes its special relationship with the United States, which is clearly demonstrated on its close alignment between the foreign policy of the two countries, regardless of which party is in power. Thus, the right-left division is most clearly demonstrated in the German example, where the CDU position tends to be more pro-American, while the SPD position is more sceptical of the US alignment. This leads us to the first presumption that even the older members of the EU, in some cases, demonstrate a certain consensus on foreign policy across the political spectrum and that party divisions, albeit existent, are not so important in the overall continuity of national foreign policy.

Similarly, we can question the foreign policy consensus in the United States itself. For those who follow the 2008 election, the difference between Democrats and Republicans on many foreign policy issues (and, most notably, the row over future engagements in Iraq, but also a number of other issues such as dealing with Iraq, Syria, Iran, the International Criminal Court etc.) cannot be more evident. On the other hand, one can also see an alignment on certain issues – such as the 'securitisation' of foreign policy after 9/11 or the belief in projecting presumably universal values. Still, on many occasions, we have seen that the relationship between the EU and the USA depends very much on who holds the presidency in the US. For the purpose of this paper, it was necessary to build on a certain simplification and generalization to be able to examine the changes of attitudes of Central and Eastern European states and their political parties towards the United States.

Party Cleavages Specific for Central and Eastern Europe – The Legacy of Transformation[3]

Analyzing the political parties positions on Transatlantic policy issues in Central and Eastern Europe poses additional challenges. This is largely due to the legacy of the fall of communism and transformation, nominally completed by the accession to the European Union and admission to other 'Western club' organizations such as the WTO or the OECD, but enduring in reality. This results in the emergence of political parties that do not exhibit the same stability as their Western European counterparts; perhaps even more importantly, the cleavages determining the placement of political parties along the conflict lines in Western Europe, as concisely described and analyzed by Rokkan, are not entirely applicable to the region. The political scientists mention at least three different cleavages characteristic of the transforming political system: the cleavage arising from the controversy over the nature of the regime, the socio-economic transformation cleavage, and the national conflict line.

The first of these arises as a **direct consequence of regime change** and the links of various political actors to the former regime (communism). This line, albeit falling in importance after the establishment of free elections and continuing transformation during the 1990's, is still evident in some countries of the region, notably Poland and Hungary, while in other countries, such as the Czech Republic, is less important. This cleavage is associated mainly with the antagonism of ex-communist formations and their anti-communist counterparts (such as former dissidents emerging into political formations during the free elections after the fall of communism) and translating itself into controversies over the residual problems of communism such as lustrations (the exclusion of former prominent figures from holding public offices) and settling the crimes of communism (including the restitution of property rights, punishment, and documentation of communist crimes, etc.). Despite the diminishing importance of this cleavage, we have seen that it endured strongly, for instance, in Poland between 2005 and 2007 where the ruling Law and Justice Party (PiS) built a large bulk of its electoral programme and government agenda around issues pertinent to this conflict line. As far as the substance of this paper is concerned, this cleavage can translate into foreign policy agenda as well. For instance, the parties claiming a legacy in the fight

3) This introductory account of the cleavages in the new member states draws mainly on the paper of Vít Hloušek and Lubomír Kopeček on Cleavages in Contemporary Czech and Slovak Politics published in 2005 (Hloušek and Kopeček 2005).

against communism are more likely to align more closely with the United States, appreciating its pivotal role in defeating communism and standing for the same principles of personal freedom and justice that they were fighting for, in addition to having an understanding for their worldwide projection.

The **socio-economic transformation conflict line** describes the right-left division in the most similar terms to the original Rokkan analysis, but is more closely linked to the economic and social effects of transformation following the fall of communism. It builds on the assumption that there are winners and losers in the transformation process, whose positions do not necessarily result from the same preconditions as the owners-employees cleavage described by Rokkan, but are rather seen as a result of the somewhat chaotic process of privatisation and the uncertainty over property rights characteristics during the first years of economic transformation, gradually translating into arguments over the degree of state intervention in the economy, the level of liberalisation, and so on. As the process of economic and democratic institutionalisation proceeds and finally takes ground firmly, it is likely that this cleavage will transform itself into the traditional socio-economic conflict line defined by Rokkan. This means that the parties that favour a more rapid transition to a market economy and its liberalisation are more likely to evolve into what we know as conservative/liberal parties in Western Europe, while those who are in favour of a more careful approach that underlines the social consequences of transformation will develop into socialist parties of a Western European style. From the point of view of the importance of this conflict line for foreign policy, it is not quite clear. However, due to the assumed convergence towards the right-left division present in Western Europe, the foreign policy positions of the political parties might develop along a similar pattern. In fact, this paper, to a large extent, builds on this premise.

The third conflict line specific for the transforming countries of Central and Eastern Europe is the **nationalist conflict line**. This one is particularly important in the region discussed due to the complicated history and mutual grievances among the various nationalities and minority groups that tend to mobilise voters along with the socio-economic consequences of transformation. This conflict line can have various modifications in different countries throughout the region; however, generally speaking, it was, at a certain stage, present in all the countries discussed. The various modalities of the nationalist conflict line include cleavages arising from the existence of a strong ethnic minority or a particular cultural group or region, or the existence of parties building their discourse on traditional historical grievances and hostility

towards their neighbours, as well as the more fundamental question of state building based on civic principle as opposed to that of ethnic or regional principles. While this cleavage can certainly also be found in Western Europe, its importance in the context in transforming the societies of Central and Eastern European countries is more important due to the cumulative impact of other cleavages, such as the socio-economic impacts of transformation, that have a higher potential for polarising a society (by blaming "the other" for failures in transformation). The relevance of this conflict line for foreign policy is likely to be evident on a case-by-case basis. For instance, some parties representing ethnic minorities might have taken different positions on an issue where a minority issue is at stake in a different country. Such is the case of the Hungarian coalition party in Slovakia (SMK) that, as the only party represented in the Slovak Parliament, supported the recognition of Kosovo, as it was considered a just cause of a minority that was suppressed by a majority. On the other hand, the other parties viewed recognition as a dangerous precedent that could lead to irredentist ambitions of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia; a very similar situation was encountered amongst the Hungarian parties in Romania.

One additional cleavage that could be mentioned is the consequence of European integration. As such, it is neither completely attributable to the specifics of the region (as we can also find it in Western Europe) nor – like the previous examples – is a result of regime change. Nevertheless, it has particular repercussions in the region compared to most Western European countries, resulting from a relatively quick integration with an already closely integrated entity (the European Union) and requiring a large degree of sharing sovereignty. While in Western Europe, the transition to supranational decision-making was an ongoing process, where within Central and Eastern Europe it took place in practically only a few years. The implications of this cleavage on foreign policy are, arguably, the most crucial, albeit not attached to any particular issue. While those political parties in favour of sharing sovereignty with other countries in order to create a stronger entity are likely to be willing to do so even in the foreign policy arena (as consensus builders rather than free riders), those parties that are sceptical of sharing sovereignty are most likely to voice their concerns exactly in the area of foreign policy which is the least "communitarized" in the EU. Such parties, thus, might prefer to adopt a free rider position, arguing that they are not willing to sacrifice their national interest for the sake of consensus building in order to meet an imaginative 'European' interest.

Therefore, the classification of the political parties along the right-left axis in Central and Eastern Europe is more complicated as it is not always sure which of the conflict lines is dominant. In some cases, more cleavages are present that complicate the political scene further. For instance, in Poland, the socio-economic transformational cleavage certainly exists, but so does the enduring conflict line on the nature of the regime, driving a further division between the parties on the right (the PiS versus the PO – Civic Platform), as well as a souverainist cleavage dividing Eurosceptic parties such as the LPR or Self-Defence. Similarly, the national conflict line is hugely divisive for the political parties on the Slovak right. The comparison of the positions of political parties vis-à-vis the United States is easier in those countries where the socio-economic transformation cleavage prevails because such party systems are more stable and clearly converging with the political landscape in Western Europe. Bearing these differences in mind, one can nevertheless assume that, as the transformation draws to its final phase and the political scene in Central and Eastern Europe comes to resemble that of Western Europe, the division along the right-left axis will clearly emerge, causing the existing political parties to be classified in this way.

Assessing the Political Parties' Atlanticism

In order to be able to assess the degree of the political parties' support of the United States, it is useful to draw such an analysis on a number of case studies that have become important issues in Transatlantic relations during recent years, and where the position of the United States and the European Union, or some of its members, has diverged. This can give a clearer indication of whether the party prefers to side with the US position (a sing of Atlanticism), or whether it prefers another position.

However, the research of the parties' behaviour across Central and Eastern Europe showed that the picture can be much more complex than labelling parties Atlanticist, according to the assessment, as whether or not they support the US. The fact that a party does not align with the US position does not always indicate that it is anti-American. This has to do with the problem of defining an antipole of Atlanticism. As Petr Drulák points out in his article in the Czech daily Lidové noviny, the differentiation in terms of the political elites' attitudes might go beyond mere pro- or anti-Americanism (cf. Drulák 2006). We can envisage at least three different modifications of how

a party's position can be interpreted when it does not support the United States on a particular problem. For instance, a party might prefer to adopt a position built purely on the interests of a given state that does not align to the position of the United States or any other important actor (e.g. the EU), which could be called a **souverainist** approach. The other possibility represents a position that aligns to a solution facilitated by an international organisation (particularly, the United Nations, but also, for instance, the EU-US consensus with other countries on board) – the **internationalist** approach. The third scenario that can be envisaged for countries and parties at stake represents an alignment with a mainstream opinion of the European Union, even at the cost of being alienated from the United States. This would represent the **Europeanist** position. It is not always possible to draw a clear dividing line between these positions. For instance, the Altanticist approach could be souverainist as well, just because a particular party believes that it is in the national interest to support the United States. On other occasions, the Atlanticist and internationalist approach can correlate when a party supports a US move that is backed by the wider international community (including the European Union). Thus, it poses certain problems to define an antipole to Atlanticism. Most likely, the only sensible approach is to examine Atlanticism on a case-by-case basis, taking into account a variety of other actors on the international scene and assessing the position of a particular country in this light.

In fact, the political parties across Central and Eastern Europe that we are examining tend to exhibit different patterns in attitudes towards the US, as well as towards issues where alignment or non-alignment with the US is at stake. In practice, we find all the afore-mentioned positions of the parties' positions across the region. The souverainist attitude, being critical of the role of the US, but also suspicious of other actors (such as the EU) includes, particularly, the FIDESZ in Hungary, the LPR and Self-Defence in Poland, part of the ODS in the Czech Republic, but also the Czech Communist party (KSČM) or the Slovak National Party in Slovakia. Clearly, both the extremes of the right and the left throughout the region tend to be souverainist or isolationist. They put more emphasis on the national interest and national positions. However, most of these parties are not what can be classified as mainstream; thus, they have only a marginal influence on government positions (with the exception of the FIDESZ, which is the dominant right-wing force in Hungary), although many of them were or are present in ruling coalitions.

An additional problem that arises is the lack of coherence of a party position on some issues. Generally, across Central and Eastern Europe, foreign policy does not dominate the political parties' programmes. General direction might often be indicated in the programmes, but is no required in order to give clear guidance on how the party would act in concrete situations. When such a situation emerges, the statements from party members might be uncoordinated or even contradictory. Secondly, in some countries, as it was found out, the message for the domestic electorate often differs from that of the actual policy. This is very much true in countries where foreign policy does not play a strong role in politics, such as in Hungary.

The Government vs. Opposition Problem

Closely linked to the issue of the internal coherence and consistency of partisan positions is the fact that parties often behave differently when they are in opposition from when they participate from a position of power within the government. In the opposition, the parties can often articulate their positions more freely than when they are in power. This is especially applicable to issues of foreign policy. Even the strongest supporters of the USA in the international arena are forced to take a more 'Europeanized' approach when in power, simply because they must deal with their EU counterparts far more often than with anyone else on the international scene. The shift is fairly visible in the case of the Czech ODS party in 2006 (or, at least, a part of it); a similar trend can appear in with the FIDESZ in Hungary (being rather sceptical of both the US and the EU); however, in the case of the Polish PiS, we have seen very little Europeanization when the party was the senior coalition member. This trend can, nevertheless, work the other way round as well. For instance, the Czech Social Democrats, when in power, took a rather moderate position towards the US on Iraq, as well as towards the missile defence plans of the US administration. The research suggests that what we can often see is a discrepancy between party members holding executive posts and the wider partisan base. The members of the cabinet are exposed to many pressures that the legislators or other party members are not, such as inter-party bargaining in ruling coalitions or pressures arising from the administration that strive to ensure the consistency and continuity of foreign policy. In addition, the fact, by nature, that we see coalition rather than one-colour governments in the electoral systems in Central and Eastern Europe, also forces the political parties to moderate their rhetoric on foreign policy issues. In some cases, it even happens in the opposition. For instance,

in 2008, the Slovak opposition parties were reluctant to vote for the Lisbon Treaty in order to blackmail the government over the controversial press law. Finally, they were very critical of the Hungarian party SMK, who voted with the government, enabling it to get the ratification act through the parliament, accusing it of 'betrayal.' On the other hand, the case of Slovakia, particularly, shows that the parties' positions on foreign policy do not necessarily have to change when the party enters the government – rather, it is an exception in the context of Central Europe.

The Overall Orientation of Foreign Policy

Central and Eastern European countries also show a higher degree of internal differentiation in regard to foreign policy, as well as in relation to the 'Atlanticist' consensus, than others. In Poland, for instance, there is a strong political consensus on support for the United States across the political spectrum; only the degree of enthusiasm for support of the US might vary with different political parties in power. At the moment, the same premise holds true for Romania. In the other countries, the political scene is more polarised as far as the relationship with the USA is concerned, again to different degrees. The strong anti-American rhetoric could be found mainly in the parties at the extremes of the political spectrum, either the Left (for instance, the Czech communist party) or the right (the Slovak National Party, or parts of the KDH). However, it is not limited solely to anti-Americanism; the extremist parties often hold critical views of the European Union as well. Nevertheless, anti-American rhetoric can also be found among the parties that could be easily classified as part of the mainstream right, as an example of the FIDESZ party in Hungary shows (although, the FIDESZ seems to be an isolated case, with the possible explanation that the party is such a dominant right-wing force that it picked some elements of the usual nationalist discourse from the parties of the far right). The general conclusion, however, shows that the internal differentiation of the examined Central European countries divides them into two groups in terms of their overall foreign policy orientation. Poland and Romania exhibit a more consensual approach across the political spectrum concerning relations with the United States. The other countries are more 'instinctive' Atlanticists – their mainstream political parties generally acknowledge the credentials of close co-operation with the United States; however, their support is not unconditional and differs along the pattern suggested in the original hypothesis – in a sense, that the more a party leans to the right, the more supportive it will be of US policies.

The Impact of Public Opinion

Another pattern identified when examining the political parties in Central and Eastern Europe shows that an important variable in the formation of the parties' preferences, even on foreign policy issues, can swing with public opinion. At least two examples clearly demonstrate that the left wing parties are more prone to linking their foreign policy stances to the state of public opinion – namely the SMER in Slovakia and the ČSSD in the Czech Republic. In the latter case, the pattern can be manifested on the example of the Czech Republic's involvement in Iraq, which the majority of Czechs were strongly opposed to and which was reflected in some official justifications for the statements of the party's members. More lately, in the case of the missile defence system, the Social Democrats advocated calling for a referendum on the treaty that, given the current circumstances, would surely not lead to its approval. Similarly, the left-wing parties in Bulgaria, especially the BSP (Bulgarian Socialist Party), exploit a traditional pro-Russian sentiment in Bulgarian society by following policies that accommodate Russian positions to a high degree. In Poland, this swing, according to public opinion, was most clearly visible with the extremist parties of Self-Defence and the League of Polish Families (LPR), especially regarding the Polish troops' deployment abroad, which the public was increasingly against. The right-wing parties, on the contrary, tend to be more cautious about public opinion in making foreign policy choices, even assuming that, especially when security issues are at stake, they must go against the will of the public (such is the case of the Czech ODS party's position to the US radar and Iraq). In most of the countries, however, the foreign policy agenda hardly ever figures into the election programmes; therefore, the question is: why should the politicians bother with taking public opinion into account (apart from extremist parties that tend to be populist by nature)? The explanation is that there are obvious exceptions when foreign policy issues have strong emotional or historical dimensions or when the issue touches on peoples' lives – such as the debate on US bases in the respective countries, issues where minorities are at stake (e.g. the debate on Kosovo in Slovakia, Romania, and Hungary), or military deployment in faraway missions such as Afghanistan or Iraq – in these examples, a position consistent with public opinion could earn political points.

Conclusion

It is difficult to make a clear-cut conclusion on the examination of the political parties from the six countries of Central and Eastern Europe, as far as their relations with the United States are concerned. What the research has shown quite clearly is that the countries do not form a unique block, but are internally differentiated, firstly with different degree of stability inside the party systems in the countries examined, secondly with a different regard of foreign policy and its formulation. In some cases, it is foreign policy that determines domestic political developments, as in the case of Bulgaria in the 1990's. In other cases, such as Hungary, the system works the other way round – it is domestic politics that, to a large extent, determines the foreign policy stances of the political parties. In still other cases, foreign policy is a much more autonomous sphere of policy-making that, presumably, gives it a better chance of being consensual across the political spectrum, as the traditional cleavages that separate the right and the left are not so important. Such is the case of Poland and Romania, at least in the relation to the USA that was examined. On the other hand, in the case of the Czech Republic, where foreign policy is still a relatively autonomous sphere of policy making, the differentiation is visible as we move across the political axis.

The examination has, however, shown that there is indeed a differentiation on foreign policy issues where relations with the USA are at stake among Central and Eastern European parties along the right-left axis. However, this differentiation is rather uneven and dependent upon many variables.

The first set of explanation is contextual. Simply too many issues that are being debated in the foreign policy arena are relatively new and unsettled. Parties are still in search of their positions, employing different tools – sometimes looking to public opinion, sometimes finding inspiration in their older twin parties in Western Europe, sometimes following the mainstream of their party group in the European Parliament. This shows that 'Europeanisation' will probably be even more important the longer the countries are in the European Union; this is a finding that suggests a possible development in Bulgaria and Romania.

Also, the stability of the political systems is very different. In some countries, such as the Czech Republic, the party system and the cleavages determining it clearly converge with the standard partisan divisions evident in Western Europe, along with largely stable electorates. In Hungary, the political scene is very stable and crystallised; however, it also more difficult to classify according

to classical left-right cleavages. On the contrary, other countries in the region, for instance, Bulgaria or Poland, still show a big degree of voter volatility, resulting in the emergence of new parties, the disappearance of others, or an appeal to negative voters. In those countries where the partisan systems are already more similar to Western Europe, even foreign policy can be assessed more easily. The premise of the stronger Atlanticism of the right, thus, works perfectly in the Czech case and largely in Hungary as well, with an important exception of the FIDESZ party.

Another variable that still plays an important role in the foreign policy formulation of the political parties (and is far less apparent than in Western Europe) is the visible importance of the nationalist conflict line. It determines, to a large extent, the pro-Americanism of some Polish political parties (such as the PiS or the LPR), as it is an antipole to Russia and Germany. Similarly, it plays a role in the FIDESZ's nationalist rhetoric that is distrustful of both the USA and the EU, or, in case of Bulgarian extremist parties, due to their pro-Russian and anti-Turkish affiliations.

The research still leaves many questions for further thinking. Although the basic hypothesis that the left-wing parties tend to be less pro-American than their right wing counterparts is generally valid, it remains to be seen in what ways the partisan systems in many of the countries examined evolve and shift. One element to bear in mind is that there might be a greater differentiation of the notion of 'Atlanticism,' as today it involves positive attitudes towards both the USA and NATO, the two being ultimately linked. Here much again depends on developments outside the region. It is possible that, for some parties, bilateral relations with the USA will be more important after some time, as already illustrated by the policy of the PiS in Poland that ruled out participation in NATO as 'not being the alliance of Polish dreams' and arguing for a separate bilateral security deal with USA. The future of NATO itself might play a crucial role. It might turn into a much less relevant organization, causing traditionally Atlanticist parties to lose interest in it, which can further result in looking either towards closer links with USA or searching for an alternative in fostering the ESDP. On the other hand, the same development could increase an interest in NATO from less Atlanticist parties, as they might see the supposedly diminishing interest of USA in the Alliance as a chance for strengthening NATO's European pillar and limiting American influence therein.

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THE CASE STUDIES

BULGARIA

Věra Řiháčková

Table 1: Parties in the Bulgarian Parliament

Term	Parties represented in the Parliament (number of mandates)	Governing party or coalition
1990 – 1991[1] (Grand National Assembly)	• BSP[2] (list 47.2%, 97 seats, SMD 45.6%, 114 seats) • UDF (list 36.2%, 75 seats, SMD 35.9%, 69 seats) • BANU (list 8%, 16 seats, SMD 8.2%, 0) • MRF (list 6%, 12 seats, SMD 5.4%, 11 seats) *Total: 400*[3] *Voters turnout: 90.7% (average in the first round)*	BSP[4]

1) In the 1990 elections, a mixed electoral system was used with 200 deputies elected proportionally (d'Hondt formula) and 200 in single-member districts (SMD); two rounds were held in some constituencies. The 4% threshold was set to qualify for seats. Parties formed on an ethnic or religious basis were excluded from the 1990 electoral competition; this action was seen as a move to prevent the Turkish minority from organising its party. The Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), however, succeeded in being recognized as the civil rights movement and won the mandates. Of the forty different political associations/parties that stood in the elections, only four cleared the 4% threshold.

2) Since 1991, the **Bulgarian Socialist Party** (*Bălgarska Socialističeska Partija,* **BSP**), formerly the Bulgarian Communist Party, contested each election as a part of coalition: with the Bulgarian Agrarian People's Union Alexander Stambolijski 1899 (*Bălgarski Zemedelski Naroden Săjuz Aleksandăr Stambolijski 1899*) in 1991; with Political Club Ecoglasnost, the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party (*Bălgarska Socialdemokratcheska Partija*), and the Political Movement Social Democrats (*Političesko Dviženie Socialdemokrati*) in 1994; with the coalition of the Democratic Left in 1997; and with the Coalition for Bulgaria in 2001 (as well as in 2005, see bellow). The **United Democratic Forces** (*Obedineni demokratični sili,* **UDF**) was formed as a rather loose grouping in December 1989 by ten political groups; it split in 1992 (UDF-L and UDF-C). It was formally constituted as a single party in February 1997 (the MRF refused to join); the principal UDF members were: Political Club Ecoglasnost in 1990–1991; the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party (*Bălgarska Socialdemokratcheska Partija)*, the Democratic Party (*Demokratičeska Partija*), the People's Union, the Bulgarian Social Democratic Union and the Christian Democratic Movement in 1996–1997. The **Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (BANU)** descended from the leading pre-war agrarian party. After 1990, the party split into several groups, each claiming the name; the party has never re-united again. The main group stood in the 1991 elections (BANU-United); in the current Parliament, the agrarian party splinters are represented in centre-left Coalition for Bulgaria, as well as in centre-right coalitions UDF and BPU. The **Movement for Rights and Freedoms** *(Dvizhenie za Prava i Svobodi,* **MRF**) represents the Turkish minority; the 1997 elections were contested in coalition with the Green Party, BANU-Nikola Petkov, and the Kingdom of Bulgaria Confederation; in 2001 these groups stood in the elections in alliance with the Liberal Union and Euroroma.

3) Five seats were won by independent candidates; 1 remaining seat belonged to the Fatherland Party of Labour, which never cleared the 4% threshold again.

Table 1: Parties in the Bulgarian Parliament		
Term	**Parties represented in the Parliament (number of mandates)**	**Governing party or coalition**
1991 – 1994 (National Assembly[5], Narodno Subranie)	• UDF (34.4%, 110 seats) • BSP (33.1%, 106 seats) • MRF (7.5%, 24 seats) *Total: 240* *Voters turnout: 83.9%*	UDF - MRF
1994 – 1997	• BSP (43.5%, 125 seats) • UDF (24.2%, 69 seats • MRF (5.4%, 15 seats) • People's Union[6] (6.5%, 18 seats) • Bulgarian Business Block[7] (4.7%, 13 seats) *Total: 240* *Voters turnout: 75.2%*	BSP
1997[8]–2001	• UDF (52.3%, 137 seats) • BSP (22.1%, 58 seats) • MRF (7.6%, 19 seats) • Euroleft Coalition[9] (5.5%, 14 seats) • Bulgarian Business Block (4.9%, 12 seats) *Total: 240* *Voters turnout: 58.9%*	UDF[10]
2001–2005	• NMSII[11] (42.7%, 120 seats) • UDF (18.2%, 51 seats) • BSP (17.1%, 48 seats) • MRF (7.5%, 21 seats) *Total: 240* *Voters turnout: 66.6%*	NMSII - MRF[12]
2005–(2009)	• BSP (Coalition for Bulgaria[13], 34%, 82 seats) • NMSII (21.8%, 53 seats) • MRF[14] (14.1%, 34 seats) • ATAKA[15] (8.9%, 21 seats) • UDF[16] (8.4%, 20 seats) • DSB[17] (7.1%, 17 seats) • BPU[18] (5.7%, 13 seats) *Total: 240* *Voters turnout: 55.7%*[19]	BSP-NMSII (NMSP[20]) - MRF

4) Following the 1990 elections, Bulgaria had an (appointed) socialist President (Petar Mladenov), a socialist government (under Andrei Lukanov), and a slight socialist majority in the Assembly. The results of the elections produced a political deadlock. The BSP was incapable of assuming responsibility for governing the country, while the UDF was not willing to co-operate with the BSP. The result was a period of protests and demonstrations ending in a general strike. In addition, the BSP had difficulties obtaining the two-thirds majority needed for many legislative decisions and was finally brought down. After the collapse of the socialist parliament, a new round of negotiations followed between the BSP and the UDF; it resulted in the creation of a temporary government, with deputies from each of the three main parties; its main task was to oversee the drafting and introduction of the new constitution (introduced on 13 July 1991). New elections were held in October 1991 (Buschek 2007:12).

5) The National Assembly is a one-chamber parliament that consists of 240 Members of Parliament elected directly every four years through a system of proportional representation in 31 districts with 4–14 seats. A party or coalition must achieve a minimum of 4% of the vote in order to enter the Assembly.

6) The People's Union was an alliance joining a splinter from the BANU-NP led by Anastasia Dimitrova Moser (in 2005–2009 within the BPU) with the Democratic Party.

7) A nationalist, rather populist party.

8) The BSP government of Zhan Videnov was unsuccessful and the BSP lost the presidential elections by a large margin in November 1996 when the UDF candidate (Petar Stoyanov) obtained 59.7% of the votes in the second round. PM Videnov resigned in late December 1996. At the beginning of 1997, the country entered into a period of unprecedented protests. The BSP agreed to new (preliminary) elections that were held in April 1997.

9) The Euroleft Coalition was a pro-European Union coalition including a splinter from the BSP.

10) The UDF coalition (UDF, the Popular (Peoples') Union, and the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party) won the 1997 elections with a considerable majority. In 1997, for the first time since 1989, a non-Communist party won an absolute majority; the UDF formed a government under its new leader Ivan Kostov.

11) The National Movement Simon II (*Nacionalno Dvizhenie Simeon Vtori,* **NMSII**) had not existed until eleven weeks before the 2001 elections; the centrist party was founded by the former king of Bulgaria, Simeon II; the 2001 elections were a huge electoral success, leaving the party one seat short of an absolute majority.

12) The majority of Bulgarians were disappointed at first that the NMSII had liaised with the MRF instead of the UDF. The analysts predicted an unstable coalition with an inexperienced NMSII often cornered by the MRF.

13) In the 2005 elections, the Coalition for Bulgaria consisted of: the **Bulgarian Socialist Party, BSP** (*Bălgarska Socialističeska Partija*), the Party of Bulgarian Social Democrats (*Partija Bălgarski Socialdemokrati*), the Political Movement Social Democrats (*Političesko Dviženie Socialdemokrati*), the Bulgarian Agrarian People's Union Alexander Stambolijski (*Bălgarski Zemedelski Naroden Săjuz Aleksandăr Stambolijski*), the Civil Union of Roma (*Graždansko Obedinenie Roma*), the Movement for Social Humanism (*Dviženie za Socialen Humanizăm*), the Green Party of Bulgaria (*Zelena Partija na Bălgarija*), and the Communist Party of Bulgaria (*Komunističeska Partija na Balgarija*).

14) The unexpectedly good result for the MRF was probably caused by the emergence of Coalition Ataka on the political landscape, which mobilized MRF voters (Savkova 2005: 10).

15) In the 2005 elections, the coalition **of the** National Union Attack (**Ataka)** (*Nacionalno Obedinenie Ataka*) consisted of the National Movement for the Salvation of the Fatherland (*Nacionalno Dviženie za Spasenie na Otečestvoto*), the Bulgarian National Patriotic Party (*Bălgarska Nacionalna-Patriotična Partija*), and the Union of Patriotic Forces and Militaries of the Reserve Defence (*Săjuz na Patriotičnite Sili i Voinite ot Zapasa Zaštita*). Securing 21 seats in Parliament, the results for Ataka were one of the surprises of 2005 elections.

16) In the 2005 elections, the Coalition of **United Democratic Forces**, **UDF** (*Obedineni demokratični sili*) consisted of the Union of Democratic Forces (*Săjuz na Demokratičnite Sili*), the Democratic Party (*Demokratičeska Partija*), the Bulgarian Agrarian People's Union-United (*Bălgarski Zemedelski Naroden Săjuz-Obedinen*), the George's Day Movement (*Dviženie Gergiovden*), and the Movement for an Equal Public Model (*Dviženie za ravnopraven model DROM*).

17) **Democrats for Strong Bulgaria** (**DSB**) split from the UDF in 2003; the party was led by former Prime Minister Ivan Kostov.

18) In the 2005 elections, the Coalition of the **Bulgarian People's Union**, **BPU** (*Bălgarski Naroden Săjuz*) consited of the Bulgarian Agrarian People's Union-People's Union (*Bălgarski Zemedelski Naroden Săjuz-Naroden Săjuz*), the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-Bulgarian National Movement (*Vătrešna Makedonska Revoljucionna Organizacija-Bălgarsko Nacionalno Dviženie*), and the Union of Free Democrats (*Săjuz na svobodnite demokrati*). All three parties had previously been part of the UDF or its coalition.

19) It was the lowest turnout since 1989; some argue that the main reason were the pre-election polls, which indicated the BSP (Coalition for Bulgaria) to be an unchallengeable leader; these polls had a drop-out effect on voters (Savkova 2005: 7)

20) In June 2007, the party changed its name to the National Movement for Stability and Progress.

Table 2: Presidential Election[21]		
Election year	**Candidates in the second round**	**President-elect**
1992	• Zhelyu Zhelev (UDF, 52.8%) • Velko Valkanov (BSP, 47.2%)	Zhelyu Zhelev
1996	• Petar Stoyanov (UDF, 59.7 %) • Ivan Marazov (BSP, 40.3)	Petar Stoyanov
2001	• Georgi Parvanov (BSP, 54.1%) • Petar Stoyanov (Ind.[22], 45.9%)	Georgi Parvanov
2006	• Georgi Parvanov (BSP, 76%) • Volen Siderov (Ataka, 24%)	Georgi Parvanov

Table 3: European Parliament Elections (May 2007)[23]		
Party[24]	**EP Group**	**Number of mandates**
GERB[25]	EPP–ED	5 (21.68%)
Platform of European Socialists[26]	PES	5 (21.41%)
MRF	ELDR	4 (20.26)
Ataka	ITS[27]	3 (14.2%)
NMSII		1 (6.27%)
		Total: 18 *Voters turnout: 28.69%*

21) According to the 1991 constitution, the Bulgarian president is elected directly for a five-year term with the right to one re-election. If no candidate achieves an absolute majority in the first round, the two leading candidates shall compete in a second ballot. The president servers as the head of state and commander-in-chief of the armed forces; he chairs the Consultative Council for National Security. He has no legislative initiative, but possesses the right to initiate a Constitutional amendment. He can return legislation for further debate to the parliament; the parliament can override the President's veto by a majority vote from all MPs.

22) Backed by the UDF and the NMSII

23) The breakdown of Bulgarian observers in the European Parliament by party was as follows: Coalition for Bulgaria (mainly BSP) – 6MEPs, NMSII – 4MEPs, MRF – 3MEPs, UDF – 2MEPs, DSB – 1MEP, BPU – 1MEP, Ataka – 1MEP

24) In total, 11 parties, three coalitions, and two independent candidates stood in the first European Parliament elections in Bulgaria.

25) Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria (GERB) is the new party that was established by the Mayor of Sofia, Boiko Borisov, in December 2006, involving many people originally involved in the UDF, the DSB and the BPU; for example, elected MEP Nickolay Mladenov was originally a member of the UDF, but ran for GERB in the European Parliament elections; the UDF is also willing to cooperate with GERB.

26) Coalition of the BSP and the Movement for Social Humanism

27) The newly-formed political group (after the Bulgarian and Romanian EP elections) in the European Parliament – *Identity, Tradition, Sovereignty (ITS)* – consisted of 23 members of right-wing and nationalist parties. A common political charter of the group was signed in January 2007. After couple of statements from Alessandra Mussolini that Romanian ITS members found insulting, the Greater Romania Party withdrew from ITS, disqualifying it as a political group in the EP; it ceased to exist in November 2007.

The process of transition to democracy after 1989 has been rather slow in Bulgaria compared to other Central and Eastern European countries; the political change took the form of negotiated reform with most of the communist elites preserving their power either in the domain of politics[28] (the governing communist party changed its name to the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) early in 1990) or business. The former regime had not been contested by any strong anticommunist movements; the street demonstrations in Sofia in November 1989 were led by different groups, which later on formed the fragmented Union of Democratic Forces (UDF). The UDF[29] stood against the BSP in the first elections. The (ideological) bipolarization of the political spectrum reached its peak after the 1991 elections, when the UDF formed a government with the ethnic Turkish Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), and determined the political landscape for several of the following years. The BSP was prone to compromise in order to prevent the UDF from radical 'de-communization'; this 'de-communization' was namely understood as removing the former representatives of the regime from the state bureaucracy (Karasimeonov 2004: 421). After the 1994 elections, the BSP took power, preventing more radical parts of the UDF to follow their policy of total 'de-communization' and shifting Bulgarian foreign policy; however, its inability to improve the economic situation of the country led to unprecedented street protests and pre-term elections in 1997 with the UDF Coalition winning and forming a new government.

The UDF government achieved some major reforms (social policy, civil service), financial stability,[30] and, in the foreign policy field, advanced the prospect of EU and NATO membership. On the other hand, it was losing public support due to accusations of corruption, new nepotism, and favouring its close economic groupings (Karasimeonov 2004: 425). The elections of 2001 were labelled a radical change (Karasimeonov 2004: 433;

28) The most visible leader, Todor Zhivkov, the First Secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party's Central Committee (1954–1989) and president of Bulgaria (1971–1989) was arrested in 1990, convicted of embezzlement and sentenced to seven years in prison in 1992. However, he was put under house arrest and lived in high comfort. After the Bulgarian Supreme Court acquitted him in 1996, he was reinstated in 1998 as a member of the BSP.

29) The UDF consisted of three major groups (Karasimeonov 2004: 419): historical parties led by some of the surviving members and leaders of the pre-communist era, Ecoglasnost, the trade union of Podkrepa, and the Club for Glasnost and Democracy – the "dissidents" and newly created parties or organizations (Republican party, Christian democrats). Also, UDF supporters were divided into "conservatives" (referring to the pre-communist era) and "modernists" (who pleaded for the Westernization of Bulgarian society).

30) The UDF coalition introduced a very ambitious four-year programme called "Bulgaria 2001." It was obvious that a real economic restructuring could no longer be avoided. One of the first measures was the establishment of a currency board in July 1997, linking the exchange rate of the lev to the Deutsche Mark (from 1999 to the euro). Thereafter, the economy began to stabilise and inflation dropped.

Buschek 2007: 11) in the Bulgarian party system. Indeed, the rise of the National Movement Simeon II (NMSII), which was established roughly three month before the elections, represents the end of bipolarity in the political spectrum of Bulgaria and a challenge to the UDF monopoly of representing a democratic alternative. Despite its ambitious programme, the NMSII-led coalition was not able to deliver results (namely, economic ones). Already, the presidential elections of November 2001 revealed a drop in support for the NMSII; BSP leader Georgi Parvanov defeated Petar Stoyanov, the candidate favoured by PM Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha and the UDF, gaining 53% of the vote. In the foreign policy field, it was announced at the December 2002 EU summit in Copenhagen that both Bulgaria and Romania could expect EU accession in 2007 and, in November 2002 at the NATO summit in Prague, Bulgaria was one of seven countries invited to join the Alliance. The 'nature of the regime' cleavage has been fading away since the 2001 elections, giving way to new socio-economic cleavage. After the 2005 general elections, a new three-party centre-left coalition government under BSP leader Sergey Stanischev was established; an agreement between the Coalition of Bulgaria, the NMSII, and the MRF was signed on 16 August 2005. The 2005 general elections, with the lowest turnout since 1990, brought a couple of surprising results; the current Assembly is comprised of seven parties and coalitions, which is the most fragmented configuration since the beginning of the transition period (Savkova 2005: 1); the number of votes for the MRF almost doubled, probably due to the mobilization of its voters by Ataka pre-election polls' results; the establishment of Ataka as the fourth major party in the National Assembly could be surprising but, in fact, had been expected by some analysts for some time (Karasimeonov 2004: 438). In the following presidential elections of October 2006, incumbent President Georgi Parvanov ran against Ataka leader Volen Siderov in the second round and was re-elected.

The European Parliament elections that were held in May 2007 proved that the traditional right was in crisis; its poor result was also caused by low voter turnout, especially in Sofia; the UDF (4.74%) and the DSB (4.35%) failed to make the 5.66% threshold necessary to win even a single seat in the European Parliament. Due to the results, Ivan Kostov, leader of the DSB and Petar Stoyanov, leader of the UDF, announced their resignations. GERB, the newly established centre-right party, won the elections by a small margin, appealing to the electorate from both the traditional right, NMSII, and the BSP.[31]

Left and Right

Generally, the political spectrum in Bulgaria, especially after the year 2000, has been characterized by high levels of fragmentation and volatility from the electorate, allowing for new parties to emerge and score in the general (as well as local and European) elections, creating an unconsolidated party system. The experts (Karasimeonov 2004: 439; author's interviews) usually explain the trend of new rising political entities by the unfinished transition, as well as economic and social problems and challenges that were not met by the established ruling parties. The society has not adapted to the new realities (socio-economic conflict lines), with a significant group of 'losers' in the transformation process (Karasimeonov 2004: 439) influencing the elections' results unpredictably over the long run.[32] A relatively high number of political parties in Bulgaria could be also supported by a tradition of forming election coalitions that are usually comprised of more than three political subjects, whereas mergers of political parties occurring rather seldom.

Until the 2001 elections, the 'nature of the regime' cleavage and the 'nature of transformation' conflict lines were defining the left-right division; the party system was bipolar with smaller parties clustering around the **BSP** on the left and the **UDF** on the right; the **MRF** was an exception due to its specific

31) In the last municipal elections (November 2007), the BSP gained the best positions in the local government, while GERB formed the largest electoral base; the electoral attitudes after the local elections still favour GERB; it has a distinctly larger support than the BSP (18%) reaching 26% support if the parliamentary elections were held by the end of 2007 (Petrova 2007). On the other hand, the GERB electorate is extremely heterogeneous. Voters from diverse socio-economic status declare their readiness to vote for it. According to Alpha Research, one third of the current GERB electorate voted previously for regional and/or business formations, 25% for UDF or DSB, and a fifth for NMSII. The BSP electorate seem to be more stable; the party generates support mainly in smaller towns and among the more traditional groups of supporters, i.e. the older generations, retirees, and people with a lower socio-economic status. However, these groups are the most vulnerable to unfavourable economic trends and are the main source for discontent towards the social policies of the current BSP-led government. That is also why the level of support for BSP dropped to 18%. The last local elections did not change the trend of the erosion of the 'traditional' right; the representation of the UDF and the DSB in local government is very limited both in terms of the number of seats and municipalities in which they managed to gain seats. Currently, their electoral potential on the national scale does not exceed the minimum of 1.9% of the total number of voters for the UDF and 1.6% for the DSB. Also, the NMSII experienced a strong electoral decay in the local elections. The public opinion polls show that the NMSII reached only 1.9% support, with the electoral base formed predominantly by old people from the big cities. Its success on many occasions stemmed from the fact that it stood in the elections in collations. Ataka ended the local election winning about 5% of the seats, but the party focused only on approximately one third of the municipalities. The MRF expanded its number of seats with about 30%, as well as the share of municipalities in which it is represented. On a national scale, there is neither an increase of the public support, nor the enlargement of its electoral base. The party support moves around 7%.

32) Those who do not benefit from the transition (the 'losers' of transformation) tend to support protest parties and populist movements in the longer run; the success of the NMSII or GERB demonstrates that the established post-communist parties were not able to respond to the demands of this (mixed) social group; according to Karasimeonov (Karasimeonov 2004: 437), as much as 40% of the population can be characterized as transformation 'losers'.

agenda. With the 2001 elections and the emergence of the centrist NMSII, the socio-economic conflict line started gaining more ground.[33]

The left part of the political spectrum seemed to be more stable; the BSP has been turning into a catchall party. A visible trend towards modernisation also started roughly in 2002 with the election of Sergey Stanishev, a pragmatist stating that there was a need to adopt the party to new circumstances, as the party leader. The BSP has been dominating the centre-left election coalition (the Coalition for Strong Bulgaria), as well as the current ruling coalition.[34] The major post-1989 party on the right, the UDF, experienced a serious internal crisis after the 2001 elections and a split of both its elites and its electorate (with the splinter DSB continuing to follow the anti-communist rhetoric in the current Assembly).[35] Three important and completely new entities emerged over the course of 2001–2007 in the centre and far right which challenged the established parties successfully in the elections to the General Assembly as well as to the European Parliament: the National Movement Simeon II, Coalition Ataka, and the Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB).

When coming into power, the **NMSII** was not a full-fledged party, missing a territorial organisation, an internal organizational structure, and the processes of legitimately empowering its members.[36] Also, the ideological identity of the (then) new party was not clear enough – it declared to be centre-right and liberal; although the election programme contained many liberal elements, it tasted of populism (lowering taxes and presenting a 0% budget deficit at once). The movement experienced a split before the 2005 elections; the New Time party, scoring 5.5% in the pre-2005 elections polls, was organized around a part of the NMSII leadership, which was not satisfied with Simeon's authoritarian style of management. New Time, at the end, did not cross the 4% threshold in the 2005 elections. In June 2007, the NMSII changed its name to the **National Movement for Stability and Progress (NMSP)**. In fall 2007, another group split off from the party after an internal dissent over its liberal roots, forming the faction of the Bulgarian New Democracy (BND), involving 14 MPs (amounting later to 17) who joined the opposition bench in the Assembly. The faction has not decided yet whether

33) According to Karasimeonov, the 2001 elections began 'the second party system' with newly defined conflict lines (Karasimeonov 2004: 440).

34) President Georgi Parvanov (BSP) is following rather cautious policies; at a certain time, there was a rumour that he planned to establish a new centre-left party. However, he denied such intentions. In fact, there is a certain understanding between President Parvanov and PM Stanishev on promoting the 'new labour' concept.

35) In the last local/municipal elections, the UDF and the DSB formed a coalition.

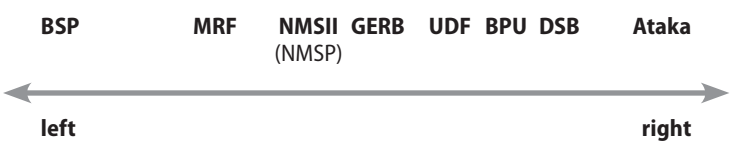
36) NMSII also stated before the 2001 elections that they would never form a coalition with the BSP, and they did.

it will turn into another party, join the Citizens for European development of Bulgaria (GERB), or ally with the UDF.

Some analysts (Savkova 2005: 8) claim that the electoral results for the (far right) coalition of **Ataka** represented a punitive vote against the established political class and assumed it would not qualify for the Assembly in the next general elections. Meanwhile, in the European parliament elections, Ataka was successful, taking 3 seats out of 18. With Ataka, it seems that a new sub-cleavage of the socio-economic conflict line is emerging, which has much to do with globalization and fears of increased challenges to Bulgarian society, bringing about a new type of (primarily economically motivated) nationalism, coloured by anti-European and anti-globalisation sentiments (Karasimeonov 2004: 436). Ataka is a coalition of different subjects that emphasise different elements of the far right agenda; its unifying mechanism is its leader, Volen Siderov.

Citizens for European development of Bulgaria (**GERB**) was established in December 2006 by Boiko Borisov, a former interior minister (2001) who was elected Mayor of Sofia in October/November 2005 and re-elected in local elections in 2008, securing 52.6% of the vote.[37] GERB describes itself as a centre-right party with its main agenda in the social sphere to fight against organised crime, a measure that resonates well with the electorate. Some argue (from the author's interviews) that it tends to be a 'one-man party' building on Mr. Borisov's personal popularity with a missing structure and voting programme, playing on the note of populism. Several analysts also predict the GERB will experience a similar development trajectory to the NMSII, following its fate of not living up to the expectations of its voters. However, the European Parliament elections and 2008 local elections proved its growing popularity; the ability to deliver functioning policies; the extent of party consolidation will be tested in the coming months with the general elections in 2009 as the major test.

Positioning of the Bulgarian Political Parties on the Right – Left Axis



37) GERB was allegedly founded with the support of several strong banks; the formal leader of the party is Mr. Tzvetan Tzvetanov.

With the consolidation of democracy, the Bulgarian party system has become more pluralized[38] and less polarized; the continuing fragmentation, especially of the centre-right part of the political spectrum would suggest that the stable parties' identities, as well as their ability and capacity to continuously appeal to the voters and solve the new challenges defined by socio-economic cleavage, have not developed fully as of yet.[39] In this regard, the process of the Europeanization of the political parties will play a certain role as well. According to the experts, a differentiation on the basis of economic platforms will continue with further stratification of Bulgarian society with the left-centre-right dimension gradually gaining entrance into the European dimension. The BSP will probably need to seek legitimacy on a social policy basis;[40] the parties in the centre (namely, the NMSII) will be aiming at keeping their balancing role and high coalition potential, although most likely with a considerably shrunken electorate (with the exception of the MRF) with the right needing to be re-established; the traditional parties are on the way out of the party system; the question remains of who will replace them (with GERB being a potential candidate to assume such a role).[41]

The 'National Consensus' and the Relevance of Foreign Policy

Foreign policy issues had determined the political alignments and orientation of the political parties after 1989 and throughout the 1990s in Bulgaria; the difference between the major political subjects (BSP and UDF) was embodied by the pro-European and integrationist tendency of the UDF and the pro-Russian tendency of the BSP that was most clearly mirrored in the debate on NATO membership. Put differently, in Bulgaria's case, foreign policy was linked to the overall political agenda of the political forces; looking at the dominant political strategies of the right and left in Bulgaria up to mid 1990's, to have a foreign policy position meant being able to implement

38) Some analysts argue that all other parties but the BSP have not been influential players until recently, partly due to the lack of support from the influential economic groupings, which all shifted from the right to the left (the BSP attracted all resources); speaking about party pluralism is not accurate since most of the policy divides can be found within the BSP itself.

39) A reform of electoral system is also being debated by the major political parties in the Assembly.

40) Despite the good results from the BSP and the MRF in the local elections, the evaluation of the government continues to be strongly negative (69%) with the most heavily criticized areas being social policies, healthcare, and interior affairs; one of the major issues in 2007 was the strike of teachers who demanded a pay rise (Petrova 2007)

41) It is not clear at the moment how long it will take the right to recover and whether the GERB will become the new political agent; some experts warn that the whole right could get more radicalized. It seems that the DSB has more stable electorate than the UDF, although by a very small margin. The party is trying to open up and attract new elites.

a wider political strategy. Foreign policy issues (and a pressure to comply) also determined the domestic political strategies of the political parties in the pre-accession periods. After the NATO campaign in Kosovo (an important moment for Bulgarian foreign policy-making), a foreign policy consensus was reached only in 2001–2002 when conflicts over the geopolitical orientation of the country had gradually lost their significance, with the BSP acknowledging the necessity to join the Alliance. The prevailing opinion of the experts is that the 'Euro-Atlantic' foreign policy consensus is still in place and that there is no division on EU vs. Atlanticist policies at the moment. However, most of them also acknowledge that the political spectrum will be influenced by the process of Europeanization and that the political parties will have to start adopting distinct positions based on different foreign policy issues, keeping the line of the political groups in the European Parliament more often.

After 1989, Bulgaria was rather hesitant to create a new alternative security policy and doctrine.[42] At first, it strived to boost its military power, improve relations with its neighbours (especially Turkey and Greece), and establish new relations with the (then) Soviet Union. Although the government acknowledged the key role of NATO, it did not assume that Bulgaria could aspire for membership (Tashev 2004: 129). Bulgaria's prime aim was to prevent any further destabilization in the region, as well as its own involvement in the ongoing conflicts in the Balkans.[43]

Bulgaria (through the UDF government) was the first state to recognize **Macedonia** (FYROM) in 1991. However, their bilateral relations have always been strained by historical perceptions and narratives.[44] Despite the so-called language dispute resolution in 1999, the historical, linguistic, and cultural battle has aimed at the reaffirmation of one's history and identity at

42) Bulgaria at that time was against the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact (BSP); the security perception in the country was also influenced by the start of Yugoslavia disintegration, which brought about unfamiliar threats and risks, also impacting its policy towards minorities.

43) According to Tashev (Tashev 2004: 128), it is also an explanation for Bulgaria for being the last EU associated member to send troops into various peacekeeping operations in the Balkans.

44) Bulgaria only recognized the Macedonian state in 1991, not the nation or its language. For Bulgarians (as well as some other nationalities in the region – Greece, for example, insists that Macedonians are in fact Slavophone Greeks; the Serbs also suggested that Macedonia is a part of southern Serbia and that, thus, Macedonians are of Serbian origin), Macedonia is rather a geographical term and the Macedonians are the 'lost Bulgarians.' As President Parvanov stated, "We have always supported Macedonia in its efforts to secure peace and stability. However, when it comes to history, and we have a common history, I think there is a line to be drawn beyond which our own history cannot be stolen by anyone else. However, I would say that these issues are best left to historians. We should put our efforts together and look ahead towards the future. Let us collaborate in that direction. Bulgaria is making progress already and hopefully the future Macedonia will also join the European Union. This will be the best solution to the issues which have accumulated over the past decades, and which may still be outstanding." (Euro news 2006)

the expense of the other's.[45] To counter the separatist aspirations from the different groups of the Macedonian minority,[46] the Bulgarian policy of denying of the existence of a distinct Macedonian minority on its territory was carried out. Legal steps against unwanted Macedonian entities in Bulgaria were taken on the basis that their activities pose a threat to national security. Eventually, Bulgaria was even brought before the European Court of Human Rights, which ruled against Bulgaria in 2003, forcing her to acknowledge the Macedonian minority (Kojouharov 2004: 286); the ruling was a blow to the Bulgarian policy of not allowing the Macedonian subjects to act, tacitly or openly supported by all political parties. The ambiguity of the relations with Macedonia translates into the policy of supporting Macedonian EU aspirations. In 2006, Bulgarian foreign minister Ivaylo Kalfin (nominated by the BSP, non-partisan) stated that his country would not unconditionally support the EU integration of Macedonia. Other politicians, including President Georgi Parvanov, have issued more cautious statements. Except for the Ataka representatives, none has played the EU membership denial card towards Macedonia openly as of yet.

Despite her moderate efforts to seek security guarantees in the West, Bulgaria tried to re-establish the security links with **Russia,** unlike other CEE countries.[47] The former ruler of the Soviet block was not considered a threat, namely security-wise (Tashev 2004: 130). Russia is an enigmatic issue of Bulgarian foreign policy, as well as of the party politics in the country; there has been also a crucial variable of almost 100% dependence on the import of oil from Russia, as well as very close business links.[48] During the Cold War, Bulgaria was considered the closest ally of Soviet Union, having no Russian troops on its territory.[49] From a historical perspective, which is formative for societal attitudes as well, Russia was perceived as a country that restored the Bulgarian nation and state after the wars with the Ottoman Empire (Tashev 2004: 130). In contrast to other CEE countries, Russia has

45) Bulgaria recognized the Macedonian language in return for Macedonia's affirmation that it would not interfere in Bulgaria's domestic affairs (Kojouharov 2004: 282). The official ethnic composition of the Bulgarian population (last population census from March 2001) is as follows: 83.9% Bulgarians, 9.4% ethnic Turks, 4.8% the Roma ethnic groups, 0.9% others – including the remaining ethnicities, 1.0% have not stated their self-identification (Buschek 2007: 5).

46) Especially OMO-Ilinden, prohibited in February 2000.

47) Bulgaria signed an enhanced Treaty on Good Neighbourliness and Friendly Relations with Russia during the visit of Boris Yeltsin in Sofia in August 1992.

48) Some analysts see a trend of Russia abandoning a direct opposition to Bulgaria's move towards Euro-Atlantic structures and replacing it by establishing powerful business lobbies, penetrating the economy of the country (Tashev 2004: 142).

49) However, the country has had Russian missiles on its territory in the past. However, the last SS-20 missiles were destructed during the summer of 2002.

been seen rather positively by the public; the policy moves of the current Russian representation meet only very limited interest in the public (like the energy crisis in Ukraine and Russian 'pipeline' diplomacy). It is also rather rare for the political right to play the anti-Russian card openly in the public political discourse. Some experts warn that the pro-Western and pro-Russian cleavage (namely within the BSP) plays a role[50] when dealing with **energy security**-related issues, with the clash to be rather over economic interests. Bulgaria is involved in EU efforts to diversify the oil and gas import routes; there is Nabucco gas pipeline project aimed at importing gas from the Caspian Sea region (and by-passing Russia), to which Bulgaria has been assigned. Besides the Nabucco deal, which is still just on paper, Bulgaria is involved in two pipeline projects in the region: the Bourgas-Vlore pipeline deal (signed in January 2007) and the Russia-backed Burgas-Alexandroupolis pipeline – an agreement with Russia and Turkey has already been signed[51] and the 300 km long pipeline should be built by the end of 2009.[52] The Bulgarian political right (UDF, DSB) has expressed concerns over the deal, stating that the Burgas-Alexandorpoulos pipeline will only increase the dependency on Russia. The parties on the right are explicitly in favour of a European common energy policy that would also give Bulgaria more power to negotiate new deals on oil and gas imports from Russia; the current agreement with Gazprom expires in 2010. The BSP-led government that signed the agreement on the Burgas-Alexandorpoulos pipeline is generally against such a move or any reliance on the EU common policy despite supporting publicly the common energy policy (president Parvanov); the BSP wants to re-negotiate the deal with Russia soon. Generally, the left (BSP) sees Bulgaria as the energy regional centre for the Balkans and a transit hub for the gas and oil imports

50) According to experts, within the BSP, the issue is much reduced to business but the party's elite, which has been the previous communist elite of the country, have institutional and personal contacts with Russia and some of them went to the business, so it is much easier for the BSP to maintain this legacy than for other parties; but other parties (NMSII), have particular business affinities with Russia as well.

51) A history of the Project dates back to the mid 1990s. A joint protocol for preparing the pipeline construction was signed by the three countries in January 2005 with a political memorandum following in April 2005. The final intergovernmental agreement was signed in March 2007 in Athens.

52) In 2006, the EU recommended that Bulgaria diversify her energy sources. A report entitled 'The EU's Energy Security Policy in the Black Sea Region' envisaged the creation of new infrastructure and transport corridors that would help diversify suppliers and delivery routes for fuel arriving via the Caspian and the Black Sea. The document discussed important EU projects such as the Nabucco gas pipeline, which would skirt Russia, transporting Caspian oil via Turkey and Bulgaria. All three projects, at differing stages of development, are competing to attract large investors eager to solve congestion problems in the Bosphorus. The Bulgarian politicians (but also other politicians in the region, including in Hungary, for example) claim all projects (including the Constanta-Trieste pipeline) are viable and deny that there is competition between them. Experts say that at least one of the two projects crossing Bulgaria seems to be doomed.

(like other countries in the region that see themselves similarly, namely Hungary); it also claims that the issue of energy security and resources cannot be resolved without Russia. Another factor in the energy security debate is the issue of nuclear energy; on the basis of the EU Accession Agreement, Bulgaria is obliged to close down two blocks of the Kozloduj nuclear power plant due to the unsatisfactory state of its installation – a move opposed by the public and some political parties (Ataka). The idea to commission the building of a new facility gained ground, welcomed by all political parties including the right (UDF, DSB), which argued that a new plant would decrease the country's dependence on crude imports. The BSP-led government signed a deal with Russia to build a second nuclear power plant in Bulgaria, in Belene, with 100% of the nuclear fuel and 75% of the spare parts and equipment imported from Russia (Gazprom).

The emerging civil society and the political parties on the right were very active in promoting Atlanticist policy; the Atlantic club, a pro-NATO lobbying NGO, had already formed in 1990 around Solomon Passy, a UDF Member of the Grand National Assembly. In 1993, the UDF government started to seek NATO membership. When the BSP came into power[53] in 1994, the discussion became very politicized; the BSP refused to follow the membership-seeking policy, causing relations with the Alliance to be put on hold. In July 1995, the BSP-led government approved a National Security Concept that identifies international and domestic factors of determining national security (Tashev 2004: 131), focusing on the traditional (mostly regional), hard security threats (territorial demands[54], civil wars, asymmetry in international security guarantees, and military power of the neighbouring states). A commitment to seeking NATO membership was not mentioned as a priority in the document; it stated that only if the Alliance was transformed (involving Russia, a position NATO from Vancouver to Vladivostok), Bulgaria could seek membership. The UDF, in parallel, promoted the need to join NATO (and the EU) as a primary goal, consistent with Bulgaria's quest for both economic and security guarantees. In 1996, the BSP-led government concluded that Bulgaria did not want to pursue NATO membership.

With the Kostov government (UDF, 1997), the Bulgarian foreign policy position changed by 180 degrees; in April 1998, a new National Security Con-

53) In 1993, the parliament with the UDF-MRF majority passed a declaration on the Euro-Atlantic orientation of the country; the Partnership for Peace Framework Document was signed in February 1994 before the BSP took power.

54) Although not declared by any country in the region; the BSP government and part of society somehow assumed them (Tashev 2004: 131).

cept was approved,[55] reflecting a policy U-turn. The document recognizes the inability of the country to ensure its security on its own, also identifying, besides hard security threats, economical and environmental factors as potential threats to its stability (Tashev 2004: 132). It concluded that the limited national resources, globalization and a need for multilateral solutions prompted the country to pursue integration to the EU and NATO. The BSP strongly opposed NATO membership, at least until 2000, but was not able to develop a security alternative while in opposition.

The 1999 NATO campaign in Kosovo was a decisive factor in Bulgarian foreign policy; the government's cooperation with NATO forces, namely the permission to use Bulgarian air space – a favour denied to Russia by the Bulgarian leadership, enhanced Bulgaria's standing within the international debate on her NATO membership significantly. With the end of air strikes, the cooperation with NATO did not end; Bulgaria was involved in the maintenance of multinational forces in post-war Kosovo and the following conflict in Macedonia; Bulgaria also received further security guarantees (Tashev 2004: 134). In March 2001, the government concurred to sign an agreement allowing NATO forces to use Bulgarian territory and to establish a military base in case of another crisis in the region (Tashev 2004: 134). Surprisingly, the BSP did not oppose the agreement in the Assembly, although during the Kosovo crisis the BSP position was aggressively anti-NATO; Georgi Parvanov (then, the BSP leader) wrote supporting letters to Slobodan Milosevic during the strikes.[56]

The BSP position on NATO membership was changing gradually.[57] According to the experts, Georgi Parvanov was not the type of strong leader who could impose his decisions on changing the course of foreign policy upon the party. He had to strive for a balance between the different BSP fractions and mediate between groups that were not so much ideologically, but rather, economically divided. The pro-Western lobby in the BSP, promoting primarily the EU accession, acknowledged that Bulgaria could be an asset for the EU[58] only as a NATO member. They adopted an instrumental

55) The application for NATO membership was already tabled by the interim government of Stefan Sofyianski in 1997.

56) Also, the Bulgarian public felt strongly about anti-strikes (see below). The UDF was the only party promoting the NATO policy in Kosovo.

57) Some analysts claim that it was also happening due to the influence of the German SPD (besides the decisive tendency towards modernizing and legitimizing the party on the new basis from within).

58) On the contrary to NATO, the BSP was always favourable towards EU membership; to a large extent, it was very important for the BSP-led government to maintain a certain speed of the process of integration into the EU since it was one of the preconditions of their ability to manage the transition process.

approach to NATO membership;[59] the party also wanted to attain a new face before the 2001 elections. Although the BSP shifted its position towards NATO membership, it remained the only party in the Assembly demanding a referendum on NATO accession. When Bulgaria got the official invitation to join the Alliance at the Prague summit in November 2002, the BSP even dropped the referendum condition. Bulgaria joined NATO in April 2004; all Bulgarian political parties (except Ataka) assert that the influence of European countries in NATO is important, especially following the accession of the CEE countries.

The NMSII-led government continued in the foreign policy line of the previous government with a consistent commitment to the EU and NATO membership. The **9/11 Terrorist Attacks** did not bring about any immediate change in re-defining the field of security threats in Bulgaria; strategic security thinking and risks assessment changes only took place in 2004;[60] on the other hand, the changing posture of the USA after 9/11 had a positive impact on Bulgarian NATO aspirations (Tashev 2004: 136). The coalition government continued implementing the army reforms that had already been started by the previous UDF-led government – not only was the structure of the military budget changed, but the policy was defined on the basis of detailed threat assessment; however, some experts claim that the reform went only half way through and that there was no real pressure to reform.[61] Later, Bulgaria sent a unit to participate in the UN mission in Afghanistan; the engagement in Afghanistan was a matter of consensus from all relevant political parties at that time.

During the **Iraq** crisis, Bulgaria was in a peculiar position, holding a non-permanent post in the UN Security Council (2002–2003). As such, it was

59) Some analysts claim that the change was partly caused by the shifts in the party's financing structure, with the pro-Western fraction gradually taking over a larger portion of the funding – "the financial revolution caused the BSP foreign policy shift; it was not an ideological battle but rather vested interests," which would partly explain why the official debate on the policy change was so short and uncontroversial. Among the other variables that possibly influenced the policy change are: BSP doubts about the electoral stability, the outcome of the 2001 elections (the party further lost support), the demography of the voters (not favourable), and the international isolation of the party. For the sake of appeasing the pro-Russian fraction of the party, the BSP leaders allegedly consulted the policy shift with Moscow (with the same happening in case of engagement in Afghanistan and Iraq). Part of the BSP electorate could never accept NATO membership, some claiming that it is also the reason why Ataka emerged (besides the fact that its electorate also couldn't bear with the market economy).

60) The new government did not change the National Security Concept; the cyclical strategic National Defence Review was initiated. Only in March 2004 did the national Assembly approve the Political Framework of National Defence Review that identified new security risks and threats (terrorism, organised crime, proliferation of WMD, etc.) (Tashev 2004: 137).

61) For example, there was no special budget allocation for missions abroad. Simeon entoured himself mostly with people who stayed in touch with him when abroad; as a result, his HR policy was often questioned. At the same time, Solomon Passy a strong Atlanticist, but also a pro-Russian energy minister, was overseeing his government; on the other hand, he put limits on the amount of pro–Russian influence on his party.

forced to state openly its pro-American position, which complicated its relationships with some European countries. The French leadership especially was openly critical towards Bulgaria, with President Jacques Chirac warning the Bulgarian government that the country was endangering its prospect of EU membership in February 2003 (Tashev 2004: 138). Although the Bulgarian political parties were unified on not giving in to the French discourse, a political consensus on the Iraq issue was not present. During the vote on the participation in the operation in Iraq (with Bulgaria providing the over-flights rights, bases, and non-combatant troops) in the Assembly on February 7, 2003, the BSP MPs abstained from voting. The government (NMSII-MRF), backed by the UDF, stated that Bulgaria was part of the coalition of the willing; meanwhile, President Parvanov, backed by BSP, insisted that the parliament's decision of February 7 on Bulgaria's participation did not make it part of the coalition of the willing. Like in other CEE countries, the Iraq crisis revealed the heterogeneous positions within the declared foreign policy consensus among the political parties (Tashev 2004: 139).[62] The BSP, like other social democratic parties in the region, called for a specific UN mandate for the operations in Iraq. Despite the public opinion of opposition to the war in Iraq, the BSP did not score many political points over its position; participation in the BSP-called anti-war demonstrations in Sofia did not appeal to the citizens as much as expected (Tashev 2004: 139). Overall, the Iraq issue did not change much in the political discourse in the country; the media have been following the Bulgarian involvement, the personal stories, and, naturally, the casualties. Bulgaria sent 500 troops to support the operations, staged in Karbala, and, quite often, engaged in fighting. The number of casualties reached 13 by the end of 2007, with one soldier killed in friendly fire in February 2005, a story much publicized in the Bulgarian media. In response, the debate on the Bulgarian involvement in Iraq was re-heated with 60% of Bulgarians supporting the troops withdrawal, demanding an official United States apology for the incident. President Parvanov stated that he would see the end of 2005 as the horizon for withdrawal (with the number of troops being gradually downsized to 100–150) and demanded a new concept of the mission to be adopted by the Assembly. All political parties but Ataka agree that the difficulties encountered on the ground in Iraq are not likely to lead to a policy change towards the United States in Bulgaria.

62) President Parvanov opposed the official position of the Bulgarian government; before the beginning of the combat operations, he even made a speech in the Assembly, stating that he was not accepting the war (Tashev 2004: 139).

The **BSP** gradually changed the country's position towards Bulgarian engagement in **Iraq.** Although, in terms of conviction, the party policy has not changed (the stance has been negative), the BSP (when it came into power in 2005) had to adjust its political position to the real situation, the power balance, and, later, to the real US presence in the country (the bases); no Bulgarian government could be openly critical towards the issue due to country's commitments. The BSP-led government chose another strategy; on February 22, 2005, a new decision was adopted by the Assembly on Bulgarian participation in Iraq, following UN Security Council Resolution 1637, extending the mandate for Iraq multinational forces until the end of 2006; redefining the mission as humanitarian, the new task was to guard a refugee camp in Ashraf. A new concept of the mission and the review of the framework regulating missions abroad was agreed to by the Assembly as asked for by the President after the BSP had become the ruling party. The new PM, Sergey Stanishev, supported the President's thesis that the level of engagement in the future must be adequate to Bulgaria's capacities. The public debate on troop withdrawal is still under way; the last decision against the complete withdrawal was taken in May 2007. Although the BSP took several steps towards weakening the Bulgarian presence in Iraq, its position is again rather ambiguous. Other political parties, present in the Assembly during the time of crisis and from that time on, have been generally supportive towards US policies and the Bulgarian military engagement in Iraq, with the exception of the NMSII, whose representatives, later in the debate, spoke on the behalf of the BSP (which was, according to experts, rather reluctant to debate its position on the issue of the troops withdrawal).

As a country adjacent to volatile regions, Simeon's government lobbied for and concluded a bilateral agreement with the USA to host the **US military bases** on its territory in order to enhance its ties with the US; the suggestions to host the US military on Bulgarian soil were allegedly heard in 2003. The 'Defence Cooperation Agreement'[63] was signed by Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice and Bulgarian foreign minister Ivaylo Kalfin (BSP) during an informal gathering of NATO foreign ministers in Sofia on April 24, 2006. The 10-year agreement allows for the stationing of 2,500 troops at Bezmer Air base (considered to be of the highest strategic importance), the Novo Selo

63) A similar agreement was concluded with Romania with military units stationed to both countries create the Joint Task Force East. The issue of US military bases was another element of the Bulgarian-Romanian rivalry puzzle. In January 2006, the mayor of a village close to Novo Selo, Emil Enchev, told the Bulgarian newspaper Standart that "the Government should hurry up with the negotiations. I think we are very slow and the Romanians have already taken the lead." He said that an opinion poll he conducted in the village showed that over 70% of its people wanted a US military base (Slavcheva 2006).

army training range, and the Graf Ignatievo Airport (to be used for logistical support). The bases serve as a point of quick deployment, as well as training facilities, for conflict zones of a military, peacekeeping, or humanitarian nature in the Balkans, Middle East, the Caucasus, and the Black Sea; the bases are used jointly with Bulgarian military personnel. After several supporting statements,[64] the BSP-led government managed to twist the discussion on the US bases in the country and re-focus it on the economic benefits the bases would bring.[65] Only Ataka, which started a campaign against the bases, pointed out the security issues and the increase of the risk of Bulgaria becoming a target of a terrorist operation as an argument in the public debate. Several Ataka MPs proposed an anti-US force deployment bill[66] in February 2006; the bill itself was rejected almost unanimously (with only 18 MPs voting for it); when unsuccessful, Ataka demanded referendum on the issue.

The debate on the **Guantanamo Bay** base or other external aspects of the US war on terror was missing in Bulgaria; the public became more interested in flights with detainees and special renditions. According to the experts, the politicians said Bulgaria was lucky to avoid this debate because Bulgarian airports were not used for the flights. Also, the **International Criminal Court** issue has been hardly mentioned in the public and political discourse within the country.

According to experts, it is rather seldom that a party or politicians would have any policy or strong opinion on the **NATO versus/and ESDP** issue. Policy formulation on the issue is not digested by the political parties; the issues are usually dealt with on an ad hoc basis. It is argued that Bulgarian politicians don't feel compelled to define their positions on the issue due to the late date of EU accession; the country only entered the EU on January 1, 2007 and did not

64) On November 4, 2005, PM Minister Sergey Stanishev said: "I would like to also note that the strategic partnership with the US is defined for Bulgaria by our NATO commitments, as well as the agenda of the transatlantic dialogue. . . . The issue of the shared military facilities in Bulgaria comes also within the context of our bilateral strategic partnership. We believe the proposals for transformation of the military forces and the US command in Europe, including the establishment of a rotating brigade stationed in Bulgaria and Romania, address adequately the new risks and threats to the security as well as Bulgaria's interests and the need for stronger cooperation." On May 21, 2006, Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov called the Defence Cooperation Agreement with the US "a strategic investment in the security of our country. . ." (Embassy of the United States in Sofia 2008).

65) Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Dimitar Tsanchev stated: "We think that in the economy, the joint use of these military facilities will lead to an increase in the confidence in our country on behalf of investors and improve the general investment climate in our country." (BBC 2006) Because of their relatively small size, the bases in Bulgaria are unlikely to generate the kind of economic benefits that the traditionally larger bases have.

66) The text of the proposed bill stated: "The deployment of US military bases directly violates the sovereignty of Bulgaria"; that such bases "can be used to strike against third countries"; that "their presence increases the risk of terrorist acts against Bulgarian citizens and civilian and military facilities"; and that "possibilities exist to test and use new types of armament and ammunition, which may include depleted uranium." (Slavcheva 2006)

take part in defining the ESDP. Only general appeals on a need of cooperation between NATO and the ESDP were expressed by the main parties. The lack of an explicit policy on the CFSP/ESDP appears to have begun to be replaced by the adoption of the majority view of the parties (fractions) in the European Parliament where the Bulgarian political parties engage. Generally, the issue is not being discussed in public. As to the EU agenda in general, the political parties revolve around EU structural funds and how to use them. There was also almost no reflection or debate on the developments related to the EU Constitutional Treaty (CT); all parties were in favour of its ratification. Bulgarian political parties have been generally more relaxed on EU membership (in comparison to NATO).[67] After the country's accession, Bulgarian politicians and institutions don't consider themselves as having a say in the EU – but they were used to thinking of performing in the ways necessary in order to comply. According to the experts, it will take some time to change their positions – to change a mentality of being a good member and not saying what Bulgaria stands for in the EU.

On the issue of **Turkish EU membership**, it seems that the opinion spectrum does not copy the right-left cleavage assumption thus far. The official position of any Bulgarian government was that Turkish membership would be a positive step, based on fulfilling certain pre-conditions. Turkey is a neighbour, a big and powerful country; because there is a Turkish minority in the country, any ruling Bulgarian political party cannot afford to oppose Turkish EU membership officially. However, the parties that are not in the government provide different attitudes; there are political positions, especially on the right, which are very conditional and even negative towards Turkish membership (DSB).[68]

The **regional dimension** has been important for Bulgarian foreign policy-making during the whole post-1989 period with the instability of the Western Balkans as one of the major security risks to the country and with the geographical position also close to the Caucasus and Middle East. The accession to the Euro-Atlantic structure underlined Bulgaria's position on the periphery of the community. Bulgaria has a rather proactive, but cautious, approach towards **the Balkans**; one of the experts interviewed claimed that if he was to identify the real Bulgarian foreign policy, he would

67) In 2002, Bulgaria received the statute of full market economy; in May 2005, the Treaty of Accession to the EU was signed; the following Candidate Country Report from October 2005 criticized heavily the shape of the country. Despite the criticism, the country entered the EU as of January 1st, 2007 as scheduled. Some experts say that, after the accession, the ruling political parties do not feel as much pressure to comply as in the pre-accession period and that it could harm reform efforts.

68) According to Transatlantic Trends (GMF 2007), only 45% of Bulgarians think Turkey will join the EU.

put it as the Balkans. On the **Kosovo** issue, Bulgaria is not an active supporter of its independence, adopting a rather wait-and-see attitude.[69] These policy stands are a matter of consensus among the political parties with the BSP-led government involving all political parties represented in the parliament (joint meetings of the parliamentary committees on national security and foreign policy) in an effort to craft a long-term national strategy over Kosovo. Despite political declarations, the diplomatic service has never attempted to develop a more proactive approach towards the **Black Sea Region**. Although Bulgaria and Romania are trying to pick up the Black Sea Region agenda in the EU after their accession, no joint steps or strategies have been implemented thus far.[70] As for the other foreign policy issues, historical experience and links play a role.[71]

In some areas, Bulgaria is not determined to seek any initiatives given its lack of expertise or resources – although it is generally favourable towards involvement in the envisaged missions,[72] it is less willing to develop diplomatic initiatives (Africa, Middle East). There is not much public debate on the **Middle East**; the political discourse is limited to the statements declaring a support to the peace process and a need for further negotiations. Almost no comments are made on the US or EU stances on the development of the region.

Although the need to integrate with the rest of Europe and other Euro-Atlantic structures was self-evident, as in Hungary, people generally tended to underestimate the integration into these structures at the beginning, focusing instead on the neighbourhood close by, namely the Balkans, as a source of external threats and instability. Meanwhile, **public attitudes** towards EU accession (level of the accession approval) reached a relatively high level of support from the outset.[73] As for NATO membership, the

69) Bulgaria takes part in KFOR and UNMIK; it will contribute also to the new EU EULEX mission.

70) Under the UDF government, regular meetings with Ukraine representatives were held; Greece and Turkey were also involved.

71) According to some experts, the human capital in the field of foreign policy is still linked to the pre-1989 division of competences among the countries of the former Soviet Block – Bulgaria's regional specialization at that time was Arab countries. However, the public debate on the Middle East, for example, is missing.

72) Bulgaria, for example, was already engaged in UNIFIL mission, sending one ship to the coast guarding operation in September 2006.

73) According to a local polling and research agency (Alpha Research) the level of EU membership approval revolved around 75% in 2007 (Alpha Research 2008). However, looking at the Eurobarometer 68 results, only 52% (another 3% drop from Eurobarometer 67) of Bulgarians think that EU membership is a good thing; the same number thinks that Bulgaria actually benefited from EU membership. Like in other CEE countries after the accession, the positive perception of the EU is waning. Although most Bulgarians think that the EU should solve primarily the issue of crime and energy security, the membership expectations are linked to economic benefits and raising living and social standards. With regard to the fact that Bulgaria now remains the only EU country where most of the people are dissatisfied with their life, the decreasing numbers are understandable.

public support remained more modest for a long time and split along party lines, with a large portion of the undecided and manifestations of resentment towards Russia. In 1996, 7% of BSP voters favoured NATO membership and 42% opposed it; meanwhile, 57% of the UDF electorate was in favour of joining NATO and 8% against (Karasimeonov 2004: 139). A strong security link to the development of the Balkans and the public assessment of the role of NATO there had also influenced the development of the public opinion. Bulgarians perceived the crises in Bosnia and Kosovo differently (Zilberman and Webber 2003) – during the former, they felt rather hopeless; during the latter, although they felt threatened, they also acknowledged in the polls that they felt protected by NATO. In parallel, the majority of Bulgarians disapproved of the NATO military intervention in Kosovo; on the other hand, a majority also supported the decision of Ivan Kostov's government (UDF) to grant access to Bulgarian air space to NATO aircraft, declining the earlier Russian demand. In 2001, a majority level of support for NATO membership was recorded and sustained further on roughly between 50–60% (Alpha Research 2008). At the end of 2001, 62% of Bulgarians thought that only NATO could guarantee the security of their country.[74] According to the experts, strong public support towards NATO, which emerged in 2000–2001, was caused by the decline in the proportion of those who had no opinion on the issue, as well as due to the policy shift of the BSP with some of its voters accepting the membership choice as a pragmatic move. NATO support is still distributed along the party lines to a certain extent, with the electorates of the UDF, BSP, NMSII, and MRF having rather positive stances towards the Alliance. At the same time, the Bulgarian public was rather cautious on the issue of Bulgarian participation in military and peacekeeping operations; peace-enforcing actions were supported by only 13–14% of the population in 2001. The biggest support (61%) was given to humanitarian operations.

In the last general elections, European issues were neither debated in the campaign nor a factor for distinguishing the political subjects to the voters and forming their electoral behaviour (probably with the exception of Ataka). The model of political partisanship with the voters, using the political parties in order to form their opinions on European issues, has not emerged yet in Bulgaria, also due to the prevailing foreign policy con-

74) According to Alpha Research data the 9/11 events did not affect pro-NATO attitudes in Bulgaria; according to the monthly data of the Gallup Bulgaria, support for NATO membership was registered as high as: 52% (August 2001), 52% (September 2001), 51% (October 2001), 48% (November 2001), and 54% (December 2001) (Zilberman and Webber 2003).

sensus on the accession in the last few years. According to Alpha Research (Alpha Research 2008), the level of EU membership approval revolved around 75% in 2007. However, looking at the Eurobarometer 68 results, only 52% (another 3% drop from Eurobarometer 67) of Bulgarians think that EU membership is a good thing; the same portion of people think that Bulgaria actually benefited from EU membership. Like in the other CEE countries just after the EU accession, the positive perception of the EU was waning. The unconditional support for the integration of the country into the EU has been replaced by more sceptical attitudes; the tendencies towards adopting such an attitude were already present during the debate on decommissioning the four reactors of the Kozlodui nuclear plant (part of the Bulgarian Treaty of Accession, Energy Chapter) when the BSP turned this debate into a major issue and demanded a referendum in 2004.[75]

Within the debate on two US bases being opened in Bulgaria, the public was generally unfavourable at first because of the rising security risk (from a terrorist attack) – an issue voiced namely by Ataka. The political parties on the right reframed the discourse, focusing on the economic benefits; the BSP, being a ruling party with foreign policy responsibilities, cautiously followed suit. As to the general public perception of the USA, the leadership of George W. Bush is perceived rather negatively, as well as the war in Iraq – only 2% of Bulgarians approved of the use of force without a U.N. mandate and only 10% with a U.N. mandate (Tashev 2004); meanwhile, the US as such is seen more favourably (GMF 2007). Some experts state a thorough sociological survey on security threat perception is needed, involving both external and internal threat and risk perception; a rationalization of the threats should follow, as well as an assessment and explanation on how missions abroad come into the picture, for example. It seems that public support towards a new security and strategic orientation for the country is highly volatile; in the case of engagements abroad, the public often fails (as in Iraq) to see the connection to domestic security and refuses to embrace and legitimize the policy of the government.

75) In an opinion poll in February 2004, 46% of respondents said that keeping the reactors was more important than joining the EU, while only 30% took the opposite view.

Positions of the Bulgarian Political Parties[76]

The foreign policy of the political parties is created by a mixture of politicians and experts; it seems that the political parties on the right have always had broader resources (both in government and in opposition), attracting personalities from the civil society sector, universities, and business organizations to a larger extent than the left.

Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP)

The BSP is the dominating force of the ruling government in Bulgaria (2005–2009), a post-communist party that managed to promote itself as a reformed entity. Its foreign policy shifts on NATO membership[77] and on the country's engagement in the Iraq war are described above. It has always maintained a pro-EU attitude and has (at least from a certain fraction of the party) displayed an affinity towards Russia, its foreign policy, and economic interests. The party discourse on **transatlantic relations** (relations with the US) is framed by the term 'strategic partnership' and defined on the basis of the country's obligations stemming from NATO membership, as well as the agenda of transatlantic dialogue (within the EU): "Our alliance-based, bilateral relations are taking the form of an intensive dialogue," states PM Sergey Stanishev (Stanishev 2005). The BSP approach towards NATO membership has been instrumental; according to some experts, the BSP adopts a 'two-level game' strategy when dealing with NATO issues, being very cooperative at NATO meetings, but following public opinion when implementing the agreed agenda back home, adopting a more relaxed attitude towards the commitments it has made.[78] The foreign minister in the current government (BSP-nominated but not a party member), Mr. Ivaylo Kalfin, is a professional, francophone diplomat, chosen on the merits of loyalty (especially towards president Parvanov); according to the experts, he is following a strategy that is not a routine strategy of the BSP.

76) The following interpretations of positions of Bulgarian political parties have been based mainly on official party documents (e.g. elections programmes, manifestos), daily press, and interviews with party representatives and experts. In some cases, it was not possible to interview a party representative and the data on some particular parties are missing.

77) The indicator of BSP position on NATO membership has been the development of the party position towards Serbia and former Yugoslavia; position of Georgi Parvanov during the Kosovo crisis was aggressively anti-NATO. After the crisis, it was Georgi Parvanov who initiated a cautious shift towards pro-NATO stance in the party; the anti-NATO wing was louder during the debate; the voice of the anti-NATO group was a university professor and MP Andrei Pantev.

78) Similarly, with the EU during the late pre-accession period, the BSP-led government wanted to be popular with the EU but also with the domestic population, sometimes leading to ambiguous positions like in the case of the Kozloduj nuclear plant.

After the shift of BSP foreign policy priorities, the party embarked upon a strategy of not voicing their foreign policy positions if not overly necessary, avoiding public discussion on the issues. The BSP also tends to be rather permissive on some statements made by Russian politicians; a point much criticized, especially in connection to the government's energy policy, by the parties on the right.[79]

According to the BSP, not only should the *US military presence in Europe* be reduced out of a need to move those forces elsewhere, but the European part of NATO should also be able to take up more responsibility; the EU should also be able to deploy military, peacekeeping, and humanitarian missions anywhere in the world. On the other hand, the BSP lobbied for placing the US bases on Bulgarian territory after the big reshuffling of US forces in Europe; given the strategic position of the country, the US decided to conclude a bilateral agreement with Bulgaria. The jointly-run military facilities in Bulgaria (Novo Selo and Bezmer airfield) were legitimized by the party as an obligation the country has as a NATO member even though the cooperation runs on the basis of bilateral agreement. The opponents of the decision within the BSP, the anti-NATO fraction, disclosed that it is not a NATO commitment and that even some of the NATO members do not support this decision from the Bulgarian government.

According to the general party statements, the CFSP and ESDP cannot be seen as an alternative to NATO; rather, NATO is seen as a solid ground on which the ESDP should be built. The EU and NATO, in close cooperation, should be an ultimate security guarantor in Europe; on the other hand, EU battlegroups should be given priority over NATO tasks in the future; there is also a positive attitude towards creating a European army.

The BSP wanted to keep a foreign policy consensus; however, before the 2005 elections, it promised to pull Bulgarian troops out of Iraq by the end of the year. When coming into power after the 2005 elections, the party position changed (see above). PM Sergei Stanischev was generally for sending troops; with the changing concept of the mission, the BSP accommodated new a position towards the country's engagement in Iraq.

Even though the BSP has made no explicit statements against the Guantanamo Bay Base, it does not see it as a necessary tool for fighting terrorism. The CIA flights are also seen as a procedure which could have been avoided.

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79) Russian President Vladimir Putin made a statement in Brussels that Bulgaria would be a fifth column of Russia in the EU before the EU accession; neither president Parvanov nor PM Stanishev made any statements in reaction to it.

Although the party takes a rather cautious approach towards developments in the Middle East, the BSP-led government of Sergey Stanishev proposed the Druzki Frigate (Daring) to be a part of the naval component of UNIFIL in Lebanon in September 2006. The frigate, the first Bulgarian ship meeting NATO standards, took part in NATO operation Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean and served in UNIFIL for two months.

The stability of Bulgaria's close neighbourhood is seen as a priority. Besides the Western Balkans, the BSP declares a need for a more active policy towards the Black Sea and Caucasus Regions. It sees Bulgaria as an anchor of stability in the region and a promoter of Western norms. As potential risks, the BSP regards the developments in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Macedonia as threats to the stability of the region; as for the Kosovo issue, PM Sergey Stanishev stated that the current unclear status cannot be prolonged forever, but that he was against unilateral steps and supportive towards the involvement of Russia. The BSP would also like to intensify relations and cooperation with Ukraine and Russia; the relations should be based on a pragmatic approach of economic partnership and should not clash with European and Transatlantic priorities.

The Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF)

Founded in December 1989, the MRF is a centrist party (centre-left) with high coalition potential. In order not to be seen only as an ethnic party,[80] the MRF now labels itself 'liberal' and has become a member of Liberal International (LI). The MRF was rather reluctant to show any foreign policy positions after 1989; however, its position changed around 1997 with the adoption of an openly pro-Atlantic and pro-NATO attitude, forming a wide majority on foreign policy issues with the right during the Kostov government; the MRF position was also important for the BSP in this regard. The MRF also did not give in to BSP propositions to pull military personnel out of Iraq right after the 2005 elections. The MRF has always taken a positive attitude towards EU membership. Naturally, it favours Turkish membership in the EU.[81] The experts say MRF foreign policy positions are very conventional;

80) Although the concept of the 'Multi-ethnic model' is still in the centre of its election programme, some experts claim that the MRF is very much related to Ankara; it is a very centralized party, monopolistic in terms of mobilizing Turkish and Muslim voters, and has been, most of the time, part of the government; it also enjoys the reputation of a very corrupt political party.

81) Provided that Turkey unofficially but, in effect, strongly supports the MRF also reflects the issue of Turkish membership to the extent to which the behaviour of the MRF in Bulgarian politics is regarded (and interpreted) by some experts as a preliminary image of how Turkey will behave in the EU.

the party does not see foreign policy as an area of specific interest, focusing rather on domestic affairs.

The National Movement for Stability and Progress (NMSP, former NMSII)

During the 2001–2005 election periods, the governing coalition of the NMSII and MRF was successful outside Bulgaria in advancing the foreign policy towards NATO and EU membership; the party is pro-NATO and pro-EU.[82] In a 2005 debate on Iraq after the friendly-fire incident, the NMSII advocated a redefinition of the task of the Bulgarian troops in Iraq to be based on thorough analysis. The NMSII was in favour of keeping the mission at least until the end of 2005, supporting, in the end, a turn towards a redefinition of activities (the training of local forces).

The current party documents call for an active stand vis-à-vis NATO and EU; it follows the motto 'enlargement equals security,' a phrase that should be read in two ways – to secure Bulgarian borders (as they are the EU external borders) and to support further EU enlargement (although not explicitly stating whom and whether in the long or short term). It also speaks of the 'return' of Bulgaria to the Balkans as an EU member, meaning that the country should enhance its cooperation and contribute more significantly to the transformation of the Balkans (into a peninsula of stability). It sees Bulgaria as a gate between Europe and Asia; the country should facilitate an active cooperation with the Asian countries, which would grant access to their markets and sources of energy. Energy diplomacy is seen as a top issue on the EU agenda; there is a need for new projects that could break old dependencies (on Russia). The primary component of Bulgarian energy policy should be an effort to conclude the overall European energy policy since a unified stand of the EU member states would better secure policy outcomes.

Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria (GERB)

GERB was founded in autumn 2005; it positions itself as a centre-right party. In the foreign policy field, GERB has been balancing between pro-EU attitudes (namely, in connection to the Structural Funds) and its 'own (i.e. national) interests' (namely, on the issue of the Kozloduj nuclear plant). After

82) Bulgaria became a member of NATO in 2004 and signed the EU accession treaty in April 2005; therefore, the country became a NATO member under the NMSII-led government. The current Bulgarian Commissioner, Meglena Kuneva, is from NMSII.

the European Parliament elections, it became a member of the EPP-ED group. The party states a pro-Atlantic attitude; on the other hand, some of its leadership (Boiko Borisov) declare that they have very good relations with people from Russian security circles.

Union of Democratic Forces (UDF)

The UDF was formed as a centre-right democratic and market-oriented party; full consolidation of the party took place only in 1997. It was in power twice – in 1991–1992 with the Dimitrov administration and in 1997–2001 with PM Ivan Kostov's administration, the first Bulgarian government to complete a full term in office after 1989. Besides economic reforms, the accession talks with the European Union were launched under the UDF government. In 2001–2005, the UDF supported the foreign policy line of the NMSII, i.e. the NATO and EU membership.[83] For the UDF, NATO membership was never instrumental; it was a substantial element of Bulgarian foreign policy.

The UDF supported the US-led operations in Iraq in 2003. It was against pulling out military troops from Iraq; after the friendly-fire incident in 2005, the UDF promoted that a sub-committee in the Assembly be created in order to issue a comprehensive report on the implementation of the National Assembly's resolution on Bulgaria's military involvement in Iraq, including its equipment, training, and deployment.

The UDF would like to see independent EU military missions only in Europe and Africa, and US or NATO-led operations preferably anywhere except for Europe. It also supports the instalment of new US bases in CEE countries, including on Bulgarian soil, and even a special US facility for the interrogation of terrorist suspects; in parallel, the Europeans should be able to take over more responsibility for the common defence and shore up the European part of NATO. The EU should be also more active in Central Asia as a geopolitical sphere of its interest. NATO, in cooperation with the EU, should be an ultimate security guarantor in Europe, with progressive development of the ESDP seen as needed. As to EU expansion, the UDF is a partisan of further EU enlargement, including Turkey.

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83) Before the failure in the European parliament election, the UDF suggested that it would join the Movement for European Reform (MER); MER was a suggested alliance of Britain's Conservatives and the Czech Civic Democrats; however, looking at the Bulgarian political parties' spectrum, it would make for a rather DSB-like profile; indeed, former DSB leader Petar Stojanov suggested that the party join MER; however, the DSB members refused. The UDF was recommended by the EPP-ED political bureau for membership suspension; nevertheless, since no UDF candidate was elected into the EP, the issue lost significance.

Democrats for Strong Bulgaria (DSB)

The DSB defines itself as a right-of-centre party with liberal economic discourse; established in 2004 as a UDF splinter,[84] its main difference to the UDF is strong anti-communism and criticism towards the BSP.[85] The DSB also challenges the MRF monopoly over the ethnic minority vote, promoting the re-definition of the 'Bulgarian ethnic model' on the basis of the principle of citizenship (and EU citizenship). There are major experts and foreign policy figures in the DSB; the party is strongly pro-Atlantic. Meanwhile, the UDF is moderately pro-Turkish on EU accession; even though the DSB has challenged Turkish EU membership, the position has not been stated explicitly thus far. The DSB was trying to position itself as a more nationalist party (like the Czech ODS); they followed a sovereignty discourse, not following everything that the EU says – for example, on the issue of the Kozloduj nuclear power station, the DSB stated that Bulgaria should have not agreed so easily; a slight tendency towards becoming a eurosceptic party has been present.

In the debate on US bases in Bulgaria, the DSB experienced problems due to certain anti-American feelings that exist among its electorate; the DSB supported the US bases, but had to use the strategy of reframing the issue to economic connotations. Otherwise, the DSB supports the preservation of a strong transatlantic link and pro-US policies (i.e., CIA flights in Europe were necessary; it welcomes the US presence in Central Asia due to favourable energy security consequences); the DSB states that independent EU military missions should be only complementary to US efforts; when the EU decides to act, its steps should be consulted with NATO and the US; concerning the very missions, there should be a division of labour and complementarity among the transatlantic allies. Further development of the ESDP is welcomed by the DSB, but not on the cost of undermining NATO activities; EU battlegroups should also act only on the condition of US and NATO consent and move towards creating a European army is unfavourable, unless coordinated closely with NATO.

84) The experts say the DSB and the UDF dislike each other more than they dislike the BSP; the UDF split because of strong personalities. The DSB is more conservative than the UDF, including on foreign policy issues. It is a cadre party with a stable electoral support (around 3%). It seems that after the disastrous results in the last (European and local) elections, the party is trying to take up more centrist and moderate position and to regain some of their votes; people still have some emotional connection to them as the former anti-communist leaders.

85) The DSB website (about us section) states: "The main political opponent [of DSB] is the Bulgarian Socialist Party (former Communists) because the latter is a party of the leftist political experiments, of populism and of reckless government." DSB politicians have also been very critical towards the BSP over its energy security policy, stating that Bulgaria acts as a Trojan horse of Russian interest in the EU (namely because of the Burgas-Alexandroupolis pipeline).

As for the Iraq crisis, the party representatives supported the actions, arguing a need for regime change in 2003, though doubting the timing and conduct of the operation. The DSB has been supportive towards the engagement the Bulgarian troops in Iraq, but warned of possible complications and casualties and criticized the lack of real discussion in the Assembly (after the 2005 elections and the redefinition of the concept of engagement).

The Bulgarian People's Union (BPU)

The BPU is a complicated coalition of three smaller parties – the Agrarians, the Union of Free Democrats of former Sofia mayor Stefan Sofiyanski, and the Revolutionary Internal Macedonian Organization (IMRO).[86]

According to a party representative, there is no will to finance the European defence, and thus, the US involvement (military missions) is welcomed everywhere and preferable to the concept of independent EU military missions. On the other hand, the US military presence in Europe should be reduced because it is not necessary anymore; new bases in CEE countries should be built because of their geopolitical strategic position. The Guantanamo Bay Base is regarded as an appropriate facility – endorsed by the argument that security is costly in terms of political capital; CIA flights in Europe were a necessary undertaking in order to secure vital information. The party is also favourable to increasing the US presence in Central Asia because it would have favourable consequences in regard to energy security.[87] On the other hand, the party welcomed the establishment of the permanent International Criminal Court. The BPU (or at least the Agrarian party) was supporting the US-led operation in Iraq and also the Bulgarian engagement within those operations. According to the BPU, the ESDP should develop further only if legitimized by the population of the EU member states; NATO should remain the ultimate guarantor of European security.

Ataka

Coalition Ataka was formed two months before the 2005 elections. It presents a programme that is virtually in opposition to the foreign policy consensus reached under the previous government, i.e. against the involve-

86) Registered in 1996, the IMRO was the only significant right-wing entity in Bulgarian politics until the emergence of Ataka. IMRO has 5 MPs in the current Assembly.

87) … And "anything that limits Putin is fine." The party is also very critical of strong Russian interference with Bulgarian politics.

ment in Iraq, anti-US (against US bases on Bulgarian territory), anti-NATO, and also against some features of Bulgaria's EU membership (a criticism on closing down the Kozloduj nuclear plant). The coalition calls for 'a Bulgaria for the Bulgarians' and proposes harsh policies on ethnic minorities. In order to promote their racist and anti-Semitic messages, they have launched their own newspaper (Ataka) and the Skat TV channel. As a difference from the extremist parties in other Central European countries (perhaps only with the exception of Vladimir Meciar's HZDS at certain points) that are appearing due to historical legacy, this hard line nationalist party is also very pro-Russian.

Conclusion

Bulgaria is still undergoing the process of its parties' fragmentation; especially, the right side of the political spectrum is eroding with traditional parties (UDF, DSB) losing appeal and electorate. Unless the economic and social situation of the country improves significantly, a relatively large group of volatile, unpredictable voters will continue to play an important role and shape the outcome of the elections, changing allegiances and loyalties to political subjects.

In the foreign policy field, the picture of the Bulgarian left and right follows, more or less, the scheme of the right being rather atlanticist and the left taking rather pro-EU attitudes. However, there are additional dimensions: Bulgarian politics has always been divided between the pro-Russian left and the pro-Western right due to the specific history of the country, the border lines, and the nature of Bulgarian political culture. Today, there is an inverted situation where the BSP claims to be pro-atlantic *and* pro-European (but of course much less pro-atlantic than the centre-right political parties (UDF, DSB, NMSII). Although the left is explicitly pro-European and similar to its counterparts in other EU countries, it tends to preserve good relations with Russia. The tacit foreign policy consensus also becomes weaker when dealing with regional agendas (including the issue of Turkish and Macedonian EU membership) – in these cases, it is also important if the party forms a ruling coalition or sits in the opposition benches. The extreme right follows a specific brand of nationalism that is very much anti-Turkish and anti-Western and pro-Russian.

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CZECH REPUBLIC

David Král

Table 1: Parties in the Czech Parliament

Term	Parties Represented in the Parliament (Chamber of Deputies) – Election Results and Mandates	Governing Coalition
1990 – 1992	(Czech National Council) OF 49.5% (124) KSČ 13.2% (33) HSD – SMS 10% (23) KDU – 8.4% (20)	OF
1992 – 1996	ODS/KDS – 29.7 % (76) Levý blok (KSČM and DL) – 14.1 % (51) ČSSD – 6.5 % (16) LSU – 6.5 % (16) KDU – ČSL – 6.3 % (15) SPR – RSČ – 6% (14) ODA – 5.9 % (14) HSD – SMS – 5.9 % (14)	ODS - KDS – KDU-ČSL – ODA
1996 – 1998	ODS – 29.6% (68) ČSSD – 26.4% (61) KSČM – 10.3 % (22) KDU – ČSL – 8.08 % (18) SPR – RSČ – 8.01 % (18) ODA – 6.36 % (13)	ODS – KDU-ČSL – ODA (minority government)
1998 – 2002	ČSSD – 32.3 % (74) ODS – 27.7 % (63) KSČM – 11% (24) KDU – ČSL – 9 % (20) US – 8.6 % (19)	ČSSD (minority government)

Table 1: Parties in the Czech Parliament		
Term	**Parties Represented in the Parliament (Chamber of Deputies) – Election Results and Mandates**	**Governing Coalition**
2002 – 2006	ČSSD – 30.2 % (70) ODS – 24.5 % (58) KSČM – 18.5 % (41) KDU – ČSL – 14.3 % (coalition with US) (22) US – 14.3 % (coalition with KDU-ČSL) (9)	ČSSD – KDU-ČSL - US
2006 on	ODS – 35.38 % (81) ČSSD – 32.32 % (74) KSČM – 12.81 % (26) KDU – ČSL – 7.23 % (13) SZ – 6.29 % (6)	ODS – KDU-ČSL - SZ

Acronyms:

ČSSD	Česká strana sociálně demokratická (Czech Social Democratic Party)
DL	Demokratická levice (Democratic Left)
HSD – SMS	Hnutí za samosprávnou demokracii – Společnost pro Moravu a Slezsko (Movement for Self-Government Democracy – Union for Moravia and Silesia)
KDU	Křesťanská a de\mokratická unie (Christian and Democratic Union)
KDU – ČSL	Křesťansko-demokratická unie – Československá strana lidová (Christian Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party)
KDS	Křesťanská demokratická strana (Christian Democratic Party)
KSČ	Komunistická strana Československa (Communist Party of Czechoslovakia)
KSČM	Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy (Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia)
LSU	Liberálně – sociální unie (Liberal Social Union)
ODA	Občanská demokratická aliance (Civic Democratic Alliance)
ODS	Občanská demokratická strana (Civic Democratic Party)
OF	Občanské Fórum (Civic Forum)
SPR – RSČ	Sdružení pro republiku – Republikánská strana Československa (Union for the Republic – Czechoslovak Republican Party)
SZ	Strana zelených (Green Party)
US	Unie Svobody (Freedom Union)

Overview of the Czech Political Scene

The Czech Republic, quite exceptionally in the region, shows a relatively high degree of stability in regard to the political parties present on its political scene. Also, the standard socio-economic cleavage present in most Western European party systems, separating the left from the right and, based on a socio-economic conflict line, is clearly visible, at least between the two major political parties. The Czech political system has, during the course of the 1990's, crystallized with one dominant party on the political right – the Civic Democratic Party (Občanská demokratická strana, ODS) and one strong player on the left – the Czech Social Democratic Party (Česká strana sociálně demokratická, ČSSD). This recalls the system of two Western European neighbours of the Czech Republic – Germany and Austria – who also have one dominant right wing party (CDU, ÖVP), as well as one on the left (SPD, SPÖ). However, drawing parallels might be a bit misleading here, as there are obvious, substantial differences between the ODS and the respective German and Austrian parties. Probably, the most significant difference is that both the CDU and the ÖVP draw a lot of their ideological inspiration from the Christian-democratic movement, which is absent in the case of the Czech ODS – the party has a secular profile,[1] thus making these parties more like their Czech Christian Democratic twin – the KDU-ČSL, which is, however, a weaker player on the Czech scene.

The situation is somewhat more complicated regarding the smaller parties. However, at least two of them have asserted themselves as stable factors on the Czech political map – the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy, KSČM) and the Christian-Democratic Union – the Czechoslovak Peoples' Party (Křesťansko-demokratická unie – Československá strana lidová, KDU-ČSL). They are both characterized by a relatively stable electorate, drawing their support (in the former case) from negative voters dissatisfied with general direction of politics after 1989 and (in the latter case) more traditional, country-based, Catholic voters.

To understand the nature of the Czech political system as it currently exists, one must look back to the beginnings of the country's transformation and the "Velvet revolution" of 1989, as this is where one can see the most significant roots of the cleavages and conflict lines determining the emergence of the

1) This is true even though the party had previously absorbed the Christian Democratic Party (KDS), a party also based on the Christian movement. However, this stream in the party is marginal and more vocal on social rather than economic or foreign policy issues, as demonstrated, for instance, in the debate on registered partnership.

country's respective political parties. The nature-of-the-regime conflict line, present in many countries of Central and Eastern Europe to varying degrees until now, was really significant only in the first "free" elections in June 1990 following the collapse of communism. These elections can simply be described as a contest of the advocates of a pluralist democracy, gathered in a wide platform called the Civic Forum/Public against violence (Občanské forum/Veřejnost proti násilí) towards the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ). It was a contest on the attitude of the Czech (or more precisely, the Czecho-Slovak) public towards the Communist era (Hloušek and Kopeček 2005) and resulted in an overwhelming victory for the anti-communist camp with more than 50% of the votes. In the following years, the nature-of-the-regime conflict line was significant only in terms of the assertion of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy, KSČM) as a full-fledged successor to the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, never clearly denouncing the legacy of the Communist era. This resulted into an unwritten agreement on the ostracization and political isolation of the party by the other party actors (Hloušek and Kopeček 2005).

The socio-economic transformation conflict line thus became the dominant cleavage of the Czech transformation following the end of the communist regime and was instrumental in the emergence of what can be viewed as a system with two major political parties, one on the left and one on the right. The ODS, led by the charismatic figure of Václav Klaus, emerged as the victorious party in the 1992 elections, championing the swift introduction of free market principles, as well as rapid privatisation, into the Czech economy. The Social Democratic party (ČSSD), since 1993 headed by another charismatic leader, Miloš Zeman, built a lot of its agenda on the criticism of the way the ODS-led government handled the economic transformation, particularly privatisation, and for neglecting the socio-economic impact of the swift shift to a market economy. Moreover, there is one significant, structural difference between the two parties – while the ODS presents itself as a "new" party, without recalling any legacy of the inter-war period of the democratic Czechoslovakia, in addition to building its image on transformation and modernisation, the ČSSD openly declares its inspiration and legacy from the social-democratic movement and the predecessor parties existent throughout the Czech lands[2].

Despite this, other conflict lines were also present in the Czech political milieu that helped the establishment of smaller parties, some of them more

2) Such as the Czecho-Slavonic Social Democratic Party in Austria, Czechoslovak Social Democratic Workers' Party (in the interwar period – the so-called "First Republic"), or the Czechoslovak Social Democracy existent shortly after WWII.

important than others at different stages of the transformation. For instance, the conflict line between Church-State was significant for the existence of confessional parties in Western Europe and helped the emergence of the Christian Democratic Union (KDU-ČSL). Although this party has stable support, due to the traditional secularism of Czech society, however, it never managed to become a major political force because its electorate was limited to a group of strongly religious Catholic voters (Hloušek and Kopeček 2005). Similarly, the national conflict line played a role in the emergence of minor political groupings requiring more political and cultural autonomy for historical regions of Moravia and Silesia. Nevertheless, the influence of these groups grossly diminished after 1992 elections.

The axiological (i.e. value based) conflict line, in the Czech case, follows very much along a socio-economic cleavage line and separates the parties with a more etatistic approach to the economy (the left) from the parties with a more liberal approach. Certain signs of this cleavage can, however, be tracked in social terms where, through the course of the 1990's, there were attempts to establish parties with liberal economic and social agendas, distinguishing themselves from the social and rather conservative ODS and the even more conservative KDU-ČSL. Examples of this can be seen in parties such as the Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA), the Freedom Union (Unie svobody, US – a split-off from the ODS that originated in 1998), or the Democratic Union; the latter two parties merged into one party in 2001. However, none of these parties asserted themselves as a permanent player on the Czech political scene, despite the fact that, for instance, the Freedom Union (US) was part of the ruling coalition during 2002 – 2006. For this reason, we do not analyze this party's positions because, as in most of the issues dealt with in this paper, their position bore little to no political weight. It is, however, mentioned, as there is still at least a theoretical chance of its resurgence in the future.

The failure to create a strong economically and socially liberal political party has left a certain gap in the centre of the Czech political spectrum (although it could be filled by the KDU-ČSL, this party only appeals to a limited electorate, as was explained), thus opening the floor for other potential cleavage lines. At the moment, a new conflict line that is appearing is the materialist – post-materialist conflict line, illustrated by the resurgence of the Green Party (Strana zelených, SZ). Although this party has existed since the early 1990's, due to the dominance of the socio-economic line of transformation, it could appeal to a very limited number of voters. With the Czech Republic growing increasingly rich at the beginning of 21st century, the situation has changed substantively,

making it easier to appeal to voters, tackling issues such as sustainable development, global environmental problems, and alternative energy sources, among others. In regard to foreign policy, which is the subject matter of this analysis, the Greens have come up with new unorthodox topics not tackled thus far so explicitly by the other parties (see further). It is, however, not clear whether the Green Party will be able to sustain its support and whether its fate will be different from those smaller parties that tried to fill the gap in the political centre and provide an alternative to the originating two-party system. Despite the fact that it entered Parliament only in 2006 and even became part of the ruling coalition, current opinion polls suggest their preferences to be higher than those of the KDU-ČSL, a well-established veteran of the Czech politics.[3] Moreover, there is a significant internal dispute in the Green party whether to follow a more pragmatic or programme-based approach, which might result in the further significant weakening of the party ahead of the next general election. In any case, this is not to say that the Green Party has replaced or removed the liberal Freedom Union (US); their programme is quite different; a large part of the party is economically closer to the Social Democrats than to the ODS.

To summarize, the Czech political scene is currently quite legible for an outside observer in terms of the right-left division applied to Western European party systems, with one dominant party on the right (ODS), another dominant party (ČSSD) and one smaller party (KSČM) on the left, plus one smaller party in the centre-right (KDU-ČSL). There is arguably still room for another smaller party in the political centre; it still remains to be seem whether such a party will establish itself firmly in the Czech political spectrum and which conflict line will differentiate it from the other party actors – it seems that it will be either an axiological or a materialist vs. post-materialist cleavage.

Positioning of the Czech Political Parties on the Right – Left Axis

3) Cf. the June 2008 opinion poll of CVVM on party preferences (CVVM 2008c). In this poll, the preferences of the Green Party are at 7,5% while those of the KDU-ČSL are only at 5,5 %.

Abbreviations/acronyms:

KSČM	Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy)
ČSSD	Czech Social Democratic Party (Česká strana sociálně-demokratická)
SZ	Green Party (Strana zelených)
KDU-ČSL	Christian-Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party (Křesťansko-demokratická unie – československá strana lidová)
US	Freedom Union (Unie svobody)
ODS	Civic Democratic Party (Občanská demokratická strana)

National Consensus and Relevance of Foreign Policy

Broadly speaking, there was a consensus on major foreign policy issues during the course of 1990's that was – as well as in the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe – determined by the imperative of integration into Euro-Altantic structures, namely NATO and the EU. Only one political party – the Communist Party (KSČM) – diverged significantly from this consensus, denying membership in both organizations and exhibiting an especially strong distaste for NATO. This attitude can be largely explained by the appeal of the KSČM to negative voters, generally dissatisfied with the way things were going after the collapse of communism. The party tried to portray the desire of politicians to join the two main organisations as a way of general deterioration. The communist party, which, as we already mentioned, never distanced itself from the legacy of communist Czechoslovakia and the rule of its predecessor, the Czechoslovak Communist Party, clearly saw the reorientation of the Czech foreign policy as a negative sign by which the Czech Republic would be finally absorbed into western capitalist structures. Due to its isolation, the consensus on the Czech political scene can, therefore, be more precisely described as a "consensus minus one."

The motto of "Back to Europe" became the main slogan describing the overall orientation of Czech foreign policy during the 1990's. This often led the Czech Republic to neglect other aspects of foreign policy for practically the entire period, such as regional co-operation or the "Eastern" policy. The aim of the Czech Republic was to prove its "western" credentials, integrate into NATO and the EU as quickly as possible, and assert itself firmly on the geopolitical map of Europe as part of the Euroatlantic structures, not as an

ex-Soviet satellite. One can recall the reluctance of Václav Klaus at the time of his premiership towards the Visegrád co-operation, perhaps fearing that it would jeopardize the more important goal of integration with the EU and NATO. In Klaus's thinking, the Czech Republic was in the best position among Central European countries to join the Euro-Atlantic organisations swiftly, thus justifying the rejection of its co-operation with other Central European partners on the way to the EU.[4] In 1996, one of the main ODS election billboards in its election campaign portrayed the Czech flag along with those of the other advanced nations, reminding the Czech voters that their country was the first ex-communist country to join the OECD (in 1995) under the ODS-led government. Contrary to that, it is quite surprising that the Czech Republic was among the last countries in the region to submit an application to join the EU, only in January 1996.

After achieving the main goals of foreign policy in 1999 and 2004 (accession to NATO and the EU, respectively), Czech foreign policy found itself in a kind of vacuum. While most of the other countries of the region tried to keep other priorities to their foreign policy (such as Eastern policy in the case of Poland or neighbourhood relations in the case of Hungary), Czech diplomacy had to define new areas to prioritise and pursue in the international arena. Arguably, this process is still underway. However, there are clear signs that the Czech Republic has managed to find such areas, visible namely in the rediscovery of the 'Eastern' policy, Transatlantic co-operation or democracy assistance and promotion in third-world countries. Moreover, the resurgence of the Green Party could push new dimensions onto Czech foreign policy, such as a stronger emphasis on global problems like the environment, energy, development aid, or sustainable development. However, it still remains to be seen whether these new priorities will generate a strong, cross-party consensus, as the issue of Euro-Atlantic integration did.

Views of the US, the EU, and NATO

Apart from the goal of integration into the EU and NATO, bilateral relations with the United States played an important role in Czech foreign policy-thinking following the fall of communism. Unlike relations with major Western European countries such as Germany, France, or the United

4) The Visegrád co-operation was founded precisely with the goal of co-operating in achieving membership in NATO and the EU. The first presidential summit took place in 1991 in Visegrád, Hungary. The Visegrád Three turned into the Visegrád Four (V4) after the division of Czechoslovakia in 1993.

Kingdom, relations with the USA are not burdened by any historical grievances.[5] The United States was perceived, primarily by post-communist elites, as a champion in the fight for freedom and democracy throughout the Cold War; it is mainly thanks to them that the victory of liberal western democracy was achieved, at least in Central Europe. An important element in the strongly pro-US attitudes of the Czech governments throughout the early 1990's was the figure of the first president of post-1989 Czechoslovakia (and the Czech Republic), Václav Havel, who emphasized the shared values of democracy on both sides of the Atlantic (Řiháčková 2005) and was a very good personal friend with prominent American politicians of the era, especially Bill Clinton and his Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, the latter being of Czech origin. In the foreign policy arena, the positive attitudes towards the United States were reflected by the Czech (and Czechoslovak) support of the US during the First Gulf War in 1991, as well as during the US intervention in former Yugoslavia in 1995. However, there was a nuanced sign of change after the first ČSSD government took office. In 1998, during his first public appearance after his inauguration as Minister of Foreign Affairs, social democrat Jan Kavan stated that he 'would not like to see the Czech Republic as a Trojan horse of the United States in Europe' (a statement that creates an interesting comparison with later references in Süddeutsche Zeitung that label Poland in the same way), followed by his support for European defence capabilities (Řiháčková 2005). Although one cannot describe this as a U-turn in the Czech Republic's relationship with the United States, it shows an interesting shift and indicates that the country might not support the United States automatically and that it can be confronted with other choices, such as the position of the European Union. This trend has fully demonstrated itself during the Iraq crisis and even more so during the negotiations on the missile defence treaty, as will be illustrated later. Still, it does not designate any major rift in mutual relations.

Recently, the main problem that has strained bilateral relations with the United States was the inclusion of the Czech Republic into the US Visa Waver Programme. However, at the moment, even this matter seems to be largely settled due to the respective congressional amendment adopted in

5) In relation to Germany, the legacy of WWII is still present among many Czechs, which was illustrated throughout the 1990's by controversies over, for example, the so-called Beneš decrees, authorising the removal of ethnic Germans from Czechoslovakia after WWII. In relation to France and the UK, what is viewed as a betrayal of Czechoslovakia in Munich Agreement in 1938 is recalled by some politicians, recently, for instance by the Vice-Premier for the EU, Alexandr Vondra.

2007 that increased the permissible refusal rate for visa applicants to 10%, a threshold comfortably met by the Czech Republic. At the moment, the only technical strain of this programme seems to be on the part of the US;[6] stipulations can result in a slight delay in enrolment in the programme; in any case, the visa-free regime should be granted by the end of 2008. An important point is also that the Czech government decided to embark on bilateral negotiations with the US administration on the visa issues, being the first country to sign the Memorandum that paves the way to inclusion in the programme. This happened at a cost of harsh criticism from both the European Commission, as well as some 'old' member states, who feared that this Czech freelancing might undermine the common European approach, and that the Czechs would be willing to make concessions to the US administration (for instance, regarding the transfer of passengers' data to US authorities or the deployment of air marshals) that would subsequently be extended to countries currently on the programme as well.

As far as Czech attitudes towards NATO are concerned, they seemed to be rather problematic soon after the Czech accession, but were arguably healed at a later stage to a considerable degree. Despite the fact that all the political parties, apart from the Communists, have consistently supported the country's membership in NATO, when practical issues were at stake after the accession, the Czech position proved rather awkward, to say the least. Firstly, the Czechs were exhibiting relatively low support for NATO membership compared to the other candidates, as well as low awareness in terms of the rights and responsibilities attached to the Alliance (Řiháčková 2005). This is attributable to several factors – the fact that NATO was for years portrayed as "the enemy," which led to sceptical positions, especially among older people, but also the fact that the political elites were reluctant to launch a wide public debate, fearing that it would be tricky to discuss security issues publicly, as well as what they view as Czech pacifism and mistrust towards military alliances. The second important moment highlighting the ambivalent attitudes concerns the political representation and its attitudes during the Kosovo air strike that occurred only a few weeks after the Czech Republic joined NATO in 1999. The political scene was split – President Václav Havel and two smaller parliamentary parties – the

6) The respective congressional amendment authorised the Secretary for Homeland Security to introduce an Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA), requiring travellers from visa waiver countries to the USA to register with US authorities at least 72 hours prior to departure. Although the introduction of the system was announced in June 2008 by Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, the system will be operational only towards the end of 2008.

Freedom Union and the Christian Democrats – supported the operation without hesitation; the minority Social Democrats in the government cautiously expressed support, but with many internal reservations; the Communists were against the operation. However, what came as a large surprise was the position of Václav Klaus, at the time, leader of the ODS and speaker of the Chamber of Deputies (the lower chamber of the Parliament), who criticised the strike, claiming that it would not produce a long-term solution. This ambiguous position, with differences going not only between the government and the opposition, but also across various political actors, became somewhat symptomatic for Czech attitudes towards various foreign policy issues where NATO, EU, and US interests are at stake, not least regarding the Iraqi crisis and missile defence. In any case, hesitant support of the NATO operation in Yugoslavia shortly after entering the alliance signalled serious doubts about Czech loyalty and responsibility and left a certain strain on the country's relationship with the US, which was unproblematic until then. Some analysts go so far as to claim that NATO created a serious problem for itself by accepting the Czech Republic in the first, a move that could take a long time and much effort to remedy (Pečina 1999).

The following period, particularly post 9/11, already gives a very different picture. The Czech Republic was the first country behind the Iron Curtain to host the NATO summit (in November 2002), largely thanks to the personal engagement of President Havel and the former Ambassador to the US and special envoy for the summit, Alexandr Vondra. The perception of pacifist Czechs also changed with the active involvement of the Czech Republic in the stabilisation of Kosovo as part of KFOR – the NATO military mission, which, to date, has been the largest Czech military presence abroad,[7] as well as the NATO operation Essential Harvest in Macedonia (Stýskalíková 2004) that included the deployment of over 120 Czech troops. Czechs also participate in the International Stabilisation Assistance Force (ISAF), a NATO operation in Afghanistan during which they have increased their deployment since the beginning of the operation. The overall number of Czech soldiers in various NATO operations in 2008 has amounted to 800, thus meeting the NATO requirements of having 8% of deployable troops in foreign missions and helping substantially in repairing the Czech reputation vis-à-vis the Alliance. The image of the army has also changed

7) As of June 2008, the Czech Republic has 473 troops in Kosovo as part of the 11th contingent, deployed in the Multi-national Task Force Centre (MNTF-C), currently under Finnish command.

dramatically among the Czech people due to its professionalization and extremely positive reflection of its performance during the 2002 floods. Today, the opinion polls show that the army is the most trusted institution among all law enforcement institutions.[8] Still, NATO remains the least popular organization compared to the EU and the UN.[9]

As far as attitudes towards the European Union are concerned, they seem to be highly complicated due to the rather polarised position of the political parties. Apart from the Communists, who oppose the membership in the Union as such (but by far not as strongly as membership in NATO), the other parties have supported it, albeit with different degrees of enthusiasm. For Václav Klaus and his followers within the ODS, membership in the EU has always been merely a 'marriage of convenience,' simply acknowledging the fact that there was no viable alternative for the Czech Republic. The Social Democrats, and smaller parties such as the KDU-ČSL, the Freedom Union, or, more recently, the Green Party, take a much more positive and constructive approach to the EU, striving to contribute to the progressive framing of the Union's policies, including its foreign policy. It seems that, for the ODS particularly, the progress in the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) poses substantial problems, as it deprives the country of much leverage in external relations. For this reason, leading ODS figures have been consistently opposed to 'more Europe' in foreign policy, including an increased scope of majority voting, instead preferring loser alliances (such as NATO) where consensus is a rule and the member states have more room to manoeuvre. This is in sharp contrast to the position of most other democratic parties[10], who support the progressive framing of the CFSP, including its security and defence dimension known as the ESDP (European Security and Defence Policy).

Let us now explore in more detail how the country's position towards the USA, the EU, and NATO fit into the key issues with which Czech foreign policy has been confronted over the past few years, from the point of view of the parties represented on the Czech political scene.

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8) For instance, a CVVM poll from May 2007 shows that more than 60% of Czechs trust the Army, while only 50% trust the courts and the police (CVVM 2007).

9) Cf. the opinion poll conducted by CVVM in March 2008 (CVVM 2008a).

10) The idiom 'democratic parties' in the Czech discourse usually refers to the parliamentary parties with the exceptions of Communists.

US Military Presence in Europe and Missile Defence

The election manifestos and other strategic party documents of the parliamentary political parties in the Czech Republic rarely contain direct references to the desirability of an American military presence in Europe. The ODS is the most explicit example in this sense. The election programme of the ODS for the 2006 parliamentary elections, called '*Společně pro lepší život* (*Together for a Better Life)*,' in its section relating to foreign policy (written by Jan Zahradil, ODS leader in the European Parliament) highlights that an 'American engagement in Europe in the NATO framework is the best guarantee of the general interests of Euro-Atlantic civilisation and, in the long-term, a necessary pre-condition of European security and stability.' (ODS 2006) The position document from the shadow government of the ODS from 2003 puts it even more clearly, stating that 'the US military presence in Europe is absolutely essential' (ODS 2003a) and that only a transatlantic link is a guarantee of our civilisation. It furthermore explicitly argues for the active participation of the Czech Republic in the NATO missile defence system. The long-term programme of the ČSSD contains a relatively extensive chapter on foreign, security, and defence policies (ČSSD 2005), however, without any specific reference to the US military presence in Europe. Moreover, most of the references in the party programme put a strong emphasis on European security and defence policy that can be viewed as a sign of wishful emancipation from the US being the main security provider, even for the Czech Republic. There is no specific reference to the matter in the election manifesto of the KDU-ČSL either, apart from the acknowledgement of a dominant role for the USA in NATO (KDU-ČSL 2006), and no direct reference in the Green Party programme (Strana zelených 2006), apart from the claim that European forces should replace NATO in Europe (see further). The Communist Party refuses the US military presence implicitly, calling for the 'abolishment of all foreign military bases and the prohibition of their construction' in its 2006–10 election manifesto (KSČM 2006).

This conspicuous silence from the Czech parties' documents (particularly, the ČSSD) is surprising, not least because the Czech Republic is currently confronted with a very delicate issue in ratifying the missile defence treaty with the United States and hosting the US radar system. The debate that has evolved around the issue from 2007 until the present reveals much more about the position of the individual parties and their key representatives than

the party programmes to which we were referring. Perhaps not surprisingly, the situation is clearest with the political parties on the edge of the Czech political spectrum.

The ODS overwhelmingly supports the conclusion of the missile defence treaty with the USA, its ratification, and the installation of radar in the Czech Republic. It can be explained partly by the fact that the ODS-led government negotiated the missile defence treaty, and thus one would expect that it would defend its position. However, there does not have to be a guarantee from the majority of the party siding with the government, as is shown by the example of another important document negotiated by ODS-led government – the Lisbon Treaty. But in the case of the missile defence, the ODS is united behind Prime Minister Topolánek, the Vice-Premier Vondra, and chief negotiator Pojar in supporting the installation. Despite the overwhelming support within the party, most analysts agree that the party (and the government as a whole, for that matter) grossly mishandled the whole debate about the missile defence. Firstly, the ODS failed to present convincing arguments about why the Czech Republic needs the installation. Due to the lack of such arguments present in the public discourse, it is more difficult to analyze what the main reasons are for the ODS strongly supporting the radar base. Prime Minister Topolánek admitted that, apart from the defence from ballistic missiles itself, one of the reasons is 'strengthening the link to the United States.'

On the very left of the Czech political scene, the Communist Party refuses the missile defence treaty and the location of radar on Czech soil. The party acknowledges its support to all the activities undertaken by different actors to undermine any activities leading to eventual installation.

It is interesting to note that the positions of both political parties go along with the preferences of their respective electorates. The survey undertaken by the CVVM polling agency in July 2008 suggests that as many as 68% of ODS voters support the radar while 88% of KSČM voters refuse it (CVVM 2008b).

The position of the strongest opposition party, the ČSSD, is naturally instrumental in the Czech debate on missile defence. Firstly, it disposes with a substantial voting potential in the Chamber of Deputies where the treaty will have to be ratified. It is also quite likely that, with the change in the government, the governmental position towards missile defence might revert, which explains why the ODS was quite eager to complete the negotiations as soon as possible and present it to the Parliament. The most vocal opponents of the radar seem to be the leader of the ČSSD, Jiří Paroubek, and his 'shadow' Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lubomír Zaorálek. ODS leaders often mention

the fact that it was during the premiership of Paroubek that the first deliberations on the possible location of the radar started. However, Paroubek claims that these were purely technical consultations and that no binding decision was made by his government at the time[11]. Moreover, Paroubek claims that the first steps toward including the Czech Republic in the US missile defence project were made in 2000 when the Vice-chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Jiří Payne (ODS), lobbied with President Havel to explore the possibility of including the Czech Republic in such plans.

It is very tempting to interpret the ČSSD opposition to the radar base as simply following public opinion. Long-term polls show that about two thirds of Czechs are opposed to it, as well as 80% of ČSSD voters; the ČSSD, being in the opposition, thus finds a suitable stick on the government with which it can win extra points in the elections, as this is one of the few foreign policy issues in which Czechs are interested. This also explains why the ČSSD leadership has been trying to push for a referendum on the issue, albeit unsuccessfully.[12] Paroubek and his followers in the ČSSD have been exploiting different strategies to prevent the signature of the missile defence treaty, including the threat of launching a procedure in front of the Constitutional Court, connecting the signature of the treaty with the government's vote of confidence in the Parliament, or writing an open letter to Condoleeza Rice, arguing for a reconsideration of the treaty with a view of a possible change of leadership both in the Czech Republic and the USA. However, one must look at substantive arguments deployed by the ČSSD against the radar, which says something about the position of the party. The main opposition is based on several premises: the treaty represents a bilateral deal that will eventually weaken NATO and the ESDP; it serves only the defence of US territory, not that of the Czech Republic or other allies; there is no imminent threat of a ballistic missile attack; and, last but not least, it will strongly damage the country's rather uncomplicated relationship with Russia. Zaorálek, the shadow Minister of Foreign Affairs, stated that the main reason he is opposed to the plan is that it excludes the European Union from any negotiations; if this were not the case, he might have reconsidered his position. Earlier, it was also signalled by Paroubek that as the missile defence treaty is a bilateral initiative, it would worsen relations not only with EU members, but also those within

11) When the media revealed that in fact more consultations were taking place under the ČSSD government, Paroubek claimed that he was not informed on such consultations by his predecessor, Prime Minister Stanislav Gross.

12) The Social Democrats tabled a constitutional amendment in October 2007 that would have enabled a call for a referendum on the missile base, as well as a general constitutional act on referendum.

NATO. This points out the broader issue of the Social Democrats' preference for other types of security arrangements than those relying solely on the US. It also remains to be seen to what extent the Social Democrats will be finally united when it comes down to a parliamentary vote. Three ČSSD deputies who have visited similar a US radar base in the Marshall Islands on the invitation of US government signalled that they might re-evaluate their position on the radar, and that they would like to start a more profound debate within the party. On the other hand, Paroubek claimed that these possible rebels would not stand as ČSSD candidates in the next elections.

With the current constellation, the positions of the two junior coalition partners, the Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL) and the Greens, is crucial. The Christian Democrats seem to be generally supportive of the radar base, albeit with exceptions. One of their deputies, Ludvík Hovorka, supported the opposition in pushing for a referendum on the missile defence treaty, and signalled that he might vote against it – a situation that might be tricky for the government, as it will need the coalition deputies to be unanimously united behind the government and its very tiny majority. In addition, an ambivalent signal was sent by KDU-ČSL Minister of Defence, Vlasta Parkanová, who claimed that, if the negotiations with Poland go badly, the Czech Republic should reconsider its participation in the missile defence system and 'start from the scratch,' a claim that was soon dismantled by Prime Minister Topolánek, chief negotiator Pojar, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The general agreement of the KDU-ČSL with having the base is, however, conditional. The most important condition is that the radar be incorporated into the missile defence system of NATO, which was agreed to at the Bucharest summit in April 2008. The other minor objections are concerned the possible health impacts of the installation on local people and the jurisdiction over the US soldiers outside of the base[13]. The conditions illustrate and are consistent with the approach of the Christian Democrats who, in regard to security arrangements, prefer a multilateral approach with the close involvement of NATO especially, but possibly also the EU. It also conforms to the position of its previous party chairman and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cyril Svoboda, who was, in the previous ČSSD-led government, the chief person beyond the consultations with the Americans and initially signalled a strong interest in the location of the radar base on the Czech territory.

13) The latter issue will be regulated in a separate treaty known as 'SOFA' whose negotiation has not been completed yet at the time of writing.

The position of the other junior coalition partner, the Green Party, is more complicated and divided. The Greens hold the powerful post of Foreign Minister in the current government, represented by Prince Karel Schwarzenberg, who – although being non-partisan – has been nominated by the party. Schwarzenberg has acted as a powerful advocate of missile defence (despite the fact that most negotiations were handled by his deputy, Tomáš Pojar, or Prime Minister Topolánek directly). Moreover, in case the treaty was not approved, he signalled that he would resign. However, the party is internally divided over the issue of support for the radar base. In addition to the Christian Democrats, the Green Party conditioned their support of the treaty on several factors, namely on the clause referring to the protection of the environment, the positive North Atlantic Council (i.e. NATO) decision, the common position of the EU Council, and the guarantee that the base will come under NATO command once the missile defence system of the Alliance is operational. The conditions show that the Greens attach much attention to the multilateral impact of the treaty, particularly the position of NATO and the EU. The party chairman, Martin Bursík, and vice-chairman Ondřej Liška were also very concerned to get the endorsement of the European Green Party. When a resolution tabled by the Dutch Green Party intended to refuse the radar system, Bursík and Liška managed to convince their European colleagues to give leeway for the Czech Greens to decide on its support. However, as the two latter conditions were not met, the Republic Council (the supreme body of the party) did not endorse the treaty in April 2008 and appealed to the Green parliamentarians to vote against it. As the opposition from some deputies in the party is quite strong, it is possible that the party will remain divided when it comes to a parliamentary vote, complicating the ratification further. The situation is complicated with strong internal tensions inside the Green Party in which some of its members feel that leaders holding government positions like Bursík or Liška are making too many concessions to the ODS and diverting too much attention away from the Green programme.

The missile defence treaty is arguably the most controversial issue concerning relations with the USA since the fall of communism. It shows a visible lack of consensus not only amongst the two major parties that think of the treaty in totally opposite terms, but also within the ruling coalition. There are also a lot of emotions involved, as hosting foreign soldiers on Czech soil again less then 20 years after the Russian troops left is, for many Czechs (politicians and citizens alike), tricky to swallow. The ratification process will be very

complicated and might be achieved at a cost of very personal interventions with deputies that are not resolutely decided yet. The analysis of discourse shows that, at the very heart of the thinking of the crucial stakeholders, there are not only technical issues, but much broader ones as well, such as whether the Czech Republic should engage in bilateral security arrangements with the United States, or whether it should look for a more multilateral approach, including particularly NATO and the EU. The difference between the two major parties, the ODS and the ČSSD, is clearly visible.

Relationship with NATO and ESDP

As far as support for NATO goes, it raises as we move from the left to the right, with the ODS being the most supportive and the Communists calling for its dissolution and the Czech pull-out from its membership. With the exception of the Communist party, the same applies the other way round for the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) – while the ODS is the most sceptical about the role of the EU as a security provider and would generally like to keep the defence policy within NATO, the ČSSD is confident that a progressive development of the ESDP and a rising role of Europe in defence is in the interest of the Czech Republic.

Such a straightforward conclusion deserves more explanation and analysis. The best starting point could be, again, a reference to election manifestos and strategic party documents, moving over to more concrete statements from the prominent parties' representatives.

As for the ODS' position, guidance can be found in the party's election programme of 2006 (ODS 2006), as well as in some older documents such as the shadow government's programme of 2003 (ODS 2003c) or position documents on the EU Accession Treaty of 2003 (ODS 2003a). In relation to defence, all these documents emphasize that the ESDP must not develop as a substitute or competition to NATO. The ODS supports Europe's capacity to undertake certain precisely defined tasks without the US, however, not at a cost of creating duplicities with NATO. It also claims to be in favour of closer military co-operation within the EU; however, it is against the creation of the European army. In light of these documents, the Czech army's reform, ensuring its interoperability with NATO missions, is the main imperative, with involvement in the ESDP not viewed as important and only as long as it does not contradict the objectives of NATO's capabilities and defence planning. The ODS also rejects the collective defence clause among the European

Union members, believing that the EU should not evolve into a defence union. In the position document of 2003 (ODS 2003b), the ODS acknowledges the attempts to build the ESDP as a counterweight to the United States and NATO, namely by countries like France, Germany, or Belgium. Given the time when the document was adopted, it reacted primarily to an initiative from the afore-mentioned countries for creating a separate defence union inside the EU, with planning capacities independent of NATO. There is also a large suspicion that European ambitions in defence remain merely rhetorical – in the view of the ODS, European countries are simply not willing to spend enough on defence in order to make it credible; the document highlights that only 5 of 15 members spend more than 2% of their GDP on defence. In the document, Petr Nečas, one of the leading defence experts in the ODS, points to the defence technology gap between the USA and its European allies, including overall defence spending, spending on defence research, or the effectiveness of military engagements. Due to this, he argues, the EU will not be able to replace NATO in the near future.[14] One must bear in mind that the adoption of the ODS strategy over the ESDP also coincided with the deliberations of the Convention on the Future of Europe, which strived at enforcing the ESDP institutionally and was opposed therein by ODS representative Jan Zahradil, elected in 2004 as MEP. There is no evidence that would suggest a substantive re-consideration of the ODS position since EU accession, or since the party formed a government after the 2006 elections.

Despite the generally strong support for NATO, one must not overlook that the ODS position has not been always consistent either. As was already mentioned during the Kosovo air strike in 1999, Václav Klaus, chairman of the party at the time, came out strongly against NATO. He was not alone – another prominent person in the party, Miroslav Macek, dismissed the operation, claiming that 'NATO needed to test new airplanes.' (Řiháčková 2005) One can, however, argue that the situation has changed substantially since then and that the ODS is currently committed to ensuring that the Czech Republic is viewed as a reliable member of the Alliance.

The long-term programme of the ČSSD states that the party 'attaches great importance to the construction of effective foreign, security, and defence policies of the European Union, which is a necessary precondition for enhancing the EU's role in the international community and an important instrument for crises and conflict prevention, as well as for the effective management

14) 'The future of NATO and the Czech Republic', speech delivered in a conference organized in March 2002 in Prague.

of existing conflicts (ČSSD 2005).' The document goes on to state that, for the active participation of the Czech Republic in the ESDP, the creation of a coherent, internally co-ordinated, and legislatively anchored defence system is necessary, and that it is necessary to ensure its operativeness and complex preparedness in order to cover all security threats and risks, including those of an asymmetric character. The document highlights that these threats can be tackled only by the full participation of the Czech Republic in two key organisations – the EU and NATO and stipulates that this support is necessary for further development of both organizations, stressing that the ESDP (in co-operation with NATO) should assume more responsibility in dealing with military and civilian crises. It also contains a reference to co-operation with other organisations, namely the UN and the OSCE. The position of the Social Democrats also reflects a long-term vision, which sees Czech security as built on two pillars, NATO and the EU. However, there is much more enthusiasm for a more independent role for the EU in the defence arena and a commitment to increasing European defence capabilities.

The 2006 election manifesto of the KDU-ČSL contains a clause acknowledging the dominant role of the USA in NATO; however, it also claims that, for possible local conflicts in Europe, European operational capabilities should be deployable. Furthermore, the programme stresses the party's commitment to building European defence capabilities, as well as fulfilling the obligations arising from NATO membership, and the deployment of Czech troops either in UN, NATO or EU missions. In the section devoted to foreign policy, the manifesto says that the party supports the transatlantic link and, thus, will advocate more responsibility for European NATO members for their defence; however, this measure will rule out any steps leading to any kind of European emancipation that would weaken NATO (KDU-ČSL 2006).

The Green Party's programme considers the deepening of the ESDP as an indispensable part of European integration (Strana zelených 2006). It goes further in highlighting that a long-term goal of the party is that European defence capabilities replace NATO in Europe. It also calls for EU member states to be more assertive in their relations with the United States, including NATO, and take more into account their interests as defined by the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy, especially should the US policy remain as unilateral and controversial as it has after 9/11.

The Communist Party, in its 2006 election programme, clearly demonstrates its negative attitude towards NATO and Czech participation within it. It calls for the withdrawal from NATO military structures as the first

phase, and the dissolution of the Alliance as a long-term goal. It also calls for repealing the NATO security strategy of 1999, describing it as unacceptable, primarily due to the reference of preventive strikes outside NATO territory and the lack of mandates in accordance with international law (KSČM 2006). Although there is no direct reference to ESDP development, we could easily assume that the KSČM is not in favour of it either – in the long term, the KSČM refuses any other military involvement than that under the UN and in strict compliance with the UN Charter.

Iraq

The Czech Republic's involvement in Iraq, particularly during the initial strike against Saddam's regime known as Operation Iraqi Freedom, illustrates deep partisan divisions concerning its support for the United States and the 'coalition of the willing.' Moreover, it shows that divisions not only occurred often between political parties, but also across parties (especially with the ČSSD) and other constitutional actors as well. The result was a balanced position that made the crucial actors happy, albeit rather obscure for the outside world (and the Czech public for that matter). Nevertheless, the Czech Republic remains in Iraq until today,[15] albeit with a limited presence. In addition, none of the other governments involved in in Iraq since 2003 have pulled out of the country completely. Although a possible pullout was signalled in 2007 by Foreign Minister Schwarzenberg, he did so without specifying the timeframe.

In the wake of operations in Iraq during 2003, the ODS was in opposition. Its position was quite firm in supporting President Havel's signature of the so-called 'Letter of Eight.' Particularly, three ODS deputies were very vocal on the issue – the shadow Minister of Defence, Petr Nečas, the shadow Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jan Zahradil, and the chairman of the Defence Committee in the Chamber, Jan Vidím. Although the position of the ODS was critical of the ČSSD-led government, it was merely in a sense that its position was too ambivalent and inconsistent, and that the government failed to communicate it to the media. However, the ODS deputies did not propose a stronger resolution that would authorize the Czech army to become directly involved

15) The Czech Republic has deployed over 1,600 troops since 2003 as a part of the Multi-national Force in Iraq under Operation Iraqi Freedom. On 5 December 2006, the Lower Chamber of the Czech Republic's Parliament voted to extend their country's military mission in Iraq until the end of December 2007. With the closing of the Iraqi Police Academy, the Czech Deputy Chairman of Defense formerly accepted the new mission for 2007, requiring the deployment of two Force Protection Platoons and three Iraqi Police Training teams. The Czech Republic rotates its forces every December and June.

in ground operations in Iraq. Generally speaking, the position of the ODS was not as critical as one would have expected. In fact, with the support of the ODS, the government managed to push most of its acts and resolutions on Iraq through the Parliament, including the dispatch of the Seventh field hospital to Basra. There is one possible explanation for this rather ambivalent position of the ODS, that being the opposition to the strike by Václav Klaus. Klaus was elected President of the Republic shortly ahead of the attack on Iraq. Shortly after taking the office, he expressed doubts that the strike could lead to a long-term solution. Allegedly, he even clashed with Craig Stapleton, the US ambassador in Prague, over the issue of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and the inclusion of the Czech Republic on the list of the 'coalition of the willing.' Despite the fact that Klaus remained only an honorary chairman of the ODS, he still exercises a certain influence over part of the party. Thus, the mainstream ODS was forced to deal with accommodating his position into the general party line. Eventually, the ODS might have been quite happy that the government did not adopt a more resolute position and have decided not to participate in the military operation.

The position of the ČSSD, the senior coalition party at the time of the crisis, was clearly the most important, but also the most divisive. There were several cleavages, notably between the members of the cabinet (including Prime Minister Špidla and Minister of Defence Tvrdík) and ČSSD parliamentarians, but also between the wider partisan base of the ČSSD and the members holding office. The ministers of the ČSSD in the government had to balance between a more pro-American proposal from the MFA, advocating Czech involvement in the operation (plus two smaller parties supporting the US-led coalition), and the majority of their own party who was strongly opposed to the strike, including many members of Parliament. Perhaps the most vocal opponent of the governmental position in the Chamber was Vladimír Laštůvka, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee. In his view, the government resolution was still too pro-American (despite the fact that it did not ask for a mandate to participate in ground operations) and should have been much closer to that of France or Germany. Furthermore, the ČSSD party congress in March 2003 overwhelmingly adopted the so-called anti-war resolution, initiated by Vladimír Laštůvka, Richard Falbr (then a senator – currently MEP), and Jan Kavan (senator and former Minister of Foreign Affairs; at the time Chairman of the UN General Assembly). The resolution condemned the 'war conducted by the USA, Great Britain, and the so-called Alliance against Iraq, which was initiated without the consent of the international community, and, according

to the Congress, is thus conducted contrary to international law' (ČSSD 2003). Especially, Falbr was extremely critical of the government. In the interview with Právo (the leading left-wing daily), he stated: 'It is necessary for the (ČSSD) congress to do it (condemn the war in Iraq). Either they are socialists or they are not. Either they believe in the American babble on the preventive war or they believe in a collective security system that has been built over decades.' Kavan, another author of the resolution, was in an opposite position in 1999 when, in the capacity of Foreign Minister, was forced to dismiss another ČSSD congress resolution condemning the NATO strike against Yugoslavia as 'confusing,' thus personifying the ambivalent attitude of the Social Democrats to important crises such as Kosovo or Iraq (Král and Pachta 2005). On the contrary, Libor Rouček, the government's spokesman and the leading ČSSD figure for the European Parliament elections in 2004, was among the strongest opponents of the resolution and tabled his own proposal, showing appreciation for the policy pursued by the government thus far. Thus, the ambivalent attitude of the ČSSD ministers and the mainstream members of the party showed deep divisions over many important foreign policy issues at stake (relations to the US and the EU, the pre-emptive use of force, the role of the UN) and illustrates that assuming responsibility as a member of the government might face it with the choice of alienating the executive representatives from its member base.

The position of the ČSSD became somewhat more critical of the US' involvement in Iraq after the operation. In his recent blog, current party chairman Jiří Paroubek criticises the US (particularly, the Bush administration) for mismanagement in the situation in Iraq, having caused a loss of credibility for all of the allies. He says that 'after six years of armed conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is obvious that our American allies cannot predict the developments and basically cannot master the warfare situations unless they end up with an immediate and definitive success' (Paroubek 2008). At the same time, however, just ahead of the 2006 parliamentary elections, Paroubek claimed that he would not think of terminating the Czech presence in Iraq, consisting in military police training for the Iraqi forces.

As far as the position of the KDU-ČSL on Iraq goes, it basically conformed to its image of an Atlanticist party. It was reiterated by the fact that it was holding the key department at the time – foreign affairs. The Foreign Minister, Cyril Svoboda, expressed clear support for the coalition strike, motivated mainly by ideological reasons (Král and Pachta 2005). The Christian Democrats tended to see the operation as a fight of 'good against evil' in defence of Christian

civilisation. Although Svoboda defended the stronger MFA resolution, giving the government leeway in deciding whether to deploy soldiers, he eventually agreed with the more watered-down version that was adopted by the cabinet. However, there was some opposition inside the party, articulated, for instance, by Deputy Jan Kasal who argued that terrorism could not be overcome by the use of force. Thus, the KDU-ČSL eventually found it comfortable to support the government position because it would not allow for the deployment of Czech troops without a new UN Security Council mandate. In addition, the position of the Czech Catholic Church, as well as the Vatican (which was anti-war), made an impact on the party's agreement with an eventual Czech non-participation in the ground operations.

Of all the parliamentary parties, the KSČM adopted arguably the clearest position. The party leadership expressed an unequivocal opposition to the war. None of the communist deputies or senators ever supported any of the government's proposals for Iraq. This is consistent with the party's position on issues such as the Czech Republic's membership in NATO, the Kosovo air campaign, or the country's participation in Operation Enduring Freedom. Some party members, such as Deputy Václav Exner, explained the motives for intervention in 'realpolitik' terms such as an US attempt to gain control over Iraqi natural resources. Others, such as Deputy Miroslav Ransdorf (currently MEP), argued more in terms of the breach of international law. The unambiguous position of the KSČM can also be explained by strong internal discipline within the party, as well as a generally 'pacifist' nature, plus a hostility towards the use of force of any kind in the international arena, especially without a mandate from the UN.

External Aspects of the War on Terror

The Czech reaction to the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington was generally that of sympathy with the United States and support of their efforts to fight terrorism globally. After the US invoked Article 5 of the Washington Treaty in March 2002, it was already under the minority ČSSD government of Prime Minister Miloš Zeman that the Czech Republic endorsed its participation in the global anti-terrorist operation 'Enduring Freedom' by dispatching a contingent of 250 troops to Kuwait in February 2003, replaced by a specialized battalion of 395 men for radiation, chemical, and biological weapons protection, whose territory of possible deployment was extended to Turkey and Israel.

However, in opposition to the general acknowledgement of the need to fight terrorism, the Czech political parties largely differ in their assessment of the adequacy of the tools used by the United States abroad. This includes different aspects of the external war on terrorism, including alleged CIA flights over European countries, the detention of terrorist suspects at Guantanamo Bay, or the abuse of human rights by US military while interrogating alleged terrorists in other locations.

The ODS views the threat of terrorism as one of the major threats to the Euro-Atlantic space, particularly after 9/11. There is an extensive chapter devoted to terrorism in the 2003 shadow government programme, pointing especially to the risks of a possible connection between the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and what Petr Nečas, the author of the programme, calls 'megaterrorism' – i.e. terrorism focused on great visibility brought about by huge numbers of victims. It argues that this kind of terrorism is actively supported by certain states and regimes, and that the use of military force is justifiable against the infrastructure of such organisations and against such states both preventively and responsively. He admits, however, that intelligence, police methods, and existing structures should be used primarily (ODS 2003b). This shows that the ODS assumes the necessity of the 'externalization' of the war on terror.

As far as more particular external aspects of the war on terror are concerned, some ODS representatives have tried to play down the importance of reports implicating the involvement of certain European governments in activities linked to the CIA rendition flights. Jan Zahradil, in an interview for Czech Radio – Radiožurnál in June 2006 (ČRo 2006), belittled the importance of the reports presented by the European Parliament ad-hoc committee investigating the CIA flights, as well as the report of the Council of Europe presented by Swiss senator Dick Marty. In Zahradil's opinion, the reports were too vague to prove the allegations, and in fact could not have been more detailed as many facts were classified due to national security concerns. He went further, suggesting that the publicity given to the investigations of CIA flights actually undermined the effectiveness of fighting terrorism. As he stressed, the only important matter was whether fundamental rights were being breached. To date, this has not been proved by the investigation of either of the institutions. He also indirectly accused both the Council of Europe and European Parliament committees to be a priori biased against the US intelligence sector, which could result in a reluctance of the Americans to

co-operate with European intelligence services. Similarly, regarding the case of Guantanamo Bay, Zahradil claims that it would be counter-productive to push too much, at the EU level, on the United States to close the base, arguing that 'it is not worth trying to provoke a confrontation between Europe and America, that it is necessary to understand each other and co-operate because the problem we are facing is a common one.'

Generally, the ČSSD supports the co-operation between the EU and the US in the fight against terrorism. However, the position of the ČSSD towards the methods used by the US is much more reserved, to say the least. Although the party acknowledges the importance of the problem in its long-term programme, the statements of some of the leading politicians indicate a critique of the US strategy. For example, Libor Rouček, a Member of the European Parliament, considers the Guantanamo Bay base a place where human rights and the Geneva Convention are violated, and expresses his opposition to any possible interrogation of terrorist suspects on Czech territory. Lubomír Zaorálek (shadow Minister of Foreign Affairs for the ČSSD) admits that the West, as a whole, committed serious mistakes in the fight against terrorism in the aftermath of 9/11, causing further hatred and alienation (particularly from Muslim states) by embracing the 'Axis of Evil' concept of George W. Bush. He asserts that 'the servile attitude to allies at a time when an effective mechanism of fighting terrorism is to be found' has backfired. According to Zaorálek, terrorism cannot be defeated by a military means, making it necessary to grasp the causes of the threats first, which can be interpreted as a criticism of the US-deployed strategy in the global war on terror. Zaorálek also views the war against terrorism as too much of a unilateral initiative from the US, a country that is not overly keen on building stable alliances, but rather those of a more ad-hoc nature, which is something the Czech Republic should not accept and strive to change.[16] An effective fight against terrorism requires the involvement of more actors and the employment of different tools, not only military ones (such as prevention, legal instruments at international level, etc.). Importantly, he sees a crucial role for the European Union in this field, which diverges from the ODS position that sees the role of the EU merely in terms of sharing the best practices and exchanging intelligence data.

The position of the KDU-ČSL is not particularly pronounced on the issue. From the survey undertaken among some parliamentarians of the

16) It is consistent with some previous statements of his, such as during a debate with Jan Zahradil on the same programme in 2004, cf. (Prima TV 2004).

party, it seems that as far as Guantanamo Bay goes, most of them regard it as an internal matter of the United States. Similarly, the CIA flights are viewed as something largely inevitable. However, the party members are generally inclined towards enhanced co-operation of the country's intelligence services with those of the United States, but take a more reserved approach towards the possible location of detention facilities for terrorist suspects on Czech territory.[17]

In addition, the Green Party is rather reserved to the US-employed strategy of fighting terrorism. Its 2006 election manifesto acknowledges the indivisibility of security threats, including terrorism or the proliferation of WMA as demonstrated by the attacks in New York, London, Madrid, or Istanbul. However, it states clearly that 'tackling these threats by preventive wars or cultural clashes is bad, foolish, and counter-productive' (Strana zelených 2006).

As far as the KSČM goes, the party is not very pronounced on the issue. However, there are references in the party documents. Its 2006 election manifesto does mention the fight against all forms of terrorism (including state terrorism) as one of the priorities of the party's programme. However, it reiterates that the fight against terrorism must be in accordance with international law and UN's documents. It also refuses the justification of human rights limitations by the fight against terrorism, as well as using it as a cover for different purposes (KSČM 2006). This can be indirectly interpreted as a strong criticism of the US policy of war on terror, particularly in the context of the KSČM strictly refusing any use of force against any territory that is not directly mandated by the UN. The document also highlights that it is necessary to identify the roots of terrorism and eradicate its causes. This was articulated by Václav Exner, Vice-Chairman of the party, in his comment for TV Prima in 2004: 'There are three basic tendencies regarding terrorism: Firstly, extensive prevention including police and intelligence co-operation; Secondly, co-operation with people who collaborate and point to suspicious acts, but such trust between people and the state can hardly be established; thirdly, to prevent the causes of terrorism by fighting overall injustice in the world' (Prima TV 2004). This illustrates the emphasis that the Communists put on the prevention and eradication of the causes of terrorism, which is more desirable than any other action.

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17) Questionnaires returned by KDU-ČSL parliamentarians.

Other Foreign Policy Issues

There are some other foreign policy issues where the country's relationship with the US plays a role in shaping (or at least influencing) Czech partisan stances. The following section focuses on three such issues, explaining in what ways they shape the parties' views.

The International Criminal Court

The Czech Republic remains the only EU member state that has not ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), despite the fact that it signed it already in April 1999. This puts the Czech government in a rather embarrassing position for at least two reasons. The country will take over the EU presidency in January 2009, obliging it to raise the ICC issue with third parties to try to convince them to sign up to the statute, which looks awkward from a country that has problems with accepting the Court's jurisdiction in its own right. Secondly, by not accepting the body that prosecutes the most serious crimes against humanity, it puts at doubt the Czech Republic's reputation in the EU for being a staunch supporter of human rights and democracy in the international arena. Even though the ČSSD tried to present the ratification in the Parliament for the first time in 2001, it was removed from the agenda. The problems were not so much between the partisan divisions, but rather in the miscommunication between the government, the MFA, and the Parliament, as the ratification of the Statute would, according to some, require a change in the Czech constitution to enable the extradition of Czech citizens to the ICC, limit the right of the President to declare amnesty, and give mercy and limit the immunity of constitutional actors, including parliamentarians. In some interpretations, the problem was already tackled by inserting Article 10a into the Czech constitution, providing for the transfer of powers to an international organisation by virtue of ratifying an international treaty having constitutional force.

Apart from the internal, rather legal considerations, there are foreign policy implications as well. One of the key factors is the attitude of the United States, which was openly hostile to IIC, particularly during the 2002–03 period. The US administration, especially in the first term of George W. Bush, feared that it could become a tool for undemocratic, authoritarian regimes to blackmail democratic countries for petty or completely fictive breaches of international law. The US offence against the court took various forms, from directly threat-

ening stopping military co-operation with countries that ratified the Statute to concluding bilateral agreements guaranteeing the immunity of US citizens (particularly soldiers) from extradition to the ICC (Bílková 2007). Although, in recent years, the US attitude towards the Court has shifted somehow from open hostility to tolerance, their ratification of the Statute is still not imminent.

The unfavourable attitude of the US towards the Court played some role in the reluctance of the Czech parliamentarians to rubberstamp the Statute, particularly among ODS members. Some party members even wanted to use it as a bargaining chip by trading it off for the missile defence treaty. As Hynek Fajmon, MEP for the ODS admitted: 'We will give a green light to the ICC with scrunching teeth, as is not our priority, if the Greens do the same with the radar' (ČT 2008c). Eventually, when the Senate voted on the Statute in July 2008, 10 out of 41 ODS Senators did not support the treaty, with 6 votes against and 4 abstentions. It is probable that the somewhat sceptical attitude of this part from the ODS coincided with US concerns over supranational institutions that can spin out of the control of democratic countries and be abused by authoritarian regimes to bully and blackmail the West. One can see that the ODS supported the ICC mainly due to pragmatic reasons, but not as an organization that could achieve world justice by prosecuting the most serious crimes. Nevertheless, the ODS was not the only party raising critical voices against the tribunal. Critical concerns were also articulated by Vlasta Parkanová, Minister of Defence for the KDU-ČSL. In her comment in Hospodářské noviny in October 2007 (Parkanová 2007), she argues that the practice of establishing ad hoc tribunals, such as those for Rwanda or former Yugoslavia, is a better option, as a court with universal jurisdiction is tricky insofar as there is no clear consensus on what constitutes genocide or other acts punishable under the Court's jurisdiction. She also recalls the US hesitation to ratify the Statute for these reasons. This is in sharp contrast to her fellow party and the chairman of the Legislative Council[18] of the Government, Cyril Svoboda, who dismisses Czech fears over the tribunal as groundless and reeking of provincialism. He acknowledges that the problem is that many parliamentarians 'pretend that our justice system is fairer than others, thus seeing it as a big problem to extradite our citizens to be judged outside the Czech Republic.' Similarly, the Green Party Minister of Foreign Affairs, Karel Schwarzenberg, compared the Czech attitude to a 'skeleton inside the cupboard of Czech politics and the unwillingness to endorse it as 'strange hesitation.'

18) The Legislative Council of the Government is a body that examines legal consistency and the compatibility of the legislative proposals of the Czech government.

In the case of the ICC, the diverging positions of the different actors were personal rather than partisan. Nevertheless, the sceptical attitude (notably of some ODS members) suggests that there is a mistrust towards certain international institutions, a point shared with large parts of the first George W. Bush administration.

The Recognition of Kosovo

The area of the Western Balkans has become, since its independence, traditionally very important for Czech foreign policy. However, the track record would not always indicate so. The rather ambivalent and hesitant attitude of the Czech Republic towards the NATO air strike against Milosević in 1999 has already been mentioned. The situation has repeated in February 2008 after a unilateral declaration of independence in Kosovo. The Czech Republic has been very late to recognize Kosovo compared to the other EU member states, only ahead of those that have been signalling their reluctance to recognize Kosovo for a long time (Spain, Romania, Slovakia). The government resolution to support Kosovo marked steep divisions across political parties, despite the fact that Kosovo was recognized by both the US and major EU members shortly after its declaration of independence.

The ODS was instrumental in getting the government's resolution adopted. However, the party was not united. One ODS minister (Petr Nečas) voted against the proposal in the government. Concerns were expressed by many ODS deputies. 'It is not a decision of hundred to a zero. But, in the current circumstances, I would be slightly over fifty percent in favour,' admitted Petr Tluchoř, leader of the ODS club in the Chamber. Another ODS deputy, Petr Bratský, admitted to being 'slightly surprised,' claiming that the decision was too rushed, and arguing that he thought it would happen only later. David Šeich, Vice-Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, claimed: 'Even I would have a problem raising my hand in favour if I were in the cabinet. This is a luxury that we have as deputies. The government cannot afford it.' The most sceptical voice, however, came again from President Klaus. 'We have opened a Pandora's box that can lead to woeful consequences. It is not an isolated issue that is being solved in that very part of the Balkans,' the president explained during his visit to Slovakia. Later, after having accepted the Serbian ambassador to Prague, Mr. Vereš, he openly admitted that he was ashamed of the government's decision (iDNES 2008e).

All the KDU-ČSL ministers in the government voted against the recognition. It is consistent with the positions of the broad feeling in the party that the act would disrupt traditionally good links with Serbia, who is viewed as a spiritual ally in the region. The Christian Democrats still view the region in terms of a conflict between Christian and Muslim worlds, although they do not admit it as explicitly as their Slovak counterparts. However, other arguments were also used. 'To recognize independence of Kosovo now would be another of the steps that could lead to the future instability of an ethnically colourful region,' explained Roman Línek, first Vice-Chairman of the KDU-ČSL, one day before the government discussed the issue. The party chairman, Jiří Čunek, claimed that 'the recognition of an independent Kosovo is an unfortunate step,' pointing to the doubtful protection of Serbian minorities and the complicated repatriation and possible discrimination of Kosovo Serbs. The MEP for the KDU-ČSL, Jan Březina, goes even further, warning of the further destabilisation of the Western Balkans, the threat of Greater Albania, and the possible breach of international law. This shows that there were several justifications as to why the Christian Democrats adopted an overtly negative position.

The Green Party marked a huge internal controversy as well. Despite the fact that the main party agent, Karel Schwarzenberg, proposed the recognition of the government and that all the Green ministers subsequently endorsed it, part of the party called for the retreat from the coalition. 'Everybody has the right to say publicly that our party has nothing to do in a coalition that recognizes criminal states,' claimed Pavel Křivka, the leader of the Green Party in the Pardubice region. On the other hand, the leader of the Green Party deputies, Kateřina Jacques, admitted that there was no obstacle to recognition after the elections in Serbia and expressed satisfaction that the Czech government had joined the European mainstream.

The most critical voices regarding the recognition came from the opposition – the ČSSD and the Communists. ČSSD leader Paroubek claimed to consider the decision as premature, having support neither in the cabinet nor in the Parliament, and accused the Prime Minister of not being able to search out a consensus on crucial foreign policy issues. The party's Vice-Chairman, Škromach, went even further, claiming that 'the government, by recognizing Kosovo, betrayed the Czech nation.' Other prominent Social Democrats, such as Jan Kavan (former Minister of Foreign Affairs) or Vladimír Laštůvka (former Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee) even organized a petition not to recognize Kosovo and gathered the signatures of more than 50

parliamentarians under it. The Social Democrats signalled their opposition to Kosovo recognition shortly after the declaration of independence. Moreover, Paroubek was already renowned for quite controversial opinions on the issue of Kosovo in the past. As Prime Minister, he circulated the idea that one of the possible solutions could be dividing Kosovo along ethnic lines, a claim that caused a lot of embarrassment among the fellow EU governments.

The Communists were likewise strictly opposed. The party chairman, Vojtěch Filip, criticised the government for having recognized an 'illegal' state which originated by the breach of international law. The communists even prepared a specific bill that would impede the government from recognising Kosovo. In their argument, the step was a bad move that was contrary to international law, as well to the wishes of most Parliamentarians, in addition to general public opinion.

The Kosovo case is particular and interesting in a sense due to the fact that the country was recognized by both the US and majority of the EU states, actions that played a surprisingly small role in Czech debates on the issue. This argument was raised mainly by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Surprisingly, however, it had very little impact on the general party discipline. It is difficult to discern the reasons for such a hesitant and negativist position from the political representation. It was a mixture of historical, religious, emotional, and legal arguments. In the case of the ODS, the hesitant attitude might have been also explained by the fears over a possible precedent in regard to a derogation from the traditional sovereignty concept (at least, in the case of Klaus); for the ČSSD, the stance was, to some extent, populist, finding another suitable stick on the government while the party was in opposition, and following the generally unfavourable preferences of its electorate. In any case, it shows that the Czech political parties might not always swing with the attitudes of the big actors, let it be the US or the EU.

The Middle East Conflict

As far as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict goes, the ODS leadership is clearly taking a position supportive of Israel, thus aligning itself closely with the United States. Most recently, this was illustrated by a visit to Israel by Prime Minister Topolánek in March 2008, where he expressed support in Israel's fight against terror (ČTK 2008). ODS deputy Jan Vidím in his article 'The Czech Republic and Israel: Chance for a New Partnership' (Vidím 2007) argues for the Czech Republic 'to positively influence relations with Israel in international organisa-

tions, not least in the European Union', claiming that both countries worship the values of democracy and freedom. Prime Minister Topolánek admits that the Czech Republic's closest ties in the region are to Israel, although arguably the Czechs strive for a more balanced approach recently. This was illustrated by him admitting of being in favour of an independent Palestinian state and even raising some critical remarks concerning continuing the construction of Israeli settlements on the West Bank. Simultaneously, Topolánek claimed that the Palestinians must have a functioning administration, self-government, and economic links to Israel, and that it would be impossible to achieve this until organisations such as Hezbollah and Hamas are disarmed and recognize Israel. He also expressed understanding for Israel's motives to construct the wall separating the West Bank. In 2006, Topolánek supported the Czech contribution to the UN stabilisation force in Lebanon after the conflict with Israel in the summer of that year, despite the fact that, when taking over the office of Prime Minister, he did not endorse it for financial reasons.

The approach of the ČSSD to the Middle East, at least recently, can be easily described as multi-vectoral diplomacy. This was clearly demonstrated by a visit to Syria by party leader Paroubek and his shadow Minister of Foreign Affairs Zaorálek in February 2008. This 'study trip' deserved harsh criticism by the government (namely Prime Minister Topolánek), as the ČSSD leaders met with representatives from the Baas party, which is even, in the Czech press, referred to as a terrorist organisation (due to its support to Hezbollah). Paroubek justified the trip by the motivation to enhance economic ties between the two countries and to ensure that the Czech Republic could take a more active part in the Middle East peace process, where he sees an indispensable role for Syria, and also expressed support for Syria's right to reclaim its occupied territories of the Golan Heights. Paroubek also tried to play down the criticism coming from the ruling parties and media by claiming that he was also planning a trip to Israel and Palestine, which indeed materialized in July 2008. The ambition to be a more visible actor in the Middle East can also be illustrated by the intention of Jiří Paroubek, while still Prime Minister in the summer of 2006, to despatch as many as 100 Czech troops as part of the international mission to Lebanon. However, the government finally declined to endorse this participation, as it was on leave; moreover, the incoming government of the ODS did not want to take on the financial commitment to sustain the Czech presence in the UNIFIL mission, fearing that it could stretch into Czech involvement in other missions abroad (e.g. Kosovo or Afghanistan) that were viewed as more important.

The position of the KDU-ČSL towards the Middle East is very close to that of the ODS in being strongly supportive of Israel in the Middle East conflict, perhaps even more so. This can be explained in terms of civilisation arguments often visible in the party's rhetoric, whereby it views Israel as part of the Western democratic world and inherently closer to Europe than its neighbouring countries. The leading foreign policy spokesperson of the party, Cyril Svoboda, (former Minister of Foreign Affairs), has repeatedly reiterated the need for a balanced approach towards the region. During the Israel-Lebanon conflict in the summer of 2006, he was quick to ensure that the Czech Republic would provide help to both parties – humanitarian aid for civilians in southern Lebanon and fire brigade hoses for Israel. However, his stance during the negotiation on the EU position towards the ceasefire during the Israel-Lebanon conflict was very badly accepted among the Arab countries' ambassadors in Prague.[19] A similarly controversial move by Svoboda, not directly linked to the Middle East conflict, but having wider repercussions, was his proposal to set up a joint EU fund to compensate those member states whose property had been damaged as an aftermath of the Danish cartoon controversy 'in defence of joint values.' He also criticised Solana for apologizing to Muslims on behalf of the EU without having properly consulted all the member states.

The Green Party's views on the issue are hard to discern, due to their relatively new presence in high-level Czech politics and the fact that the issue has become somewhat more important for Czech politicians only recently, especially after EU accession.

The Communist party is extremely anti-Israeli, despite their permanent isolation that makes them less pronounced. The party views Israel as a Middle-Eastern clone of the United States – i.e. overly unilateral, disregarding international law, and extremely militaristic. The party policy is also largely consistent with the policy of its predecessor – the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia – that was strongly anti-Israeli and largely pro-Palestinian. One point that demonstrates this attitude is an article printed in the party newspaper Haló noviny on 25 August 2006, titled 'Jewish Terrorists Have Kidnapped Hamas Commander,' referring to the apprehension of one of the Hamas leaders by Israeli soldiers. The Communist party's statements on Hezbollah militants that were exchanged in the summer of 2008 for two dead Israeli soldiers referred to the former as 'freedom fighters.' The website

19) Svoboda, along with Germany and the UK, advocated the reformulation of a proposed common position tabled by the Finnish presidency, calling for an 'immediate ceasefire, replacing it with an immediate cease of animosities followed by enduring armistice.' This was viewed as too strong a pro-Israeli formulation, basically allowing Israel to continue with its strikes.

of the party district committee of Nymburk referred to a summer 2006 Israeli attack against Lebanon as the 'Bloody summer aggression of Israel against Lebanon' and 'killing that cannot be forgotten' – these are just a few illustrations of the general mainstream party thinking.

The Czech parties' positions have thus led to a foreign policy that has been viewed as very much pro-Israeli in the Middle East. In Israel itself, the Czech Republic is often viewed as its biggest supporter in the EU and the most ardent advocate of its interests.[20] The recent moves of the ČSSD, however, show that the party might try to depart from this image of an ardent Isrealofile and adopt a more balanced approach towards the region, which would give it more leverage to get actively involved in the Middle East peace process. But it remains to be seen whether the parties will find a consensus and a means of achieving this – the first attempt of Paroubek does not seem to have made much progress in this respect.

Conclusion

It can be asserted without hesitation that the consensus characterizing Czech foreign policy in the 1990's and early 2000's and defined by the imperative of joining the EU and NATO has largely disappeared. On one hand, the governments and Czech diplomacy try to keep continuity in foreign policy, despite their changing partisan composition, striving to identify more consensual topics such as the promotion of democracy or human rights, the support for the Western Balkans' integration into the EU, or the active building of relations with Eastern EU neighbours. However, when it gets down to the USA-EU-NATO triangle, the polarisation of the Czech political scene along the right-left axis is clearly visible.

The ODS, the rightmost parliamentary party, views bilateral relations with the United States and the active Czech involvement in NATO as imperatives for Czech foreign policy. Despite the moderated position of the ODS being in government since 2006 and trying to take a more constructive approach to the EU (at least for those party members holding executive posts), it is still clear that, in foreign policy terms, the party relies more on the United States than on Europe. According to the ODS, the EU and its foreign policy is often too weak, divided, and dominated by countries or governments who would

20) Israeli ambassador Arthur Avnon, on leaving Prague, compared his country's relationship with the Czech Republic to the special relationship Israel enjoys with the USA. Israeli political scientist Barry Rubin has commented in the Jerusalem Post that he considers the Czech Republic the most pro-Israeli country in the EU.

like to see Europe as an anti-pole to the United States, which the ODS finds unacceptable. Secondly, the ODS is not even in favour of having an overly strong Europe in international relations, mainly because of the fear that such a Europe would be more prone to confrontation with the United States. It is clear that the party will do its best to keep the US and the EU on the same board. In the case of internal rifts in the EU, the party will most certainly find itself in the strongly pro-American camp. The ODS conviction is based on the fact that the US is the best guarantor of its shared values of democracy, human rights, and freedom in the globalising world, and that its position is that such values have to be protected even at the cost of the use of force and the breach of the outdated Cold War system of international law, characterized often by unaccountable institutions and involving countries who do not respect supposedly universal values of democracy and human rights. The ODS shares, particularly with the Republican US administration, fears and suspicions towards international organizations that are out of control of democratic countries. The ODS is quite prone to reverting to unilateral actions (or the 'coalition of the willing') of the West (not necessarily only the US) should the other means of achieving the goals fail. It is also quite clear that the ODS supports strongly NATO as the main institutional link between the US and European allies.

The ČSSD, the main rival of the ODS on the Czech political scene, has a largely different vision of the world. In the long-term programme of the party, namely its part devoted to the 'Vision of Global Justice,' one can read that the aim of the party is a 'multilateral world,' which, with a bit of caution, can probably be interpreted as a 'multi-polar world'. In this document, the ČSSD stresses the role of the United Nations, highlights the necessity of conflict prevention, and refuses pre-emptive wars. The programme directly acknowledges the differences between the United States and the EU, with the former viewed as largely striving to achieve its goals unilaterally, while the latter multilaterally, as well as highlighting the limits of unilateral strategy. The use of force is permissible, according to the ČSSD, only in strict compliance with international law. This all can be viewed as an indirect criticism of US strategy in international relations in recent years. Generally, one can assume that its position is very close to the positions of other social democratic parties in Western Europe. They tend to view the dominant role of the USA in today's world rather negatively, believing that it creates more instability, and, thus, a different arrangement should be found in the form of a multipolar world, created through the mechanisms of the United Nations where

the EU would play an instrumental role. There is also a strong emphasis on the European Union being a more assertive, independent actor, resulting in the party's support for a strong European foreign policy. The party is much more comfortable with the way the EU has handled international crises so far, being a largely soft power, emphasizing effective multilateralism and diplomacy over the use of force. At the same time, the party is in favour of increased defence emancipation from the EU from the United States, reiterating the vision of the EU as another pole in international arena.

The smaller parties in the centre of the Czech political spectrum, namely the KDU-ČSL and the Green Party, are balancing somewhere between the positions of the main actors, the ODS and the ČSSD. While KDU-ČSL emphasizes the Trans-Atlantic link and its importance for the Czech Republic more than ČSSD, it remains a strong supporter of the common EU foreign policy, as well as more emancipation in defence terms. The Green Party remains more critical of the US, not only due to their unilateralism and willingness to use of force for achieving its goals, but also due to the US' refusal to participate in what the party views as the important achievements of the international community in the construction of new 'global governance', such as the ICC or tackling climate change.

The Communist party's strategy is very much based on the negation of Czech foreign policy post 1989. The party holds extremely critical views of both the United States and NATO; its somewhat moderate stance on the EU is present primarily because the party has representatives in the European Parliament who have influence within the United European Left group, and secondly because the EU policy of diplomacy, soft power, and respect for international law is closer to the Communists' views of global justice.

Therefore, the picture presented herein for the Czech Republic confirms very closely to the hypothesis raised in the introduction. The more the parties are to the right, the more they tend to follow a respective typology of foreign policy typical for established Western European democracies, drawing them, in many respects, closer to the USA. The more they are to the left, they more the parties are likely to partake more anti-American stances. This is also enabled by the fact that the right-left division on the Czech political scene is clearly visible, as was underlined at the beginning.

Despite these different partisan visions of international relations by the two strongest parties, Czech foreign policy, nevertheless, shows a considerable degree of stability and continuity. This can be explained by at least two factors. Firstly, Czech governments are normally coalition governments. The

government position on foreign policy issues where the EU-NATO-USA triangle is at stake are likely to be more moderate than the individual partisan positions of the senior coalition parties – the ČSSD and the ODS. This has to do with the moderating role of the centrist parties, who are present in such coalitions, and whose attitude is both Atlanticist (particularly in case of the KDU-ČSL) and pro-European (both the KDU-ČSL and the Greens). Secondly, the attitudes of the two major political parties themselves can differ significantly when the party is in control of the government. The ODS is likely to be more pro-European while in control of the government by the simple fact that the Czech Republic is in the EU and the ODS ministers meet their EU counterparts far more often than the American ones. Similarly, the ČSSD is prone to taking a less critical view of the United States in the government, as we have seen, for instance, in the case of Iraq or missile defence. However, this pragmatic approach risks alienating the politicians holding executive posts from their deputies and senators or wider partisan base. As a result, the Czech government position is often not very strong in order to comfort a variety of actors. The advantage of such a position is that it ensures the continuity and stability of foreign policy. The disadvantage is that, externally, the position is not always very clear, legible, and confirms to what the Czechs call 'sitting with one back at two chairs.'

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HUNGARY

Tomáš Weiss

Table 1: Parties in the Hungarian Parliament

Term	Parties represented in the Parliament (number of mandates)		Governing Coalition
1990 – 1994	MDF[1] (164) SZDSZ (92) FKGP (44) MSZP (34)	FIDESZ (24) KDNP (19) Indep. (5) ASZ (2)	MDF – KDNP – FKGP
1994 – 1998	MSZP (209) SZDSZ (69) MDF (38) FKGP (26)	KDNP (22) FIDESZ (21) ASZ (1)	MSZP – SZDSZ
1998 – 2002	FIDESZ (148) MSZP (134) FKGP (48) SZDSZ (24)	MDF (17) MIÉP (14) Indep. (1)	FIDESZ – MDF – FKGP
2002 – 2006	MSZP (178) FIDESZ (164) MDF (24) SZDSZ (20)		MSZP – SZDSZ
since 2006	MSZP (190) FIDESZ (+KDNP) (164) SZDSZ (20) MDF (11)	Somogyért (1)	MSZP – SZDSZ[2]
Source: www.valasztas.hu			

1) In 1993, MIÉP split off MDF.
2) In 2008, SZDSZ left the coalition. MSZP has continued in a minority government with support of the former coalition partner.

Parties in the Hungarian Parliament:

ASZ	Agrarian Union
FIDESZ	Alliance of Young Democrats
FKGP	Independent Smallholders' Party
KDNP	Christian Democratic People's Party
MDF	Hungarian Democratic Forum
MIÉP	Hungarian Justice and Life Party
MSZP	Hungarian Socialist Party
Somogyért	Association for Somogy
SZDSZ	Alliance of Free Democrats

Hungary played an important role during the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe. Since the 1960s, the strict regime established after the Soviet invasion of 1956 was turning into a sort of Potemkin village. The population was supposed to restrain from criticising the regime overtly, but was not required to believe in it. Similarly, besides the official state economy, people could raise their living standards through private businesses conducted after the end of official working hours. Unlike citizens from other countries of the Soviet block, Hungarians were relatively free to travel in Western Europe. This so called 'goulash socialism' turned Hungary into the 'happiest barrack' of the Eastern block and was probably the main reason the communists stayed in power without major turmoil until 1989.

During the late 1980s, however, the regime turned out to be unmaintainable and imploded in round table negotiations between the communists and opposition movements. The gradual resignation of the regime contributed in turn to an abolishment of the communist regimes of other countries. Hungary became a 'hole in the wall' when it opened the border to Austria in 1989, allowing thousands of fellow Central and Eastern Europeans flee to the West.

Political parties came into existence or were re-established on the basis of traditional political parties that had been active in the inter-war period in late 1980s and contested in the first free elections in 1990. All major political parties of today's Hungary were already present on the political map in 1990, which shows stability unusual in post-communist countries. However, the relative strength of the parties has kept changing and several important ones have ceased to play any significant role.

In today's Hungarian parliament, only four political parties are represented: the Hungarian Socialist Party (Magyar Szocialista Párt, MSZP), the Alliance of Young Democrats – Hungarian Citizens Alliance (Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége – Magyar Polgári Szövetség, FIDESZ-MPSZ[3]), the Alliance of Free Democrats (Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége, SZDSZ), and the Hungarian Democratic Forum (Magyar Demokrata Fórum, MDF)[4].

Left and Right

At first glance, the Hungarian political spectrum is very transparent today. There are two big parties, the MSZP on the left and the FIDESZ on the right, that each achieve over 40 per cent of the votes. There are also two small parties that ally themselves with the big ones. Whereas the Alliance of Free Democrats serves as a partner to MSZP, the MDF serves as a partner to the FIDESZ. Although the coalition of the MSZP-SZDSZ broke down over personal and communication issues in 2008 during the second term in office, the SZDSZ continues to support the Socialist minority government. The FIDESZ and the MDF have formed the opposition. It has been a habit that parties in the two blocks mutually support their candidates in second rounds of the single-member constituencies. The opposition even set up a joint list for the 2002 elections.

At second glance, however, the picture blurs. During 1990s, the FIDESZ was successful in integrating the right and working its way up to the dominant position (Fowler 2002: 3, Fowler 2004a). The 2002 pre-election union with the MDF seemed to be another step in unifying all right wing parties within one party. In fact, Brigid Fowler argues that the MDF survived as a parliamentary party only thanks to this union (Fowler 2004a: 82).[5] If the government of Viktor Orbán of the FIDESZ had remained in office, the unification may have been successful. After the lost elections, however, the MDF reviewed its course, put up a separate list for the 2004 European Parliament elections, and disagreed openly with the FIDESZ on the elections' relevance

3) Only the abbreviation FIDESZ is used throughout the study, reflecting its use in literature as well as in Hungarian political debate.

4) KNDP established a faction in Parliament after the 2006 elections. It is not analysed in the study though, because its independence on FIDESZ is more formal than factual. The party was not present during the previous two terms and came back to the fore only as a result of its very junior position in the coalition with FIDESZ.

5) Whereas the MDF was able to win 165 out of the parliament's 386 seats in 1990, it gained 38 seats four years later and only 17 in 1998. The FIDESZ, on the other hand, was able to raise its share from 21 and 20 seats in 1990 and 1994 elections, respectively, up to 148 in 1998.

for domestic policy (Racz 2006: 204). This decision caused a group of prominent members to leave the party (Sitter and Batory 2006: 4). However, the MDF managed to win one out of 24 Hungarian mandates, affirming its independence in the 2006 general elections (even if getting over the 5 per cent threshold very narrowly).

Unlike communist parties in other Central and Eastern European countries, such as Czechoslovakia or Romania, Hungarian communists were able to adapt to the changing situation of the end of 1980s and take part in the regime change actively. Round table negotiations organized between the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP) and opposition movements conducted during 1989 resulted in free elections in May 1990. In preparation for the elections, the MSZMP transformed into the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) in October 1989 and, despite losing the elections in 1990, was able to establish itself as the major left-wing party during the early 1990s and form governments after the 1994, 2002 and 2006 elections. The MSZP's coalition partner in all governments, the SZDSZ, has kept a liberal profile that distinguishes it from the dominant MSZP since early 1990s. Gábor Demszky, the former chairman of the SZDSZ, has also helped to preserve the party's autonomous profile, having been the mayor of Budapest continuously since 1990.

Yet, the media understand Hungarian politics largely as a two block contest. The recent street riots in October 2006 and March 2007 have increased this interpretation as they were targeted against the left government in general.[6] The two big parties have not objected this view because it fuels their dominance in their respective blocks. The smaller parties, however, do not share this point of view. The SZDSZ refuses to accept the whole concept of a two-camp political scene. Instead, it recognises three poles of the Hungarian political spectrum: socialist, conservative, and liberal.[7] The MDF presents itself as the only conservative party, blaming the FIDESZ for not having a right-wing programme at all, but only a mixture of right and left radicalism.

Unlike in some other countries in the region, notably Slovakia or to some extent the Czech Republic, economic issues are not the most important factor that puts together the respective camps of the government and opposition. Therefore, there could be three Socialist-liberal governments in office after

6) Compare e.g. Left-Right Split Fuels Hungary Unrest, *CBS News* 26 September 2006.

7) Where not stated otherwise, party positions follow the author's interviews with Hungarian experts, politicians, and political parties' representatives or affiliates conducted in Budapest in May and June 2007.

1990 (with a continuing liberal support to the Socialist minority government), even though 'New Labour' has become the key-word for the MSZP only with Gyurcsány (Eddy 2004). Similarly, the market-oriented MDF can denounce the protectionist FIDESZ for its left-wing social and economic policies.

The Hungarian coalitions must be explained by cleavages other than economic policy. The opposition parties both stand for traditional rightist values, such as support for family or good relations with organised religion. The FIDESZ 2006 election slogan '*Job – Home – Family*' (FIDESZ 2006a) would work for any right-wing political party in Western Europe. Similarly, the government parties are secular with liberal, societal views.

The most important factor that has shaped the left-right political cleavage in Hungary has been, however, the political parties' views on Hungary's position in the region and the significance of Hungarians living abroad. According to Brigid Fowler (2002: 1), this cleavage shaped Hungarian politics in 1930s and re-emerged in 1980s among non-communist intellectuals. The right-wing parties '*think in terms of the nation*' (Fowler 2002: 1). The 1920 Trianon peace treaty still arouses bitter feelings among their politicians and voters. The first post-communist Prime Minister, József Antall of the MDF, declared in 1990 that he wanted to be a '*spiritual prime minister*' for 15 million Hungarians. This includes Hungarian minorities in neighbouring states beside the 10 million living in Hungary, most notable in Romania and Slovakia. More diplomatically, but still significantly, Viktor Orbán, the chairman of the FIDESZ and Prime Minister in 1998–2002, stated that he believed that the Hungarian state and nation did not coincide and that his government *'would be part of the Hungarian nation'* (Deme 1998: note 58). Antall established the Government Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad (Határon Túli Magyarok Hivatala, HTMH) in 1992, an entity that has been very influential during the terms of both the MDF-led as well as FIDESZ-led governments (Dunay 2004: 212). In 2001, the Hungarian parliament passed a law introducing a system of benefits for Hungarians in neighbouring countries based on national principle. The law was heavily criticised for its exterritorial scope not only by countries with Hungarian minorities, but also by the European Union and the Council of Europe. Only after the left-wing government took office was an amendment passed that accommodated most of the criticism.

The left has been '*comfortable with the post-communist status quo, and with the idea that Hungary is a small, relatively poor state with a still-fragile democracy and sometimes dubious national past, bound to accommodate itself to the West*' (Fowler 2002: 1). Left-wing governments have never been

keen on putting Hungarians living abroad too high on the agenda, even if they have kept the issue among their priorities. As an SZDSZ representative put it, the '*MSZP is very worried of being labelled as non-nationalist.*'

To sum up, Hungarian political parties can, indeed, be divided into two separate groups that, in many respects, follow the distinction between left and right. Parties on the left could be further distinguished as socialist and liberals. However, in many respects, with the Socialists incorporating 'New Labour' policies and moving towards the centre, the border may blur. On the right, the FIDESZ and the MDF can be distinguished by the extent of populism used, where the FIDESZ has needed to appeal to far right voters while unifying the right. The spectrum, for the purpose of our study, can thus be drawn as follows:

Positioning of the Hungarian Political Parties on the Right – Left Axis

The 'National Consensus' and Relevance of Foreign Policy

During 1990s, Hungarian foreign policy was based on three objectives: integration into Western structures, good neighbourly relations, and support for the Hungarian minorities across the borders. All the governments pursued the same objectives independently of their political affiliation. Whereas the government consulted foreign policy with the opposition, the opposition did not criticise the government on foreign policy issues openly. The parties created a coordinated system based on parity that worked parallel to the foreign affairs committee in the Parliament. The 'national consensus' provided for the unanimous adoption of basic principles for the country's security policy by the Parliament in 1992, the first official document that called for full membership in NATO (Törő 1999: 81).

The relationship between the objectives and their relative importance was, however, interpreted differently by individual administrations (Dunay 2004:

200–203). The emphasis that the MDF-led government put on supporting Hungarians living abroad impeded good relations with neighbouring states that saw such measures as meddling in their internal affairs. To a certain extent, cross-border disputes over Hungarian minorities influenced the integration objective as well because Western countries, struggling with wars in Yugoslavia, worried about the further rise of ethnic and nationalist violence throughout the region. Gyula Horn's left-wing government cared more about Hungary's relations with neighbouring governments than with the citizens of Hungarian nationality. As a result, basic treaties were signed with Slovakia (1995) and Romania (1996) that renounced any territorial claims on each other and regulated protection of national minorities (*Szerződés…* 1995 and *Szerződés…* 1996).

At present, there is no consensus on foreign policy among the Hungarian political parties. This is a fact widely recognized by both politicians, as well as analysts. It cannot be identified exactly at what point the consensus disappeared. Csaba Törő names a reviewed document on the principles of security and defence policy adopted in December 1998 as another example of consensual foreign policy (Törő 1999: 83). In the late 1990s and at the beginning of new century, all relevant parties still supported the main goals of Hungarian foreign policy. Nevertheless, the consensus was missing in details. The parties started using details in domestic debates, such as Orbán's critique of the government's negotiations with the EU or questioning the relevance of NATO membership as a part of the criticism of land ownership liberalisation (Hegedűs 1998). Similarly, the MSZP criticised the Orbán government for allowing NATO bombers to use Hungarian airports during the Kosovo crisis (Bugajski 2002: 351). In 2003, the consensus was lost without a doubt. Erzsébet Nagyné Rózsa identifies even 4 foreign policy cleavages: government v. opposition, government v. the MSZP, within the MSZP, and intra-governmental (Nagyné Rózsa 2003: 13).

One of the important, if not the most important, reasons for the disappearance of the national consensus in Hungary is the polarization of the Hungarian political scene and the prevalence of domestic over foreign policy. Pál Dunay (Dunay 2004: note 16) argues that during his premiership, only domestic policies mattered for Viktor Orbán, a politician who was anxious to unite right wing voters. This effort directly influenced Hungarian foreign affairs. He was not ready to distance himself from the statements of István Csurka, chairman of the extreme rightist MIÉP, an action that did harm to Hungary's image abroad. In 1999, Orbán condemned Csurka's statements on the revision of the

borders in Vojvodina only four months after Csurka first made them. Orbán also criticized Csurka's stance in the German daily newspaper Franfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, a publication not widely accessible in Hungary. In 2001, Csurka stated that the '*US had received its due punishment*' (The Stephen Roth Institute… 2002). The Prime Minister did not distance himself from this statement at all, a move that may have been the reason why President Bush did not meet with him during his 2002 visit in the US (Kriza 2004: 9).

The polarization emerged after the 2002 parliamentary elections. Whereas there were only 2 and 1 MPs elected in single mandate districts in the first round in 1994 and 1998 respectively, there were 44 MPs elected in the first round in 2002[8] (Benoit 2002: 127). The polarization reached its peak as of late when the FIDESZ fueled street protests against Prime Minister Gyurcsány in September 2006 and March 2007.

Foreign policy topics have thus either become heavily influenced by domestic affairs or have disappeared entirely. The former is true for the European integration. In the 2004 EP elections, it was almost only the domestic agenda that mattered in the campaign (Racz 2006: 206). István Hegedűs argues that the political parties saw '*the European political institutions as a new arena in which they could strengthen old domestic partisan cleavages*' (Hegedűs 2006: 76–7). Some experts accredit the irrelevance of foreign policy to an ignorance of the politicians for whom the foreign policy in general and the EU in particular are too complicated. This is by no means a problem of the opposition only. As others note, there can be no consensus because there is no proposal on the side of the government. All reactions were *ad hoc* for a long time, providing a lot of space for playing up domestic policy. A new foreign policy strategy, drafted under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with contributions from experts, was adopted only in March 2008.

The politicians themselves have also recognized this. Kinga Göncz, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, complained in an interview that '*there [was] very little talk in Hungary's present-day public policy discourse about foreign policy. We look inwards; we're provincial.*' (Göncz 2007). Key documents from each of these political parties do not pay much attention to foreign policy. The discussion material on 'Hungary's New Social Democracy' prepared within the governing MSZP does not mention security policy even once and the EU only very vaguely, largely in relation to Hungarian minorities across the border (MSZP 2004). Similarly, a one-year review of governmental poli-

8) In the first round, the candidate must receive more than 50 per cent of the votes to win the mandate straight away.

cies by the FIDESZ did not touch upon foreign policy. The MDF does not even have a member in the parliament's foreign affairs committee. And the SZDSZ preferred appointing the Minister of Economy to a post as Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The lack of interest at the moment does not necessarily mean that foreign policy cannot make it into the headlines in future. Some argue that a younger generation of politicians will have better knowledge of EU affairs and could therefore at least bring European issues onto the table. Even smaller political parties may start dealing with foreign affairs more intensively – SZDSZ chairman, János Kóka, allegedly inclines to foreign policy more than his predecessors, although voices from the SZDSZ admit that his commitment to such issues is still not overly intensive. The opposition has also recently attacked the Prime Minister for his policy towards Russia. Thus, Hungarian-Russian relations have suddenly become a highly politicized topic. It is yet to be seen if this is just an exception or if it is first in a row of publicly debated foreign policy issues.

An impossibility to reach a consensus may have serious consequences in Hungarian foreign action. The state's constitution is very rigid and asks for a 2/3 majority on specific issues. In today's polarized Hungary, such a request can hardly be met. In 2004, for example, the Hungarian military contingent had to be pulled back from Iraq because the government was not able to prolong its mandate by a 2/3 majority in Parliament. Even though the FIDESZ had backed the deployment before, the government requested only a very limited mandate for several months during Iraqi parliamentary elections. Therefore, it can be speculated whether it was the particular question or, rather, a general opposition to a proposal put forward by the government that made the FIDESZ MPs vote against the prolongation.

To sum up, Hungary's foreign policy is not subject to a consensus anymore, but suffers two-fold: from the polarization of the Hungarian political scene that hampers any reasonable cooperation between the government and the opposition, and from a lack of interest in foreign policy in general.

Views of the US, the EU, and NATO

Hungary set integration into West European institutions as one of its priorities very quickly after the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe. Attila Ágh notes that 'Europeanization' or 'Westernization' were '*the most important legitimization devices for Hungarian governments*' (1999:

841). After the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact (where the country played an important role), the same was true for the country's decision to join NATO.

All non-extremist political parties supported both NATO and the EU. They were backed by public opinion because more than two thirds of the population saw a connection between the EU and NATO accession processes (Torő 1999: 93) and supported both of them as the accession referenda in 1997 (NATO) and 2003 (EU) demonstrated.

Hungary became a member of NATO in 1999 and finally also member of the EU in 2004. Most experts share the view that the EU membership was more significant for Hungary. Besides the successful accomplishment of the integration goal, it has also signified a radical change in the other two foreign policy goals. Hungarian minorities abroad now have their interests secured through European standards and can commute to Hungary freely any time they feel so inclined. Good neighbourly relations depend partly on the question of Hungarian minorities, but are also improved through regional cooperation and the need to cooperate on the European level. Some scholars even argue that NATO membership was, above all, a necessary step on the way to EU membership. They believe that the regional aspirations that have shaped the three goals of Hungarian foreign policy do not require direct involvement from the US. Thus, in general, Hungary remains more oriented towards Europe than across the Atlantic (Póti and Tálas 2004: 44).[9]

This does not necessarily mean anti-Americanism. Póti and Talás argue that all political parties have their own reasons for why they should support NATO and the US (2004: 45). Others insist that active anti-Americanism is present only on the extreme right and left and that the rest of the political spectrum limits themselves to mere lack of interest caused by a lack of capacity to be '*good pupils*' of the EU and deal with the US intensively at the same time. This may be the reason why Hungary has been perceived as a non-performing member in NATO since the beginning with a permanent lack of resources in defence sector (Dunay 2004: 210).

Nevertheless, other scholars see a more pro-US side of Hungarian politics. Nagyné Rózsa lists two '*firm believes*' among Hungarian authorities: a) there is and must be no contradiction between NATO obligations and the development of a European defence capability; and b) preconditions of Hungarian

9) Póti and Tálas argue that the regional focus of Hungarian foreign policy distinguishes the country from other, more Atlanticist new member states of the EU. Those countries either have an increased threat perception (Baltic states), try to increase their influence in Europe (Poland), or struggle to avoid periferization (Romania, Bulgaria).

security are membership in NATO and the US presence (Nagyné Rózsa 2002: 37). This view is supported (in words, at least) in Hungarian official documents (cf. *Hungary's External Relations Strategy* 2008).

Positions of the Hungarian Political Parties

The following interpretations of the positions of Hungarian political parties have been based beside literature mainly on official party documents (e.g. elections programmes, manifestos), daily press, and interviews with party representatives (via questionnaire, telephone, and personal meetings). It is questionable, however, to what extent the Hungarian politicians' rhetoric can be seen as a reliable source of information. Viktor Orbán has been reported to have said openly at an Atlantic Club Breakfast organized by the FIDESZ that a lot is being said for Hungarians and should not be paid much attention to abroad. It is thus necessary to compare the parties' statements with the adopted policies where possible.

Every part is divided into five broader topics of US-EU relations: the US military presence in Europe, the relationship between NATO and the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), Iraq in particular, the external aspects of the war on terror, and other foreign policy issues.

MSZP – Hungarian Socialist Party

The Hungarian Socialists have held both the Prime Minister's office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 2002. Therefore, they have had a huge impact on Hungarian foreign policy recently. The influence of these particular offices has varied according to the personalities that held them: Foreign Minister László Kovács, currently the EU commissioner, used to be very strong and had significant impact on Hungary's policy during the Iraq crisis in 2003. At the moment, Ferenc Gyurcsány has shifted the centre of gravity to the Prime Minister's office. The ministers of foreign affairs have not always been the authors of foreign policy: Ferenc Somogyi was seen merely as an administrator and Kinga Göncz is neither expert nor diplomat. Moreover, the experienced foreign policy makers from the MSZP have largely moved to Brussels – László Kovács to the EU Commission, Csaba Tabajdi and Gyula Hegyi to the European Parliament. The same is true for many young politicians interested in foreign policy, such as the MEP Alexandra Dobolyi.

US Military Presence in Europe

In general, Europe is closer than NATO for MSZP politicians. As Ferenc Gyurcsány puts it regularly: '*Hungary is our motherland, the Union is [...] home, and America is our ally*' (Gyurcsány 2007a). A similar phrase appeared in the 2004 government programme (*Lendületben az ország…* 2004). In the 2007 Prime Minister's address to ambassadors, Gyurcsány labelled Hungary's relationship to the United States as '*a priority.*' However, the rest of the speech was concerned mainly with the EU and the necessity to deepen European political cooperation and the CFSP (Gyurcsány 2007b).

The former Foreign Minister, László Kovács, wanted '*more Europe, but not less America*' in 2002 (Póti and Tálas 2004: 46). Current party representatives believe that the EU should gradually take over European defence and that the US military presence in Europe should be reduced. It should be noted that the quotation of Mr. Kovács originates from his article for The Washington Times, whereas the views of current representatives have been delivered privately. But Kovács has been seen as a genuine Atlanticist during his term (Dunay 2004: 207) at various occasions. Among today's MSZP foreign policy makers, there is probably nobody with such a strong affiliation. It can be argued that the emphasis on Europe has increased in the MSZP.

Regarding the US radar and missile bases in Central Europe, the MSZP has been officially very restrained. Mr. Gyurcsány stressed that it '*would defend a significant part of Europe*' but called for more discussion (Logan 2007). As one MSZP representative puts it, the MSZP must keep a safe position and argue that all threats should be defended. Unofficially, however, MSZP representatives are very sceptical about the US installations and do not believe that they could contribute to Europe's security. The discrepancy between the official and unofficial position is the reason why they regard themselves lucky that Hungary has not been invited to participate in the anti-missile defence system.

Relations between NATO and the ESDP

In security matters, we can also see a difference between the Medgyessy and Gyurcsány governments. The former called full integration in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization '*the most important guarantee of Hungarian security*' and wanted to '*contribute to a strengthening of transatlantic solidarity.*' At the same time, it supported '*strategic partnership between NATO and the EU*' and wanted to '*contribute to the formation of the CFSP and common civil and*

military crisis management' (*Cselekedni, most és mindenkiért…* 2002). The latter promoted two pillars of Hungarian external security – the European and the transatlantic commitment. Regarding the European pillar, it wanted to deepen integration, develop cooperation, and extend the scope of the CFSP (*New Hungary…* 2006). It should be noted that Hungary was a NATO member, but only an EU candidate in 2002, whereas it was member of both organizations in 2006. Therefore, the increased emphasis on the EU and its CFSP does not necessarily mean a less pro-NATO stance from the Gyurcsány government. In the light of the afore-mentioned preference for Europe above the US, however, it can be assumed that the Gyurcsány government indeed does value NATO less than the Medgyessy government used to in the past.

Such an interpretation has support in the party representatives' positions that were presented to the author. All of them have been very supportive to the progressive development of the ESDP and want the EU to be, along with NATO, the ultimate security provider in Europe. At least, in the future if the EU is not fully capable today. The MSZP also supports a subsequent creation of a European army.

Regarding military operations, the party prefers a more important role for the EU at the expense of NATO. Although the EU should be given priority over NATO especially in its neighbourhood, some voices call for EU preference everywhere in the world.

Iraq

Hungary's Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy signed the so-called 'letter of eight' backing the US in the political crisis before the actual war in Iraq. Experts agree on the analysis that Foreign Minister Kovács made Medgyessy sign the letter (Nagyné Rózsa 2003: 13; Dunay 2004: 208). The government later tried to belittle the significance of the letter. Medgyessy played down the meaning of the actual signature and focused on the content that called for a peaceful solution. In short, the government became stuck in the effort to be a good ally to both the countries gathered around the US, plus the countries gathered around Germany and France. The signature was merely the choice of a lesser evil (Póti and Tálas 2004: 46).

The MSZP supported and pushed through sending a contingent of Hungarian military engineers to Iraq, but not sooner than there was a UN Security Council resolution approving such contributions. In 2004, the Gyurcsány government wanted to prolong the mandate by three months until March

2005 due to the elections that took place in Iraq at the beginning of 2005. However, it failed to get the necessary 2/3 majority support in Parliament. Ferenc Gyurcsány, commenting upon the decision, stated that the opposition put their own interests above their obligation and responsibility, arguing that '*it was more than a question of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq,*' such as of human rights and democratic values. He also announced to send 150 volunteer soldiers under NATO to Iraq in the summer of 2005, an action that did not require parliamentary approval (Lukács 2004).

In private, MSZP representatives are rather critical of the Iraqi operation. Although some acknowledge their original support of the US, none of them support the current US presence in Iraq. Moreover, they mostly assume that the difficulties in Iraq may lead to a policy change towards the United States in Hungary. Rather paradoxically, they also believe that the Hungarian participation in Iraq has been successful and needed, even if difficult.

It must be noted that, during the Kosovo crisis, when the MSZP was in opposition, it criticised the FIDESZ government for its decision to support NATO military action against Serbia.

External Aspects of the War on Terror

All MSZP representatives are united in refusing to grant CIA flights or interrogation facilities that some European countries have allegedly allowed on their territories. Prime Minister Gyurcsány stated that he had never been asked to host secret CIA installations, but that he would have declined if there had been such a request (The Budapest Sun 2005). Gyula Hegyi, MEP, praised the government for not participating '*in the CIA's illegal European action*' (Szőcs 2007). They are, however, very restrained regarding other countries' decisions to allow CIA flights inside their territories because, as one MP elected for the MSZP puts it, '*secret missions need secret flights.*'

Similarly, the MSZP condemns the function of the US military base at Guantánamo Bay, seeing little need for such a base and its procedures. The party would be against any detention of Hungarian nationals in Guantánamo. This firm disapproval is not reflected in official positions, however. During George W. Bush's visit to Hungary in 2006, only President Solyóm, who was elected against the will of the MSZP, indirectly criticised Guantánamo, saying that '*the war on terror can only be considered successful if it conforms to international human rights' laws*'. No such comment was made by the Prime Minister (The Budapest Times 2006).

Other Foreign Policy Issues

MSZP representatives questioned in the framework of this research have held very similar positions on all foreign policy issues raised. These positions have been rather critical of the US politics. As with other Hungarian parties, the MSZP has backed the International Criminal Court from the very beginning (in the parliamentary vote on the ICC status there was only one vote against), even though the US did not support it.

Moreover, MSZP representatives doubt the positive impact US engagement in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, even though some admit that it may not have been the case in the past. Similarly, they mostly condemn the pro-Israeli stance that the US took during the Israeli intervention in Lebanon because they did not see the war as purely defensive.

The message is very clear in case of Cuba as well, where the MSZP would welcome a change if the US re-evaluated the situation and lifted its embargo. Regarding Central Asia, the MSZP would prefer the EU to play a bigger role in the region rather than the US.

SZDSZ – Alliance of Free Democrats

The Free Democrats have been a traditional coalition partner of the MSZP. As such, they have been only second in line regarding foreign policy because Socialists have nominated, in all governments, both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. There is a tradition of foreign policy making in the SZDSZ though. Between 1994–98, the party appointed political secretaries to the foreign ministry (István Szent-Iványi and Mátyás Eörsi), a section of the government that was rather strong at that time under László Kovács. In 2006, the SZDSZ was offered the post of Foreign Minister, but chose environment and water management instead. The reason for this decision had to do the activity of the Prime Minister in foreign affairs, which does not leave much power for the minister.

Until 2004, the SZDSZ shared foreign policy views with the MSZP. After 2004, however, a gap has appeared, because, as SZDSZ representatives put it, the SZDSZ wants to promote value-based foreign policy and that Socialist foreign policy is too pragmatic for the party. Similar to other parties, SZDSZ experts have partly left for Brussels – István Szent-Iványi became an MEP. But some of them have stayed in Budapest – Mátyás Eörsi chairs the SZDSZ faction of the European Affairs Committee in the Hungarian Parliament.

US Military Presence in Europe

In its rhetoric, the SZDSZ is both very pro-European and very pro-American at the same time. They support the claim of a '*More federal European Union! A Stronger Brussels!*' (SZDSZ 2006a: 181) and that the party '*could live*' with majority decision-making on CFSP issues. At the same time, they consider the US to be the main guarantor of European security and bilateral relations with the US to be the primary task for Hungary (SZDSZ 2006a: 182).

For the SZDSZ, a US military presence is desired. However, the party believes that European NATO members should take up more responsibility for the defence of the continent. The EU should take over ultimately, but only in the long run.

The US missile defence bases in Central and Eastern Europe will contribute to the security of European continent, according to the SZDSZ. Even if the threat is not present now, it will be in medium-term. Therefore, it is sensible to take appropriate steps today. In any case, the bases should be inclusive, in NATO, or NATO-compatible. Representatives of the SZDSZ note that it was a wise decision not to address Hungary because Hungarian political representation, especially the MSZP, would have problems with hosting such bases.

Relations between NATO and the ESDP

The Free Democrats are supportive of the ESDP. They call for the strengthening of European capacities in order to allow the EU to take care of the European continent together with NATO and even conduct operations anywhere in the world if necessary. However, they promote sensible cooperation with NATO and the US, which they see, as mentioned before, as the ultimate guarantor of security in Europe. They insist that the development of the ESDP must not undermine NATO or be a rival to it. The worst scenario for the SZDSZ would be if the EU were not strong enough to act, but strong enough to hamper the functioning of NATO.

The SZDSZ also supports the creation of a European army, provided that it would have clear limitations as to its function.

Iraq

The Free Democrats emphasize the fact that they have been the only Hungarian party to support both the operations in Kosovo and in Iraq. Representatives of the party stress that their foreign policy positions are based on the conviction that human rights are more important than international law. The party sees itself as a descendant of the Hungarian democratic opposition from the 1980s. As such, the Free Democrats do not want to repeat the mistakes that the West made during that time, such as appeasing communism. The whole Iraqi operation has been seen as an endorsement of human rights and democracy by the SZDSZ and therefore supported. The emphasis from the SZDSZ on human rights has also been identified by scholarly literature (Póti and Tálas 2004: 45).

In 2004, during the negotiations on whether to prolong the mandate of Hungarian soldiers in Iraq, the SZDSZ bluntly supported the extension. If they were needed, the party argued, they should stay. The same is true for the US presence in Iraq today – they should stay, because their presence is needed for the democratic transition of the country. The party has its doubts concerning the success of Hungarian participation, something that is seen as having been difficult, but believes that it was necessary.

The SZDSZ does not believe that the difficult situation of coalition forces and the transition process in Iraq could damage Hungarian views of the US and US-Hungarian relations.

External Aspects of the War on Terror

The alleged CIA flights and installations in Europe are not regarded as a political topic by the SZDSZ. Its position is not to make it an issue. The party believes that the fight against terrorism is important and that all states should contribute. Although illegal deeds must not be tolerated, there should be legal consequences and not political ones.

Some SZDSZ representatives have, however, expressed their opinion on some issues accompanying the war on terror. Mátyás Eörsi pleaded for the closure of the Guantánamo Bay base because human rights had to be observed even during the war on terror (SZDSZ 2006b). Nevertheless, SZDSZ representatives make sure that they always add an appreciation of the US role in world security when stating anything that could be interpreted as a critique (cf. Szent-Iványi's statements in Népszabadság 2006).

Other Foreign Policy Issues

In other political issues, the SZDSZ supports the US stances in general. It has supported the US backing of Israel during Lebanon war. It also believes that the increasing US presence in Central Asia will have positive energy security consequences in Europe.

In Cuba, the SZDSZ would like to promote a peaceful regime change. It advocates the US sanctions that lead to this end, measures that should be dependent on the political situation on the island. The Free Democrats would not object to the suspension of the sanctions as long as it was accompanied by deadlines, clear benchmarks, and ultimately a re-installation of sanctions if needed.

All members of the Parliament from the SZDSZ voted for the Hungarian accession to the Status of the International Criminal Court.

FIDESZ – Alliance of Young Democrats

It has been mentioned earlier that the FIDESZ has fought hard to unite the Hungarian right wing over the last years. That implies a certain emphasis on the nation of Hungary. In order to become acceptable for the Hungarian extreme right, which has been rather strong during the 1990s and catapulted the MIÉP into Parliament in 1998, the FIDESZ's rhetoric has been sometimes very harsh and not very well accepted abroad. This is the case of bilateral relations with Hungary's neighbours or Viktor Orbán's silence on Csurka's statements. Unfortunately for a relevant research, a lot of statements from FIDESZ representatives must be looked at through domestic policy glasses. It is necessary to pick up and reconstruct the "real" foreign policy views of the FIDESZ from concrete actions that the party has initiated or supported. This is, however, very difficult since the party was in power only between 1998–2002 and has been influenced by the politicisation of Hungarian domestic politics in opposition. Moreover, the 1998–2002 period was marked by the final steps in NATO accession and the negotiations over EU membership. This influenced the foreign policy of the country rather significantly and cannot be fully compared to an 'un-influenced' foreign policy of a member state of both organizations.

The national factor of FIDESZ policy is expressed in its emphasis on Hungary's own power, sovereignty, and national interests. Unlike other parties that anchor Hungary's security unambiguously in international cooperation (be it NATO, the EU, or both), for the FIDESZ, two pillars are relevant –

Euro-Atlantic integration and international cooperation on one hand and Hungarian national force on the other (FIDESZ and MDF 2002: 25)[10]. As a consequence, the alliance with the US or the European states is seen merely as a tool for safeguarding the interests of the *magyarság* (the Hungarianess). There is a mistrust of both at the same time – Europe for its historical legacy of the Trianon treaty (Póti and Tálas 2004: 45) and the US for personifying globalization. It is of no surprise that the FIDESZ describes itself as close to the French vision of Europe (FIDESZ 2006b: 7).

US Military Presence in Europe

The FIDESZ seems to be very ambivalent on the EU and US roles in Europe. Pál Dunay characterized the Orbán government as '*disinterested in the CFSP*' and '*not in favour of too much centralization and "federalization"*' of the EU (Dunay 2002: 33, 49). The scepticism over future of the EU's foreign and security policies is accompanied by an appreciation of the United States' role in Europe. György Schöpflin, an MEP from the FIDESZ, claimed in The Economist that '*if extremists took power in Serbia, only America could protect Hungary*' (The Economist 2006).

At the same time, however, there are voices in the FIDESZ that call for reducing the US military presence in Europe and for the EU to take over European defence. A strong Europe is seen as beneficial for Central and Eastern Europe because it can stand up against Russia or the US if necessary. As Viktor Orbán put it, the US needs Europe to '*keep her bad instincts down*' (Orbán 2005).

The party does not have any official position on the US missile defence bases in Europe. From within the party, supporters as well as opponents can be heard, pointing out or disputing their contribution to European security. The independence of Poland and the Czech Republic is stressed as well as the demand not to provide Russia veto power over their decision-making.

Although it is unclear whether the FIDESZ would back the establishment of such a base in Hungary, it is believed that it would rather not. There is a precedence from which to draw conclusions. In the past few years, the government has sought a location for a NATO radar base that would be part

10) Although this was a joint election programme of the FIDESZ and MDF, the author takes into consideration that foreign policy had not been an MDF domain in the government (both Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs were appointed by the FIDESZ and defence was administered by an FKgP member) and attributes the foreign policy expertise of the joint election programme to the FIDESZ. The same formulation had already appeared in the Orbán government's programme.

of the NATO air defence. Together with civic organizations, the FIDESZ stood out against the location at Zengő Hill due to environmental reasons. The government proposed a new location at Tubes Hill, but the FIDESZ stood out against this proposal again, following public opinion. Zoltán Illés, the MP for the FIDESZ, claimed that there was no reason for building the radar base on Hungarian territory and, since Slovenia was a NATO member too, the base could be established there (Tamás 2003). With the FIDESZ having stood up against a NATO radar installation, we could hardly expect the party to support a purely US installation.

Relations between NATO and the ESDP

In its latest election programme, the FIDESZ stated clearly that it sees NATO as '*the cornerstone of our [Hungarian] security.*' It is therefore a priority to safeguard '*the unity and operability of NATO*' in a way that would '*acknowledge national security, the objectives of the United States, and the member states alike*' (FIDESZ 2006b: 18). NATO should also be the core place of cooperation between Europe and the US (Orbán 2005). There are, however, certain reservations regarding the influence of European states in NATO that have diminished, according to some.

Hungary is, according to Viktor Orbán, a country with '*a transatlantic mindset*' (Corsi 2004), an approach that means cooperation with both the EU and the US simultaneously. Although the FIDESZ considers NATO to be the most important security organization, the EU should be more active in security too. If the ESDP should develop further, the FIDESZ would support the creation of a European army if the EU member states so decided. While boosting its capabilities, however, the EU should avoid duplications and consult NATO first before taking and action (FIDESZ 2004: 16).

There is no clear preference of whether the EU or NATO should take a lead in military operations abroad. The decision would depend on the circumstances of the particular missions. The concept of an EU mission is not put aside in principle though. And the FIDESZ supports EU operations in the Balkans. The EU should be active in the neighbouring regions, such as North Africa or the Middle East, in general.

Iraq

The FIDESZ supported the original decision to send Hungarian troops to Iraq after a clear UN mandate had been granted, although the party had not supported the invasion in the beginning. Viktor Orbán did not see '*any reason or national interest why Hungary should support the US in the war in Iraq.*' He deduced so from the fact that the EU provided Hungary economically, while NATO and not the US militarily (Nagyné Rózsa 2003: 14). Although some FIDESZ affiliates criticised the operation because it had been '*ill-conceived,*' some did so with much more temperament. Gyula Tellér, Orbán's adviser and a formal head of the analytical department of the PM's office, argued in 2003 that the US had '*toppled a functional, legitimate political regime.*' He claimed that the real reason of the invasion had been the *'boosting of an ill American economy by Iraqi means, taking over immense Iraqi oil resources (in order to make profit and – possibly – to blackmail world policy), to provide security to Israel that carried out regular war against the Palestinians, and to safeguard a regional power status for Israel. President Bush was persuaded to carry on with the latter goals by Israel-friendly neoconservative members of the administration in his vicinity. What used to be a goal of the State of Israel turned to be – with their help – a goal of the United States.'* (Tellér 2003)

When the security situation worsened in Iraq and the MDF started to request the withdrawal of Hungarian troops, the FIDESZ kept to its previous decision to support Hungary's participation in the mission, stating that the troops were able to do their duty despite the dramatic situation (The Budapest Sun 2003). It reserved the right to review the position, a process that happened during the following year. In the end, the party's MPs voted against the renewal of the mandate, even if the position had not been very clear and that there might have been a way to gain the party's support (Deák 2004).

Today, the FIDESZ would prefer the US to withdraw from Iraq, the sooner the better, because there are no valid reasons for being there. Some believe that the whole Iraqi operation and Hungary's participation in it have contributed to a growing feeling of anti-Americanism in Hungary.

External Aspects of the War on Terror

International law is important for the FIDESZ, according to its representatives. Their positions on parts of the US war on terror reflect this emphasis. Although ready to cooperate with the US in the intelligence sector, FIDESZ

representatives criticise both the Guantánamo Bay base, as well as the alleged CIA flights in some European states, as illegal. Despite this disapproval, the topic has not ranked very high in the party's interest with not much to be heard from the party representatives if not requested directly.

Other Foreign Policy Issues

Even if not as harsh as in the case of Mr. Tellér that was quoted above, the FIDESZ is generally very critical of US foreign policy activities. Be it Cuba or the Middle East, FIDESZ representatives are not very happy with American policies and would be happier if the US reviewed them. The Israeli-Palestinian puzzle, especially, puts the FIDESZ '*closer to the EU than the US*' with some people openly hostile to the foreign policy steps of the US, preferring the US to pull out of the region.

For one segment of FIDESZ voters, the US should be blamed for some global phenomena, such as globalisation. Because the blame carries over into detached issues of foreign policy, the party ends up strongly hostile towards the US. However, it should be noted that the hostility has remained verbal and restricted to issues where the FIDESZ or Hungary cannot effectively influence anything. The party keeps a moderate, more pragmatic tone on topics that are more relevant for the country. The factual policy conducted by the FIDESZ while in power was, notwithstanding the rhetoric, down-to-earth and not that much different from other governments. To a certain extent, the discrepancy in the biggest right-wing party amongst mainstream policies on important issues and radical statements on issues where a voice from Hungary does not count indicates, more than anything else, that foreign policy is not an important topic in Hungary.

MDF – Hungarian Democratic Forum

Similarly to the SZDSZ, the MDF has not had a huge impact on Hungarian foreign policy in the last years, having been in opposition since 2002 and just the most junior member of the government during 1998–2002. Moreover, the number of mandates in Parliament – currently 11 out of 386 – does not provide for a significant position either. It has already been mentioned that there is not even one MDF representative in the foreign affairs committee.

However, the MDF used to be the strongest Hungarian political party at the beginning of 1990s. József Antall, the MDF chairman and Prime Minister

of Hungary, contributed significantly to the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the creation of the Visegrád Group. The interest in foreign affairs has thus survived in the party.

When talking about MDF foreign policy views, party representatives discern themselves from the FIDESZ to a large extent. It is logical, because not only do the two parties tend to be put together as 'the opposition,' but the MDF needs to prove its autonomous existence. The MDF presents itself as value-based on foreign affairs, but more pragmatic than the FIDESZ, which is seen as rather dogmatic. Just like the SZDSZ, the MDF derives its emphasis on values from the Hungarian national experience during communism.

As in other parties, the Brussels brain-drain has affected the MDF as well. Péter Olajos, a long-time head of the party's European Integration Office, became its only MEP.

US Military Presence in Europe

Views of the MDF on the relationship between the US and the EU are, in fact, rather similar to the second small party of the Hungarian political spectrum, the SZDSZ. In addition, the MDF is a vivid supporter of both the deepening of European integration and the strong role of the US in European security. The EP election programme claimed that the voice of the EU should be heard in all important foreign and security policy questions. The integration objective should not just be a common economic area, but primarily a political union of nations and citizens (MDF 2004). On the other hand, the general election programme of 2002 emphasised the fact that NATO provided security and supported '*nation-building*' (MDF 2002).

According to the MDF, the US military presence in Europe is important for securing the continent. Therefore, the party supports the anti-missile defence bases that the US wants to build in Europe. The party believes that they will improve Europe's security. It considers the bases to be an issue of bilateral negotiations of individual states.

Relations between NATO and the ESDP

While supporting the further development of the ESDP, the Democratic Forum remains cautious regarding its possible consequences for NATO because NATO is seen as the guarantor of Hungarian military security (MDF

2006). However ideally, both NATO and the EU should be the ultimate security guarantors in Europe. Therefore, the ESDP should be created in close cooperation and matched to NATO (MDF 2004).

The fear of hampering NATO leads the MDF to reject a creation of a European army. The party would be ready to approve such a thing only if it was closely coordinated with NATO. Close cooperation and coordination is also required while deciding on future military missions. The MDF supports the notion of independent EU military missions and sees them even as preferable where the EU interests are more direct than those of its allies. Although every mission should, however, be considered and discussed individually, they do not have to be exclusive. Regarding the use of an allied pool of force, the MDF rejects the priority of European battle groups without prior consent from the US and NATO.

Iraq

The MDF faction was the loudest critic of the Hungarian participation in the Iraqi operation within the Hungarian parliament. The MPs for the MDF voted for sending the troops originally, but changed their opinion rather quickly. They argued that the troops and the mandate were not appropriate to the situation on the ground and that the military action was not prepared (Princz 2004a). In 2003, György Gémesi, an MP for the MDF, suggested a pull-out only few weeks after the Hungarian Parliament prolonged the contingent's mandate. He argued that the soldiers were trained for home-defence and not to be deployed in a war zone. In his opinion, Hungary had already fulfilled its obligation to NATO by deploying peacekeepers, but was not obliged to participate in a war (The Budapest Sun 2003).

In 2004, the party was very coherent in its opposition to any further prolongation and contributed to the ultimate pull-out. The party chairman, Ibolya Dávid, emphasised again that the peacekeeper mandate of the soldiers did not reflect the situation on the ground. She stressed that the MDF was always a partner in importing democracy into a country peacefully, but war was only the last solution (Princz 2004b).

However, the position of the MDF has not arisen to unanimity from within the party. Apparently, there were voices approving of Hungary's participation in the operation. The negative position was the result of an internal discussion and concerned the Hungarian contingent only. Otherwise, the author has been assured, the MDF is supportive to the efforts in Iraq.

It is questionable of whether there was a shift in the party opinion on Iraq during 2004–07, or whether the MDF called for a pull-out due to, rather, a domestic driven policy. Since the pull-out, there has not been any public debate on Iraq in Hungary, despite the fact that a small number of Hungarian soldiers are still present in the country. It is thus difficult to compare public statements from MDF representatives on the issue. Yet, Ibolya Dávid has been reported to be travelling to and from the US very often, which might be a sign of her rather positive view of the US.

External Aspects of the War on Terror

The Democratic Forum claims that Hungary is '*a partner in the war against terrorism*' (Princz 2004b). Its representatives admit that such a war may require extraordinary measures and intensive cooperation among various institutions and agencies. However, they point out that human rights must be respected. Thus, they stress that the US must revisit Guantánamo Bay base issue.

MDF representatives prefer to avoid a clear statement on the alleged CIA flights in European countries. They refer to procedures and legal bases in the affected countries as the measure of supporting or condemning the flights. There was no need for a discussion in Hungary, something that would have pushed the MDF to a clear position, since the country was not mentioned among the places where the planes were reported to land.

Other Foreign Policy Issues

In general, the MDF supports the US in its activities in the world. It does back the embargo against Cuba, although it should be depending on the evolution of the Cuban regime. It also welcomes the increasing US presence in Central Asia. The party also believes that the US activity may have positive consequences not only in energy security, but also in the overall stability and democratization in the region.

In the Middle East peace process, the MDF supports all initiatives that bring the parties back to the negotiating table. During the Israeli operation in Lebanon last year, the MDF advocated the US backing of Israel because it saw the operation as a response to terrorist activities.

Together with other Hungarian political parties, the MPs for the MDF who were present for the voting gave their voice for the Status of the International Criminal Court.

Conclusion

Foreign policy does not play a decisive role in today's Hungary. On the contrary, domestic policy has often influenced foreign affairs. The polarization of the Hungarian political spectrum further intensifies such an effect.

Hungary's relationship to the EU and the US used to be the core of a national consensus on foreign policy during the 1990s. It still can be traced today in the overall party orientation – all Hungarian political parties are, overall, rather pro-European – but the differences are in detail and accented by ubiquitous politicisation.

Hungarian political parties can be distributed along the left-right axis only with huge difficulties. The left wing has recently introduced very liberal, Blairite ideas that go against what has traditionally been attributed to the left. The right wing suffers from nationalism and populism, which has led to protectionism – again not usually attributed to the right. With some reservations, however, we can place the parties along the axis from left to right as follows: MSZP, SZDSZ, MDF, and FIDESZ.

Having investigated the positions of Hungarian political parties, the following statements can be made if we do not include the FIDESZ:

- The more to the left the party stands, the more critical it is of the US.
- The more right the party stands, the more cautious it is about the role of the EU.

The MSZP has shown a large degree of criticism of the US and a huge support of the political integration of the EU. The positions of the SZDSZ are characterised by a strong emphasis on European political union, although, at the same time, exhibiting an openness to US policies and actions. The MDF is very supportive of the US. Among these three parties, the MDF emphasises the role of NATO the most important and pursues a conditionality of EU integration in the field of security policy with respect to NATO.

The FIDESZ is a special case that does not fit into this pattern. The party has been cautious about both EU political integration and the US. The emphasis on the nation and rhetoric that is aimed at weakening extreme right parties, along with populism and anti-Americanism in economic affairs, corresponds to parties further right in Western Europe's political spectra.

The rhetoric, programmes, and statements of the parties' representatives may serve to create a general conception of their respective policies. Once in

power, however, the MSZP, as well as the FIDESZ, have taken up pragmatic policies aimed at good relations with the US, despite the possible scepticism of the United States and its policies. This pragmatism is probably necessary for a rather weak country firmly established in the Euro-Atlantic structures and will not change in the near future.

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POLAND

David Král

Table 1: Parties in the Polish Government

Term	Prime Minister	Parties Represented in the Governing Coalition
1989 – 1990	Tadeusz Mazowiecki	Government of National Unity: A wide coalition of communists, post-communist parties, and Solidarity
1991	Jan Krzysztof Bielecki	UD, KLD, PC, ZChN
1991 – 1992	Jan Olszewski	ZChN, PC (post-Solidarity)
1992	Waldemar Pawlak	Caretaker – never won a vote of confidence
1992 – 1993	Hana Suchocka	Post-Solidarity: UD, KLD, ZChN, PL, PPP
1993 – 1994	Waldemar Pawlak 2nd cabinet	SLD – PSL
1994 – 1995	Józef Oleksy	SLD – PSL
1995 – 1997	Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz	SLD – PSL
1997 – 2001	Jerzy Buzek	AWS – UW (from 2000, the minority government)
2001 – 2004	Leszek Miller	SLD – UP – PSL (until 2003, after that minority government of SLD – UP)
2004 – 2005	Marek Belka	SLD – UP minority government
2005 – 2006	Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz	PiS – SRP – LPR
2006 – 2007	Jarosław Kaczyński	PiS – SRP – LPR
From 2007	Donald Tusk	PO – PSL

Acronyms:

AWS Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność (Solidarity Electoral Action)
KLD Kongres Liberalno-Demokratyczny (Liberal-Democratic Congress)
LPR Liga Polskich Rodzin (League of Polish Families)
PC Porozumienie Centrum (Centre Agreement)
PiS Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice)
PL Porozumienie Ludowe (People's Agreement)
PO Platforma Obywatelska (Civic Platform)
PPP Polska Partia Pracy (Polish Labour Party)
PSL Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (Polish People's Party)
SLD Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (Democratic Left Alliance)
SRP Samoobrona RP (Self-Defence of the Republic of Poland)
UD Unia Demokratyczna (Democratic Union)
UP Unia Pracy (Labour Union)
UW Unia Wolności (Freedom Union)
ZChN Zjednoczenie Chrześcijańsko-Narodowe (Christian-National Union)

The Polish Political Scene

Giving an account of the Polish political scene is not a particularly easy task. Unlike in other countries of the region, especially in the Czech Republic or Hungary, Polish politics has been extremely changeable with new parties emerging and disappearing, uniting and splitting, and politicians changing their party affiliations. In reviewing all the political parties registered since 1989, we would arrive at an incredible figure of seventy-four. As a result, the voters' behaviour has been highly volatile. Due to this fact, the right-left division and the typology of political parties applicable in Western Europe or other established democracies also pose certain problems in the Polish context. In terms of the party system, different cleavages endure in Poland as a result of the transformation process. The right-left division, albeit existent, does not seem to be the main dividing point among political parties; if so, it is still more a socio-economic transformation cleavage rather than the established owner-employer or centre-periphery conflict line that prevails in the West. For instance, the existence of populist Self-Defence (Samoobrona) is often conceived to represent the 'losers' of the transformation process. Certainly, the nature-of-the-regime conflict line endures strongly on the current political scene. Although it divides the post-communist parties of the 'left,' it also

increasingly does so to the more pragmatic Civic Platform (PO) from Self-Defence and the Law and Justice Party (PiS), with the latter strongly (and, in some experts' views, almost hysterically) emphasising the need for overcoming the residues of the past. The axiological (value-based) conflict line separates the League of Polish Families (LPR) and Law and Justice (PiS), who stand for extremely conservative and supposedly traditional 'Polish' values; these parties put a strong emphasis on a link with the Catholic Church and issues such as abortion, gay rights, or euthanasia, separating them from more liberal and secular oriented parties such as the Civic Platform (PO), the Union of the Democratic Left (SLD), or the Polish People's Party (PSL). To some extent, we could even track signs of the national conflict line with parties such as Self-Defence or the League of Polish Families (LPR), who strongly emphasize the national character of the Polish state and define it against the others (let it be the EU or Anti-Semitic cards played by some members of the LPR). A classical cleavage centre – periphery is demonstrated by the existence of two peasant parties – the Polish People's Party (PSL) and Self-Defence. Both parties appeal mainly to agrarian voters, the former being close to the Czech Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL) with a very pragmatic approach that can swing either left (as in 1993–97 and 2001–03) or right (from 2007), and the latter being largely populist, appealing mainly to negative voters.

One feature, however, is very characteristic for the Polish political scene. Polish experts use the terms 'left' and 'right' quite extensively. This can be, perhaps, attributed to the system's extensive fragmentation, whereby it would be difficult to describe it otherwise. The question remains as to what extent this is consistent with Rokkan's classification of the right-left cleavage in Western Europe. It can be assumed that the 'left' represents various parties that emerged from the pre-1989 dominant Polish United Workers' Party – PZPR and those who held power between 1993 to 1997 and then again from 2001 until 2005. Similarly, the parties of the 'right' (drawing their substrate mainly from the Solidarity movement) were present in the first governments after the fall of communism (1989 to 1993), then again from 1997 to 2001, and lastly being in office since 2005. It is a paradox to see that, despite this fragmentation through the course of 1990's, the left was the dominant force in Polish politics and was backed by the presidency of Alexander Kwaśniewski; the situation was totally reversed after 2005, when the parties on the 'left' fell into huge disarray.[1]

1) This happened despite the fact that three leftist parties [the SLD (Democratic Left Alliance of W. Olejniczak), the SDPL (Social Democracy of Poland of Marek Borowski), and the PD (Democratic Party of Janusz Onyszkiewicz)] ran for the 2007 elections as the LiD – the Left and Democrats alliance. This coalition has, however, split again.

In fact, some analysts think that the left will not be able to recuperate in Poland in the foreseeable future and that the current political scene will remain for years and be dominated by the right. The outcome of the 2007 Polish elections illustrates this tendency quite clearly: while the 'right' (i.e. Civic Platform, Law and Justice, and Pawlak's People's Party) holds 406 mandates in the current Sejm, the left-wing parties, including the SLD, the DP, and the SDPL, came to hold a mere 53 seats! Even more remarkable is the situation in the Senate, where only the PO and the PiS are represented, the former having 60 senators and the latter 38, with the only left-wing senator being former Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Wlodzimierz Cimoszewicz. Thus, the Senate is also totally dominated by the political right.

The second distinctive feature of the Polish political system is the presence of populist parties, namely the Self-Defence Party (Samoobrona) of Andrzej Leper, and the League of Polish Families (LRP)[2] of Roman Giertych. Although their influence has largely diminished since the 2007 general election, where they won only 1.53% and 1.30% of votes respectively, they have been part of the governing coalition in the 2005–2007 government; this era marks the critical period for examining many of the foreign policy issues discussed in this paper. These parties were very loud on issues such as abortion, gay rights, the role of the Church, or the rights of the peasants. On many occasions, they were held responsible for the condemnation and ridicule of the Polish government during this period. It is not surprising that – despite the fact that the two parties stand on the opposite sides of the left-right spectrum – it is in foreign policy where the positions of these two parties often converged due to their accent on Polish sovereignty, security, the need to protect Polish interests and values, etc. This also points to additional problems for the right-left classification of the Polish scene as described above.

Polish political parties have gone through several metamorphoses during the course of the transformation period. However, the point of this paper is not to analyse the evolution of the Polish party system, but to focus on the differences among the political parties concerning the foreign policy agenda. For this reason, attention will be paid only to the most relevant political parties who are currently represented in the Polish parliament, or those that were represented in the period relevant for the case studies examined.

2) The League of Polish Families draws its name from a pre-war ancestor party with a strongly anti-Semitic agenda.

Positioning of the Polish Political Parties on the Right – Left Axis

Abbreviations/acronyms:

SLD	Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej)
SDPL	Social Democracy of Poland (Socjaldemokracyja Polska)
PD	Democratic Party (Partia Demokratyczna)
PSL	Polish People's Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe)
PO	Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska)
PiS	Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedłiwość)
LPR	League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodzin)

National Consensus and the Relevance of Foreign Policy

In many respects, Poland represents a special case among Central and Eastern European countries and the new members of the European Union. This applies to the new self-perception of Poland in the international arena, its foreign policy goals, priorities and consensus, as well as some structural pre-conditions relating to the specifics of Polish society, its political scene, and political parties.

Poland has emerged from communism as a country championing integration with Euro-Atlantic structures, as well as having a strong pro-US inclination in its foreign policy. This goes along (to a differing degree) with the inclination of political elites with other countries of the region. There are, however, other features that make the Polish case and the orientation of its foreign policy, particularly, a strong reliance on the United States, distinct from its neighbours.

The first distinction has to do with many historical reminiscences and the self-perception of Poland's position in Europe. The 'partition syndrome'[3] and the legacy of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact resonates across the Polish

3) Relating to the three successive partitions of Poland in 1772, 1793, and 1795 by Russia, Prussia, and the Habsburg Empire and resulting in the disappearance of Poland from the map of Europe for over 100 years, with a short intermezzo of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw existent during the Napoleonic Wars.

political elites, as well as among the general population, far more strongly than, for instance, the Munich Agreement in the Czech Republic or Slovakia and, arguably, even more than the Treaty of Trianon in Hungary. Since the re-emergence of an independent Poland after WWI, the main imperative of Poland was to reassure its sole existence and sovereignty in the buffer zone between two of its powerful neighbours, Germany in the West and Russia (or the Soviet Union) in the East. The fall of communism and subsequent integration with the West has not changed much in what is, by outside observers, often viewed as a Polish obsession with security. On one hand, it is true that relations with Germany have improved immensely during the course of 1990's and even more so in the last year,[4] as well as general perception of Germans among the Polish population (Cwiek-Karpowicz 2006). However, the recent rapprochement between Germany and Russia on many issues, especially the energy deal on the North Stream pipeline that bypasses Poland, has led the Polish political representation to be suspicious about German dealings with its Eastern neighbour and led the former Polish Minister of Defence Sikorski to compare this deal to a new Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. These perceptions put security and foreign policy, in general, very high on the Polish political agenda. In fact, there is a strong consensus across the political spectrum on the importance of foreign policy. This also plays an important role in the perception of the United States as the ultimate guarantor of Polish security. Among the Polish political elites, there is a widely shared notion that it is in the Polish national interest to keep the US strongly engaged in Europe, as well as to support its actions in a wider international context.

Another important element is that Poland views itself as a big player in the enlarged European Union[5]. Poland definitely sees itself as a setter rather than a recipient of foreign policy in Europe. Poles seem to view EU foreign policy to be set by the big players and have made many attempts to assert themselves as part of the G-6 club within the EU and also engage in other initiatives involving the major EU players, such as the Weimar Triangle. Whether their strategy has been successful or not is another question; in any case, there is a widely shared notion that Poland has to engage actively in EU foreign policy making. Linked to what has been said, it is natural that

4) After the Polish elections in 2007 and a Citizen Platform-led government, many experts refer to new Polish-German rapprochement, illustrated by close personal links between German Foreign Minister Steinmeier and Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski; see also further.

5) Although some Polish experts claim that Poland has an internal dilemma, which could be referred to as the 'size complex' – it is not always evident whether the Poland wants to act the same way as the other big players in the EU (e.g. Germany, UK, France), or rather to align with smaller countries, particularly its neighbours.

Poland remains committed to making sure that Europe and the United States work closely together on many foreign policy issues. However, the desire to be a stronger player in EU foreign and security policy also somehow changes the Polish perceptions of Atlanticism, as we will see.

A traditional playground of Polish foreign policy activism is Eastern Europe, where Poland has played an important role in respect to the EU as well. It was the first country in the EU to play the Ukrainian card after the Orange revolution, calling for the recognition of the 'European choice' of Ukraine (among with other EU governments) and pushing consistently for an association agreement with Ukraine. In addition, the strong position that translated into a veto occurred over the mandate to negotiate a new EU-Russia enhanced treaty to replace the expired Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (PCA), justified by the Russian ban on the export of Polish meat to Russia; this has been another example that Poland will not surrender its national interest in the region. If we add the activism of the Polish political establishment on Belarus, pushing for the extension of a visa ban on top Belarus officials in the EU, Poland emerges as a strong player in the Eastern policy, striving to shape the agenda in its own favour.

But the manifestation of Poland's self-perception in foreign policy is not only evident in its immediate vicinity. Polish government was one of the fiercest supporters of the George W. Bush administration in Iraq, having signed the Letter of Eight, sending troops to Iraq as a part of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and agreeing to administer one of the occupation sectors. Some prominent Polish politicians and thinkers even acknowledged that it was the decision to send around 200 Polish troops to Iraq (under Operation Iraqi Freedom) and, subsequently, as many as 2,500 in the stabilization mission, plus the agreement to take over one of the stabilization sectors, that finally parachuted Poland into the group of important players in international relations, along with countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom. For instance, Dariusz Rosati, MEP and Former Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1995–97, claims that, by sending the troops, Poland overnight turned into a country that matters much more on the international scene than it did two or three years prior to the invasion (Kosiewski and Krzeczunowicz 2003: 23).

Another element underpinning more global Polish aspirations was the proposal for the reform of the United Nations (Kosiewski and Krzeczunowicz 2003: 16). It was in 2002 that Poland had tabled some of the first proposals. Although they originally generated very little attention, they gradually built up a positive momentum that attracted the attention of big players such as

the United States and Russia, even though such countries originally seemed to be quite indifferent towards discussing these issues or even considering possible changes.

Therefore, even if the primary imperative of Polish foreign policy remains its reassertion, in security terms, in a wider European context, and particularly vis-à-vis Russia, contemporary Polish foreign policy is characterized by a multiplicity of interests and playgrounds in which Poland seeks an active or even a leadership role – let it be the United Nations, the EU, the Weimar Triangle, Visegrád, the Central European Initiative, Iraq, Afghanistan, cooperation in the Baltic region, or active contribution to the promotion of democracy. Some experts would question the adequacy of current Polish foreign policy goals and ambitions, given its limited resources, legacy of recent transformation, and continuing relative poverty compared to other large countries in the EU and the US. The actual effects of this activism from recent Polish foreign policy still remain to be seen.

Positions of the Polish Political Parties on Foreign Policy Issues

While it has been said that the political scene in Poland is not easy to describe or analyse, foreign policy in many respects represents a much more consensual issue in Poland due to the factors that were mentioned in the previous section. This is not to say that the positions of the individual parties on foreign policy do not differ; however, these are certainly not the issues that would pose major cleavages in the Polish political arena. Nevertheless, 'the devil is in the details;' thus, a closer examination of particular issues will show certain nuances and divergences.

Views of the US, the EU, and NATO

As well as in the case of other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, it is also true of Poland that the twin goals of EU and NATO integration represented a cornerstone of the country's foreign policy during the course of the 1990's, as well as the beginning of 21st century. These are, however, complemented by a third goal, something not as visible in other countries in the region – a necessity to keep a very close bilateral link with the United States. In reality, while Polish foreign policy was often at odds with the EU (especially in the final phase of accession negotiations or the negotiations over the Constitution and, subsequently, the Lisbon treaty), relations with the United States have been excellent throughout, regardless whether the 'right' or 'left' were in power. This is quite visible on the change of the presidency

(which in Poland plays a somewhat stronger role in foreign policy than in other countries in the region). Aleksander Kwaśniewski enjoyed the reputation of being both Altanticist and pro-European; his links with both Washington and Brussels were excellent. While the assumption of the presidency by Lech Kaczyński was met with a lot of nervousness in Brussels (and rightly so), the relations with the US administration were not substantially affected by this change.

Marcin Zaborowski explains the relationship and esteem for the United States in Poland, or what he calls the Polish 'instinctive Atlanticism,' (Zaborowski 2004: 7) through several factors. It is, firstly, a result of a historical legacy dating back as late as the 18th century (the role played by generals Kosciuzsko and Pulawski in the American War on Independence), as well as the role that the United States played in the re-creation of Poland in 1918, in the defeat of Germany during WWII, and later in the defeat of communism. However, there are other factors that account for this 'special relationship.' One of them is the presence of a large community of immigrants from Polish descent in the United States, accounting for as many as 10 million people and making Chicago the second biggest Polish city after Warsaw (ibid). The fact that many Americans of Polish origin possess voting rights makes the relationship with the US a crucial question for any Polish government. It is also interesting to note that Poles abroad enjoy special attention in election party programmes. While this traditionally meant mainly Poles in the US and Canada, large Polish communities have recently emerged in the UK and Ireland where many Poles migrated after EU accession.

The relationship with the United States enjoys a key part in the programmes of many Polish political parties. However, the place and formulation differ, which might indicate an interesting pattern for future developments. For instance, the PiS programme for 2007 addressed the US in the security section of the foreign policy programme, which happens to be its first part, and refers to the 'strategic partnership' between Poland and USA in the context of anti-missile defence (PiS 2007). Similarly, the PO programme refers to the strategic partnership with the United States (PO 2007), but in the context of a foreign policy section called 'A Strong and Safe Poland in the EU,' stating that keeping a close alliance with the United States is as important as enhancing the position of Poland in the EU. The programme of the Democratic Party (PD) in the section called 'We will ensure a powerful position for Poland in Europe and in the World' mentions the relations with the US only in the fourth point, while the first point highlights the necessity

to support the integration of EU foreign policy, arguing that 'we want to be part of such an organization of states that possesses a means of influencing the world order.' In the part dealing with the role of the US in the world, it mentions that the EU and the USA together bear responsibility for solving many of the worlds' problems and that Poland plays an important role in tightening the transatlantic partnership.

In the following section, we will analyze and explain the position of the relevant political parties on different issues that involve the United States, and explain how a particular position has emerged and why it is so. Rather than following the position of each party on each topic, we will try to proceed issue by issue and look into the positions of individual parties on these questions and explain why and how the stance has evolved and changed.

US Military Presence in Europe

There is a general consensus among the main Polish political parties analysed herein that the United States is absolutely essential in terms of providing for European, and for that matter Polish, security. This fact is widely acknowledged in many party programmes. The PO election programme states that it is in the 'vital interest of Poland to assure a US military presence in Europe.' The PSL 2007 election manifesto recognizes that 'the US, as a global power bearing highest responsibility for the international security, must remain present in Europe.' Law and Justice, in its programme, refers to an enhanced Polish security through Polish participation in the anti-missile project, namely by placing US missiles in Poland. Most of the left-wing parties, however, do not make such specific references to the US presence in Europe in their basic programme documents, nor do the small populist parties – the LPR and Self-Defence.

Poland, as viewed from the outside, has an image of the most ardent supporter of US military presence from the 'New Europe.' Generally, this picture is right; however, a closer look at some detailed policy issues, nevertheless, reveals differences among the political parties' positions.

Since 2006, the discussion on the US military presence was very much reduced to the issue of placing the components of US anti-missile defence shield in Poland and the Czech Republic. The proposal to host the base in Poland was made by the US administration at the end of 2006 at a time when the government was composed of Law and Justice, the League of Polish Families, and Self-Defence. The Law and Justice party welcomed the

initiative quite enthusiastically, viewing it as yet another recognition of the importance of Poland for the United States and an opportunity to boost the strategic partnership between the two countries. The proposal to install such system in Poland was also welcomed by the LPR, a coalition partner at the time. This step was not largely disputed by the Civic Platform, the main opposition party at that time.

The concerns voiced on the matter came mainly from the opposition parties, particularly the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD). It is not to say that the SLD is against the anti-missile system as such; however, it is certainly more cautious. Although former Prime Ministers Miller and Belka supported the concept, they underlined that it should be an integral part of the NATO defence system and that Poland must be consulted along with other allies in NATO, as well as within the European Union. An outright opposition came from the Polish People's Party (PSL), who signalled its disapproval of this initiative.

Nevertheless, the calculation of the governing coalition at this time went beyond a mere debate about the anti-missile shield as such. It opened up a question of Polish security and the guarantees provided by multilateral organisations, namely NATO. Two people were instrumental in this respect – the Minister of Defence, Radoslaw Sikorski, and his deputy Witold Waszczykowski, who was appointed chief negotiator with the US administration on the missile base in Poland. Although Sikorski is considered to be the spiritual father of the idea of placing the base on the Polish territory, not least because of his previous engagement in Washington and his close links to neo-conservative circles, he proved to be very tough on the Americans in clearly articulating Polish demands. Both Sikorski, and Wasczykowski even more so, voiced that the plans for the base in Poland would have to be accompanied by a bilateral security arrangement with the United States. Sikorski even compared the desired arrangements to the guarantees the USA is providing to Japan or South Korea. Furthermore, the base would have to be equipped with the Patriot missiles and complemented with the enhanced system of regional defence. Finally, the clash between Sikorski and the PiS leaders, particularly the Kaczyński brothers, resulted in his resignation after not having been able to defend his tough negotiating stance in the cabinet.[6]

The developments around the anti-missile system in Poland took a rather different turn as a result of the 2007 general elections, which brought to gov-

6) The reasons for the resignation of Mr. Sikorski in February 2007 are not clear. It is likely that it happened through the pressure of the President's chancellery; however, the reasons were probably multiple, along with the ensuing WSI (Military Information Services) scandals that involved Antoni Macierewicz, the person in charge of its reconstruction.

ernment the coalition of Donald Tusk's Civic Platform (PO) and Waldemar Pawlak's People's Party (PSL). This, in itself, made for a certain twist in the game. Firstly, the new foreign minister in Tusk's government is Radoslaw Sikorski, who originally served as Defence Minister in the PiS-led government and was put in charge of the negotiations once again. His hard stance in the negotiations with the US was already mentioned. While the Czech Republic had already completed its negotiations on the placement of the radar system, the talks with Poland were stuck at an impasse, leading to the frustration of American negotiators, and even the threat that the US would pull out of the deal. This threat did not seem real by most Polish experts. Firstly, the approach was seen as traditionally tough Polish negotiating tactics, a method that we know even from negotiations on the country's EU accession, voting in the Council, etc. Secondly, the PO actually signalled before the elections that there would have to be a clear *quit pro quo* for an affirmative vote from Poland, particularly, the US participation in upgrading the Polish army with Patriot missiles. Thirdly, it would be absurd to accept that Sikorski, who was behind the whole idea, would let the talks collapse – it is widely thought that, given his long experience in Washington, he knows exactly how far he can go and what he can demand during negotiations. The position of the PO has been that it would not endorse the base without being sure that this deal would substantially improve the security of Poland. Unlike the PiS, who seemed to be more concerned about having a bilateral security agreement with the United States, it seems that the PO has been pulling more in the direction of a substantial US contribution to upgrading of Polish defence systems, as well as bearing a large bulk of the cost for such an operation.

In any case, the tactics of the PO have been heavily criticised by the PiS as extremely damaging to traditionally very good US-Polish relations. Similarly, Jaroslaw Kaczyński strongly attacked Tusk for his visit to Moscow during which he tried to explain the importance of the missile deal with the United States to the Russian administration. This might have to do with the fact that the PiS clearly acknowledged that he views the missile base as a security guarantee vis-à-vis the Russian threat. The PO has done a lot to dismantle Russian concerns, and has instead focused the negotiations on American participation in upgrading Polish army equipment[7].

7) The fact that the PO's position was more of a negotiated tactics rather than an opposition to the base is reiterated by the fact that at the time of the editing of the publication, the agreement between the USA and Poland on the missile defence has been successfully concluded.

Relationship with NATO and the ESDP

It can generally be said that the rightmost Polish political parties are very supportive of the United States and NATO as the security agents and very suspicious of the EU in that respect. The position of the LPR can be illustrated by a statement attributed to Giertych, in which he says that Poland 'could become the US aircraft carrier.'*8* On the other hand, given an overall Euroscepticism from the LPR, one would hardly expect that the party would be too much in favour of building up European defence, or even a European army.

The position of the PiS is very similar, albeit a bit contradictory and inconsistent. It could have taken many by surprise when Jaroslaw Kaczyński, on his first official visit in the capacity of Prime Minister in Brussels during August 2006, announced that he wants 'the EU to constitute a power similar to the US' (Spinant and Taylor 2006) and that he supports 'a strong, political Europe that would also be a true military power.' Lech Kaczyński, in November 2006, supported the creation of a European army that would comprise 100,000 troops, remain closely linked to NATO, and execute military operations outside Europe (Cienski and Wagstyl 2006). However, most Polish analysts believe that this does not reflect Kaczyński's conviction and that he stated this in an attempt to show that Poland could play a constructive role in the building of the ESDP. In addition, the way it was supposed to be presented caused a lot of confusion, leaving the credibility of such a proposal in doubt.[9] In reality, Lech Kaczyński remains deeply disillusioned with the actual role that Europe can play in the security arena.

Beyond that, there is scepticism not only towards the ESDP, but also NATO. This is further supported by statements from the Deputy Minister of Defence Wasczykowski that 'NATO is not an alliance of our dreams.' He suggests that NATO can no longer assure the security of Poland due to the fact that the Alliance has not invested its time in enhancing its defence systems since 1999 (Warsaw Business Journal 2007). This distrust towards NATO was also fleshed out by another prominent PiS figure, the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Sejm, Pawel Zalewski, stating that the distrust is caused by the lack of engagement from allies in NATO missions (Palata 2007). Thus, the PiS, within the framework of bilateral negotiations on the anti-missile defence

8) Quoted by one of the leading Polish experts on the issue.

9) Lech Kaczyński acknowledged that the idea was discussed a week earlier between Prime Minister Jaroslaw Kaczyński and German Chancellor Merkel; however, Jaroslaw Kaczyński expressely denied having talked to Merkel about such a proposal.

system, seeks a special defence deal with the United States similar to arrangements with other countries such as the UK, Japan, or South Korea.

The position of the PO recognizes the key importance of NATO, the USA, and the EU in the context of building Polish security arrangements. In its election manifesto of 2007, it states clearly that it wants Europe to accept more responsibility for its own security, as well as that of the world. This is quite important, as it suggests that the PO is supportive of an active Polish engagement in missions implemented under the EU flag. However, it simultaneously stresses that the EU must implement such tasks in alliance with the United States and NATO and that they bear a joint responsibility for global peace, security, and the stability of international order (PO 2007*)*. A more balanced approach to EU initiatives and an evolving defence policy are also ways of distinguishing the PO from the PiS, whose policy of ardent pro-Americanism has been seen as extremely damaging to Polish interests by Donald Tusk, as well as some prominent PO members in the European Parliament (e.g. Saryusz-Wolski).

The Democratic Party (PD) shows an even more favourable approach to the ESDP, EU-led missions, and more responsibility from Europe for its own defence. One of the prominent party members, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and recently deceased member of the European Parliament, Bronisław Geremek, has co-authored a declaration, adopted by other prominent figures in the EP such as Elmar Brok, Jo Leinen, and Nicole Fontaine, calling, inter alia, for 'the EU to establish a foreign policy, security, and defence union' and that the EU should be equipped with 'joint defence forces that would genuinely enable the European Union to act autonomously.' However, the position of Geremek, who was in the European Parliament since 2004, was probably somewhat more enthusiastic about European defence capabilities than the party as a whole. For instance, in the opinion of the party's leader, Janusz Onyszkiewicz, the EU military missions are preferable only in Europe or perhaps in Africa; however, in other regions, it is the USA or NATO that should take the lead. Although he claims to be in favour of the progressive framing of the ESDP, he underlines that the ultimate responsibility for European security must be borne by both NATO and the EU in close co-operation. He is neither in favour of creating an autonomous EU-army, unless it is closely co-ordinated with NATO.

It is also necessary to highlight that both Geremek and Onyskewicz held key positions in the AWS[10]-led government (the former was the Foreign

10) AWS: Solidarity Electoral Action, a party that was the leader in the 1997–2001 government. It subsequently split into currently existing right-wing and centre-right parties, such as the PiS, the PO, and the DP.

Affairs Minister, the latter the Defence Minister) between 1997 and 2000 (representing the Democratic Union party and resigning after the AWS-UW coalition broke up) and, during this period, were highly critical of the EU plans to establish a EU security and defence policy. The main concerns were related to the exclusion of non-EU NATO members from the decisions made within the framework of the ESDP. Geremek explicitly argued for including six non-EU European NATO members into ESDP decision making, while Onyszkiewicz stated that the EU plan was unclear and lacking in military and operational viability (Zaborowski 2004:17).

The position of the left parties, the SLD and the SDPL, on the relationship to the ESDP and NATO remains a bit blurry. There is no explicit reference to NATO or the ESDP in the party election manifestos. However, given the deeds, one can assume that they also view NATO and the US as the cornerstone of Polish security. It was under the premiership of Leszek Miller in December 2002 that one of the biggest military deals ever was executed, when the Polish government accepted a 3.8 billion USD loan from the US Congress to procure 18 F-16 aircraft from Lockheed Martin (Wayne 2003). In many ways, this was interpreted as a desire from Poland to prove its credibility as a mature NATO member. Nevertheless, the choice of procuring American, rather than European, defence systems was also an expression of the pro-American credentials of the Poles (Zaborowski 2004: 7). Kwaśniewski, during the course of his term of office, consistently praised the leading role of the United States in the world, claiming that it is 'both unquestionable and that it should be exercised.'

The Foreign Minister in the 2001–2005 government, Wlodimierz Cimoszewicz (SLD),[11] took a more positive approach towards the gradual development of the ESDP, stressing that the ESDP should concern itself with developing capabilities rather than institutions.[12] He acknowledged explicitly that Poland was in favour of deepening its integration in the CFSP, while still stressing the value of transatlantic relations. He also supported the establishment of the European Armaments Agency, however, while also pointing out that it should remain open to transatlantic armament co-operation. During his keynote address at the Batory Foundation conference in 2003, Cimoszewicz called for close EU-US co-operation and acknowledged that it is the country's interested to foster it for fundamental reasons (Kosiewski and Krzeczunowicz 2003). At the same time, he admitted during the speech that some of the concepts

11) Cimoszewicz has not been in politics since 2005; however, in 2007, he was elected to the Senate as an independent senator.
12) Lecture by W. Cimosczewicz at the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Berlin, 12 March 2003.

for protecting US security interests (such as the 'coalition of the willing' for addressing unconventional threats) could undermine NATO and imply a selective approach. This would indicate some criticism towards an overly unilateral approach of the United States and an inclination from the SLD to act through a multilateral framework rather than unilaterally, or in ad hoc coalitions.

To conclude, all the major parties agree that US involvement in Europe is crucial for Polish security, as well as that of NATO. However, the parties on the right, particularly the LPR and the PiS, are sceptical towards European plans for enhanced European security and a more active European involvement outside of Europe. The centre and centre-left parties (PO, PSL, DP, SLD, and SDPL) take a much more positive view of the emerging role of Europe as a security provider. However, their position and support is still conditioned on the fact that Europe will co-operate closely with NATO and the US, and also that Poland will be included in any substantial debate. The much more positive approach from the centre and left parties to the ESDP was facilitated by the accession of Poland to the EU, Polish participation in decision making regarding the ESDP, and in the European Armaments Agency. This fits with the Polish interest of being a strong and credible actor in the security field.

Iraq

For none of the other countries in the region is the relationship to the United States and Atlanticist inclination as illustrative as on examining the Polish involvement in Iraq. Maria Wągrowska refers to it as to the 'most controversial undertaking in Polish foreign and security policy during the last 15 years' (Wągrowska 2004).

When discussing Iraq in the context of the Polish political scene, one must distinguish between Polish participation in the military intervention and its subsequent stabilization of the country. As far as the first issue goes, there was relatively little debate; Poland's involvement in Operation Iraqi Freedom was not contested by any of the government or opposition parties, nor from the parties not represented in Parliament, and not even from the public administration (Wągrowska 2004). This support for the US intentions was symbolically expressed by Prime Minister Miller's signature of the famous 'Letter of Eight' in January 2003. The decision to send a strong, elite unit of 200 soldiers to participate in the intervention was adopted by the government in March 2003, endorsed by President Kwaśniewski, and supported by both major opposition parties, the PiS and the PO.

While Polish participation in the military operation was quite non-controversial and achieved quickly, Polish involvement in the stabilization mission started to point out divergences among various stakeholders, including the political parties. Firstly, even the government was surprised that Poland was invited to take command of one of the stabilization zones in Iraq. Even as early as March 2003, such a possibility had been practically ruled out, with the Minister of Defence Smajdziński arguing that this would 'have a negative influence on the finances of the department' (Wągrowska 2004: 16). Once it was agreed that the Americans would pay a substantial part of the activities of the contingent, including its transportation, the decision to move in was given a green light; the contingent was relocated to Iraq at the beginning of June 2003.

Since then, there has been a continuous debate in Poland about the costs and benefits of the Polish presence in Iraq. Originally, the government mandated that the contingency stay in Iraq until the end of 2003 with the possibility of prolonging the mission by one year and then, subsequently, by six-months periods.

The first politician that openly brought in the question of Polish withdrawal from Iraq was the Minister of Defence, Jerzy Szmajdziński, in an interview for Gazeta Wyborcza in October 2004. Szmajdziński, for the first time, set a deadline, stating that Poland would leave the country by the end of 2005, which was connected to the lapse of the Security Council Resolution n. 1546. This was followed by appeals from his party – the SLD – urging the government to set a pullout date. The appeal of the party congress adopted on 3 July 2004 came very soon after the official transfer of sovereignty to Iraqi authorities on 28 June 2004. In October, Marek Belka only very closely survived a vote of confidence after claiming that 'we would not stay in Iraq an hour longer than needed' and had to promise to scale down the Polish deployment of some 2,500 troops during the course of 2005. It is important to note that the pressure to do so did not come from the opposition, but rather from the ranks of the ruling party, the SLD.

The victory of the PiS in the 2005 elections marked a change in the position of the Polish pullout from Iraq. Although, originally, the remaining 1,500 troops that stayed were supposed to be withdrawn by January 2006, Prime Minister Marcinkiewicz decided to defer the decision after the outcome of the Iraqi elections in December 2005. He subsequently asked President Kaczyński to prolong the mandate by another year. Thus, the position in Iraq changed again, although the PiS remained virtually the only party supporting

a continuous deployment. The mandate was prolonged for yet another year at the beginning of 2007, although a further scaling down to 900 troops was also accepted by the government. The hard stance of the PiS was maintained, despite the escalation of violence against Poles present in Iraq. Shortly before the elections on 21 October 2007, a car transferring the Polish ambassador in Iraq was attacked, claiming the life of a Polish soldier; subsequently, there was another explosion near the Polish embassy. In fact, after the attacks, Prime Minister Kaczyński warned against "deserting" Iraq; Minister of Defence Szczyglo warned that 'anyone campaigning on the issue of withdrawal from Iraq would bear full responsibility for the welfare of Polish troops there.' (Dujisin 2007).

Even the smaller coalition parties, Self-Defence and the LPR, defended the pullout. Lepper's Self-Defence has been against the participation in the stabilization force for a long time. Two LPR ministers, Giertych and Wiechecki, clashed with the rest of the government over the prolongation of the mission and initiated a call for a national referendum on the issue that was to be called in May 2007. However, the proposal did not win the necessary absolute majority in the Sejm.

The Civic Platform (PO) has put withdrawal from Iraq at the top of its foreign policy agenda for the 2007 early elections. Donald Tusk was committed to terminating the Polish mission in Iraq completely by mid-2008. However, the need of co-habitation with PiS president Kaczyński, who has levers to defer the decision should he deem it premature, made things a bit more complicated. The president and the PO finally managed to strike a deal resulting in a compromise by which there would be a pullout by October 2008.

Let us briefly summarize and look at the reasons for the political parties' positions. For the PiS, which has been undoubtedly the staunchest supporter of continuing the Polish presence, support was motivated by its alleged expectations from the United States. At the time, when many countries were pulling their troops out of Iraq, even while situation constantly deteriorating, it was considered unwise to send a wrong signal to Washington. It is possible that Kaczyńskis also deemed it necessary to prove Polish credentials for the deals they needed to strike with the US on other issues, such as the missile base and a special security agreement with the US. For the PO, the engagement in Iraq did not pay back enough to Poland. For the PO, the Polish engagement in Iraq bore enormous costs, resulting in a resentment in public opinion and diminishing pro-Americanism in Poland; yet, Poland received very little or nothing in return. In the opinion of Tusk and Sikorski,

Poland did not get anything of what it wanted – visa waivers, army upgrades, or extensive orders in the reconstruction of Iraq. In the PO's opinion, it is necessary to show Washington that Poland would not support it at any cost and for no benefit. Thus, a very similar way of thinking that applied to the PO's position on anti-missile base. For the LPR and Self-Defence, the negative position of continuing the country's presence in Iraq is quite understandable – both parties are largely populist; public opinion (which was strongly against Polish involvement and the polls shifted even more in favour of Polish pull-out) is negative; the party cannot win any political points by supporting it. It was also difficult for these parties to conceive, something very much oriented to 'national interest' rhetoric, what the Polish interest is in keeping law and order in a faraway country. Finally, for the SLD, the arguments would be similar to the PO; the party has advocated for a pullout ever since the former passing of sovereignty to the Iraqi government happened. The argument voiced by the Polish left often entails that the Polish capacities are already overstretched by involvement in too many missions – however, particularly Iraq and Afghanistan are often mentioned. One could, perhaps, interpret it in a way that the approach of Poland should be more balanced – given that it has limited resources, Poland should not focus only on US-led missions, but should leave some capacity for active involvement in the ESDP. As was mentioned, the SLD wants Poland to play a strong role in European security. With too much of its energy being focused on Iraq and Afghanistan, it might lose the credibility amongst the strong players in the EU.

External Aspects on the War on Terror

The biggest endeavour in Polish involvement in a worldwide 'war on terror,' as defined by George W. Bush, is its involvement in Afghanistan, where Poland participates actively in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Poland contributes at the moment with around 1,200 troops to this NATO-led mission, as well as a special force named GROM, deployed in the Kandahar province for unconventional operations.

The Polish deployment in Afghanistan enjoys much larger support and consensus among the major political parties, i.e. the PiS, the PO, and the SLD, than the mission in Iraq. This is despite the fact that public opinion is generally opposed to any deployment of Polish forces abroad; Polish analysts point out that ordinary Poles can hardly distinguish between the two missions. Public backlash culminated after August 2007 when six Polish soldiers

operating in Southeastern Afghanistan opened fire on a village (allegedly thinking that Taliban insurgents were hiding there) resulting in the killing of eight civilians, including a pregnant woman.

In addition, unlike the mission in Iraq, which was partially paid for by the United States, the costs of the involvement in Afghanistan were borne by Poland alone. This seems to cause some concerns, particularly for the SLD, fearing that Polish resources might become overstretched.

The SLD-led government agreed with the participation of Poland in Operation Enduring Freedom, including Afghanistan; however, it did not support the United States in the initial strike against the Taliban and decided to contribute only after the international stabilization mission was authorized by the UN in December 2001 by sending a de-mining team to the country in 2002, as well as providing combat engineers and logistical support.

The biggest controversy was sparked by the decision of the PiS-led government in September 2006 to boost the Polish presence in Afghanistan by contributing an additional 1000 troops to the NATO-led mission. As the announcement was made by Minister of Defence Sikorski, it caused strong reactions from the coalition partners, the LPF and Self-Defence. Giertych, the leader of the LPR, commented, 'When the USSR was fighting in Afghanistan, Poland did not have to send its soldiers there.' Similarly, the leader of Self-Defence, Andrzej Lepper, suggested that it was unfair that Sikorski made this announcement (moreover, in Washington) without consulting with the smaller coalition partners on such a large-scale deployment and threatened to initiate a parliamentary resolution condemning Sikorski's move as incompetent and harmful to the Polish Republic (Cienski and Dombey 2006).

The PO has not made any signs of intentions to limit its involvement in Afghanistan. In fact, Tusk pledged to bolster the Polish presence to 1,600 troops and deploy 8 additional helicopters in the southern province of Kandahar. There is a clear link between pulling out of Iraq and an increasing presence in Afghanistan. By many, this is interpreted as a fact that the PO prefers an engagement of missions linked to NATO rather than the 'coalition of the willing.' However, one of the prominent PO figures, Deputy Speaker of the Sejm for the PO, Bronislaw Komorowski, pleaded already ahead of the 2007 parliamentary election to change the nature of the current Polish engagement from the one of a combat nature to that of a civilian mission (McNamara 2007). This stems from a shocking experience in August 2007 when a group of Polish soldiers was implicated in allegedly

opening fire on civilians, which caused a huge uproar from the Polish public. However, the PO Foreign Minister, Radek Sikorski, in his speech in Canada in February 2008, underlined the necessity of Poland to remain engaged militarily and explain motives that are not only pragmatic. It is well possible that Sikorski's personal experience of being a war reporter in Afghanistan during the 1980's makes him take a somewhat more personal approach; it is also possible that, to a Polish audience, he would have delivered a slightly different message. Nevertheless, an early pullout from Afghanistan is not likely to be on the PO agenda.

As far as the allegations of Poland hosting secret CIA detention facilities and CIA flights bringing terrorist suspects to Europe, this generated very little response from Poland. All the key figures, regardless of their party affiliations, denied such allegations. The testimonies from the intelligence sector, as well as the Council of Europe report authored by Swiss senator Dick Marty, acknowledge that at least two prominent SLD figures, Prime Minister Miller and President Kwaśniewski, were aware of the existence of such facilities in Poland. Kwaśniewski admitted that CIA flights might have stopped in Poland, but that there were certainly no detention centres. Although a parliamentary investigation into these accusations was launched, the outcomes were never publicised due to national security concerns. The government announced that the outcomes of the investigation found the allegations to be unfounded, causing Prime Minister Kaczyński to declare it a 'closed issue' (Amnesty International 2007). It is indeed very difficult to discern whether there are any strong positions from the political parties on the issue of CIA flights. Due to the high sensitivity of the issue, the key representatives from the political parties keep a low profile on this issue, perhaps in an attempt to deny any accusations that might damage the reputation of Poland as a country.

The Middle East Conflict

Among other issues that deserve attention in terms of the Polish parties' attitudes towards the United States, one probably worth mentioning is the country's attitude towards the Middle East conflict. During the times of communism, Poland played a rather pro-Palestinian role, similar to other countries from the Communist block. After the fall of communism, Poland tried to take a more balanced approach, which can be described as 'equal distance' (Kolarska-Bobińska and Mughrabi 2008) and even strived to play a mediating role between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The Polish engagement in

the Middle East, rather weak during the 1990's, has intensified at the beginning of 21st century. First and foremost, it is linked with the Polish presence in Iraq, where Poland was fighting along with the US in Operation Iraqi Freedom and subsequently took control of one of the occupation sectors. Polish diplomats also strongly believe that the conflict in Iraq had a strong impact on the entire region, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Polish policy of 'equal distance' has not changed significantly in the past few years, despite changing partisan composition from the Polish governments. As one Polish diplomat noted, the Polish political right tries to be more pro-Israeli for both historical reasons and the style of governance that was demonstrated when the PiS was in power in 2005–07. 'Kaczyński likes the fact that Israel has a similar vision of a strong country and "state democracy," which puts a strong emphasis on security,' he observed (Kolarska-Bobińska and Mughrabi 2008). This is reiterated by a statement from Andrzej Krawczyk, foreign policy advisor to Lech Kaczyński, calling good relations with Israel one of Poland's foreign policy priorities ahead of Kaczyński's visit to Israel in summer 2006 (Taube 2007). At the same time, Kaczyński managed to maintain a good relation with the Palestinian authority, where his visit in September 2006 was described as a big success.

In respect to Israel, the position of the PO does not seem to diverge very much to that of the PiS. It was clearly demonstrated during Donald Tusk's visit to Israel in April 2008, expressing a particularly strong Polish understanding for Israel's concerns over the Iranian nuclear programme. Equally, on the political left, the instrumental person who tried to improve relations between Poland and Israel was Aleksander Kwaśniewski during his ten-year presidency.

On the contrary, the situation is more complicated with the far right. Relations with Israel are stranded because of alleged anti-Semitism on the part of many LPR members. At the time when Roman Giertych, the party leader, was appointed the Minister of Education, the Israeli officials refused to meet with him, referring to the anti-Semitic platform of the party. Indeed, it seems that a rather deeply rooted anti-Semitism present in Polish society still poses certain problems in restoring Polish credibility vis-à-vis Israel, despite political statements on both parts referring to a strategic partnership and the orientation of both countries' foreign policy towards the United States. In a 2003 poll, 46% of Poles admitted to disliking the Jews, a figure similar to those disliking traditionally unpopular nationalities such as Russians, Arabs or Gypsies.

Otherwise, deep partisan divisions towards the Middle East cannot be easily discerned. Several variables probably play a role here. First, Poland is balancing between an original pro-Palestinian approach that has earned the country certain credibility among Arab states in the region, as well as Israel where, due to complicated historical links, it is trying to reassert itself as a strategic partner and advocate inside the EU. Secondly, the Polish engagement in Iraq mandates that Poland pursue a more pro-active Middle East policy. This is also reflected in the Polish deployment in the UNFIL peacekeeping mission in Lebanon that was raised to 500 troops, as well as the humanitarian aid provided to Lebanon and Syria during the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah during the summer of 2006, or the Palestinian Authority being one of the priority countries of the Polish Official Development Assistance (ODA). Thus, it seems to be the case that the Polish partisan positions keep continuity in the policy of 'equal distance' in the Middle East, striving to make Poland a more important and credible partner in the region. As one Polish official puts it: 'they [the Polish peacekeeping missions in the region] are Poland's biggest asset: the more missions, the bigger Poland's involvement in international and EU policy towards the region. They increase its credibility as an EU member and strengthen its position' (Kolarska-Bobińska and Mugrabi 2008). Strangely enough, the Polish position does not reflect what is often viewed as a one-sided approach from the United States to the region and proves that a Polish foreign policy consensus does not necessarily have to 'copy' the US attitude.

Conclusion

The account of the foreign policy positions of the Polish parties has to start with the assertion that there is a large degree of consensus across the Polish political scene as far as the relationship with and support of the United States is concerned. This stands in opposition to support for EU actions or positions vis-à-vis other international organizations where the diverging positions of political parties are more obvious. However, even regarding the United States, the stances are starting to be more nuanced as we move across the Polish scene.

The most ardent supporters of the US policies can certainly be identified in what we described at the beginning as the Polish right. The PiS is the most pro-American of the Polish parties; this can be illustrated in almost all the issues that we examined.

The LPR does not exactly fit the pattern of strong pro-Americanism. Rhetorically, it seems to be a supporter of the United States, especially when opposed to the European Union in the international arena, something that can be interpreted as a prevailing, strong Euroscepticism within the party. However, when it comes to paying the price of such support, such as deployment the Polish troops in US or NATO-led missions, the party has a problem. It clearly is not convinced on the benefits of Polish soldiers risking their lives in faraway countries, which can be explained by the strong accent on Polish interests and populism within the party, exploiting a largely hostile public opinion to Polish engagement in such missions. In addition, the either explicit or implicit anti-Semitism from many of the party's members puts its credibility vis-à-vis the United States in question. Thus, a more correct interpretation is that the party is strongly nationalist or 'souverainist' in its approach to foreign policy, complemented with a strong populism, being sceptical of both the EU and the USA, with a strong nationalist accent separating it from the mainstream right-wing parties.

The PiS considers the country's relationship to the US a cornerstone of Polish foreign and security policy and maintains that this strategic partnership must be sustained and cherished. Poland must act as a good ally of the United States and try not to alienate itself by adopting measures that might be regarded as disloyal in Washington. This goes hand in hand with certain scepticism towards the EU, particularly towards Germany, who – according to the PiS – does not necessarily share the same objectives and interests in international relations, and a huge dislike and suspicion of Russia, which has become an archenemy for the Kaczyński brothers. However, no divergence of interests is viewed vis-à-vis the United States.

The position of the Civic Platform (PO) is more pragmatic. It is true that the PO still values enormously the strategic relations with the United States. However, compared to the PiS, it tends to view this relationship more in cost-benefit terms. In other words, the relationship with the US must bring tangible benefits to Poland. It wants Poland to act more – at least symbolically – on equal footing vis-à-vis the US, or as partners rather than a provider – recipient situation. This stance of the PO goes hand in hand with the same pragmatism towards the European Union and its foreign and security policy, striving to keep the balance of support for the activities and initiatives of both actors while still projecting a great deal of its own interest.

As for the parties of the centre-left and left, such as the PSL, the SLD, and the SDPL, the positions on foreign policy matters and the US become even blurrier. Even in their case, the United States plays a crucial role in Polish foreign policy. However, these parties see as equally importantly the commitments Poland has vis-à-vis their European partners. They want Poland to be a good and reliable ally for the US, but also prove Polish credibility as an actor within the EU, not least in framing its foreign and security policy. Thus, they try to make sure that Poland uses all its influence to be a bridge between the Transatlantic partners, an entity that makes the EU and the US pull in the same direction, if possible.

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ROMANIA

Věra Řiháčková

Table 1: Parties in the Romanian Parliament (Chamber of Deputies):[1]		
Term	**Chamber of Deputies (number of mandates)**	**Governing Party or Coalition**
1990 – 1992[2]	• National Salvation Front (FSN, 66.3%, 263 seats) • Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR, 7.23%, 29 seats)[3] • National Liberal Party (PNL, 6.41%, 29 seats) • Ecological Movement of Romania (2.62%, 12 seats) • National Peasants Party – Christian Democrats (2.56%, 12 seats) • Alliance for Romanian Unity (2.12%, 9 seats) • Democratic Agrarian Party of Romania (1.83%, 9 seats) • Romanian Ecological Party (1.69%, 8 seats) • Romanian Socialist Democratic Party (1.05%, 5 seats) • Social Democratic Party (0.53%, 2 seats) • Democratic Group of the Centre (0.48%, 2 seats) • Parties gaining one seat + 9 seats allocated to ethnic minorities[4] *Total: 396/387 (+9 seats for ethnic minorities)* *Voter turnout: 86.2%*	FSN

1) Romania has a bicameral Parliament with both chambers equipped with comparable competences; according to the Law No. 68/1992, in effect as of the 1996 elections, members of both chambers are elected from electoral districts on the basis of proportional representation. Members of both chambers are elected for a four-year term. The threshold for entering the Parliament is 3%; there was debate in Romania on elevating the threshold to 5%. There are 42 constituencies ranging from 4 to 29 deputies. An initial seat distribution at the district level uses the Hare quota; a second distribution at the national level applies the d'Hondt formula to allocate any remaining seats. Romania is a semi-presidential republic with the President elected directly in a two-round major vote system with one possible re-election. When in function, he/she cannot be a member of a political party. The change of the constitutional framework as of 2003 prolonged the original four-year presidential term to five years. The 2004 elections were the last instance of when both the chambers and the President were elected at once. President Traian Băsescu proposed another change of the electoral system – a referendum on the introduction of a two-round uninominal voting system was held simultaneously with the referendum on his suspension in May 2007. Due to insufficient voter turnout (44%), the referendum (in favour of change) on the change of the electoral system was declared invalid.

Table 1: Parties in the Romanian Parliament (Chamber of Deputies):

Term	Chamber of Deputies (number of mandates)	Governing Party or Coalition
1992 – 1996	• Democratic National Salvation Front (FDSN[5], 27.7%, 117 seats) • Democratic Convention of Romania[6] (CDR, 20%, 82 seats) • FSN (10.2%, 43 seats) • Romanian National Unity Party (PUNR, 7.7%, 30 seats) • UDMR (7.5%, 27 seats) • Greater Romania Party (PRM, 3.9%, 16 seats) • Socialist Labour Party (3%, 13 seats) • 13 seats allocated to ethnic minorities *Total: 341(328)*[7] *Voter turnout: 76.3%*	FDSN, Romanian National Unity Party, Greater Romania Party, Socialist Labour Party[8]
1996 – 2000	• CDR[9] (30.2%, 122 seats) • Party of Romanian Social Democracy (PDSR[10], 21.5%, 91 seats) • Social Democratic Union[11] (12.9%, 53 seats) • UDMR (6.6%, 25 seats) • Greater Romania Party (PRM, 4.5%, 19 seats) • Romanian National Unity Party (PUNR, 4.4%, 18 seats) • 15 seats allocated to ethnic minorities *Total: 343(328)* *Voter turnout: 76%*	CDR, Social Democratic Union, UDMR
2000 – 2004	• Party of Romanian Social Democracy-Social Democratic Party of Romania (PDSR/PSD[12], 36.6%, 155 seats) • Greater Romania Party (PRM, 19.5%, 84 seats) • Democratic Party (PD, 7%, 31 seats) • National Liberal Party (PNL, 6.9%, 30 seats) • UDMR (6.8%, 27 seats) • 18 seats allocated to ethnic minorities *Total:345(327)* *Voter turnout: 65.3%*	PDSR/PSD, UDMR
2004 – 2008	• National Union PSD + PUR[13] (36.8%, 132 seats; PSD-113 seats, PUR-19 seats): • Justice and Truth Alliance (PNL+PD, 31.5 %, 112 seats; PNL-64 seats, PD-48 seats) • Greater Romania Party (PRM, 13%, 48 seats) • UDMR (6.2%, 22 seats) • 18 seats allocated to ethnic minorities *Total: 332(314)* *Voter turnout: 56.5 %*	Justice and Truth Alliance, UDMR, PUR[14], (in 2007 PNL-UDMR[15])

2) The 'Assembly of Deputies' was elected on the basis of the system combining multi-member districts and proportional representation. The Chamber consisted of 396 seats, of which 9 were reserved to the representatives of the ethnic minorities. The elections took place on May 20, 1990.

3) The UDMR results in the first elections were the most striking; it was clear that almost all 2-million of the large Hungarian minority in Romania voted unanimously for this ethnic-based party. The electorate of the party has remained more or less the same since then.

4) Every officially recognized minority participating in the elections is entitled to one seat in the Chamber of Deputies, if it has not won a seat in either the Chamber or the Senate vote. The number of seats allocated to minorities, thus, varies from election to election.

5) PM Petre Roman's supporters in the FSN argued for further reforms; Roman was elected a party chairman in March 1992. In response, President Iliescu and his supporters broke off from the FSN and established the FDSN.

6) In 1992, the CDR was an electoral coalition of 12 parties, including the PNL, the Romanian Ecological Party, the National Peasant Party-Christian Democrats, the Civic Alliance Party, the Party of Romanian Social Democracy, and other smaller parties. (Crowther 2004: 370; University of Essex 2002).

7) The electoral rules established by the legislature in July 1992 reduced the number of seats in the Chamber of Deputies to 328 (without the seats reserved for ethnic minorities) and expanded the number of seats in the Senate to 143.

8) An agreement of support for the FDSN was concluded in 1995.

9) In 1996, the Democratic Convention of Romania was an electoral coalition of 12 parties, including the PNL, the Romanian Ecological Party, the National Peasant Party-Christian Democrats, the Civic Alliance Party, the Alternative Party of Romania, the Association of Former Political Prisoners, and other smaller parties (Crowther 2004: 384; University of Essex 2002).

10) The former FDSN from the 1992 elections later changed its name to the Party of Romanian Social Democracy-Social Democratic Party of Romania, and even later to the Social Democratic Party (PSD); for details, see below.

11) The electoral alliance of the Democratic Party (PD), formerly, the FSN – Petre Roman's party and the Social Democratic Party (PSDR), a member of the CDR in the 1992 elections; the PD won 43 seats in the Chamber of Deputies; the PSDR won 10 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. (Crowther 2004: 384; University of Essex 2002).

12) The party later changed its name to the Social Democratic Party (PSD).

13) The Humanist party of Romania was founded in 1991; in May 2005, it changed its name to the Conservative Party.

14) In December 2004, the PUR signalled a switch of political partners and later broke from the electoral coalition with the PSD. On December 25, 2004, the UDMR and the PUR signed a government coalition protocol with the Justice and Truth alliance (PNL+PD), with Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu as the designated PM. The PSD was left in opposition.

15) In December 2006, the ruling coalition started to split due to controversies arising between the president and the PM; the Conservative party left the government. After a couple months of disputes, a reshuffling in the government and the end of the PNL-PD alliance was announced and a minority government of the PNL and the UDMR was established. In parallel, part of the PNL members, including former PM Theodor Stolojan, formed the Liberal Democratic Party (PLD) – a pro-Băsescu splinter of the PNL. The minority government has been ruling with the support of the PSD opposition (the governing parties together with the PSD initiated the impeachment procedure of the President).

Table 2: Parties Represented in the Romanian Parliament (Senate):	
Term	**Senate (number of mandates)**
1990 – 1992	• National Salvation Front (FSN, 67%, 91 seats) • UDMR (7.2%, 12 seats) • National Liberal Party (PNL, 7%, 10 seats) • Romanian Unity Alliance (2.2%, 2 seats) • Ecological Movement of Romania (2.5%, 1 seat) • National Peasants' Party – Christian Democrats (2.5%, 1 seat) • Romanian Ecologist Party (1.4%, 1 seat) *Total: 119*
1992 – 1996	• FDSN (28.3%, 49 seats) • CDR (20.2%, 34 seats) • National Salvation Front (PD, 10.4%, 18 seats) • Romanian National Unity Party (PUNR, 8.1%, 14 seats) • UDMR (7.6%, 12 seats) • Greater Romania Party (PRM, 3.8%, 6 seats) • Socialist Labour Party (3.2%, 5 seats • Agrarian Democratic Party (3.3%, 5 seats) *Total: 143*
1996 – 2000	• CDR (30.7%, 53 seats) • Party of Romanian Social Democracy (PDSR, 23.1%, 41 seats) • Social Democratic Union (13.2%, 23 seats) • UDMR (6.8%, 11 seats) • Greater Romania Party (PRM, 4.5%, 8 seats) • Romanian National Unity Party (PUNR, 4.2%, 7 seats) *Total: 143*
2000 – 2004	• Party of Romanian Social Democracy-Social Democratic Party of Romania (PDSR/PSD, 37.1%, 65 seats) • Greater Romania Party (PRN, 21%, 37 seats) • Democratic Party (PD, 7.6%, 13 seats) • National Liberal Party (PNL, 7.5%, 13 seats) • UDMR (6.9%, 12 seats) *Total:143*
2004 – 2008	• National Union PSD+PUR (37.5%, 57 seats) • Justice and Truth Alliance (31.8%, 49 seats) • Greater Romania Party (13.6%, 21 seats) • UDMR (6.2%, 10 seats) *Total: 147*

Table 3: Presidential Elections		
Term	**Candidates (in the second round)**	**President Elect**
1990 – 1992	• Ion Iliescu (FSN), 85% • Radu Campeanu (PNL), 10.6% *Voter turnout: 86.2 %*	**Ion Iliescu**, NSF *(in the first round)*
1992 – 1996	• Ion Iliescu (FDSN), 61.4 % • Emil Constantinescu (CDR), 38.6% *Voter turnout: 76.3 %*	**Ion Iliescu**, Democratic National Salvation Front
1996 – 2000	• Emil Constantinescu (CDR), 54.4% • Ion Iliescu (PDSR), 45.6% *Voter turnout: 76%*	**Emil Constantinescu,** Democratic Convention of Romania
2000 – 2004	• Ion Iliescu (PSDR), 66.8% • Corneliu Vadim Tudor (Greater Romania Party), 33.2% *Voter turnout: 65.3%*	**Ion Iliescu**, PSDR
since 2004	• Traian Băsescu (Justice and Truth Alliance, PD), 51.2% • Adrian Năstase (PSD), 48.8% *Voter turnout: 54.8%*	**Traian Băsescu**, Justice and Truth Alliance

Table 4: Referendum on the Suspension of the Impeached President – Traian Băsescu	
Date	**Options**
May 19, 2007	• No (against suspension), 74.5% • Yes, 24.8% The remaining votes were invalid. *Voter turnout: 44%*

Table 5: The EP Elections (held on November 25, 2007)			
Party	**EP Group**	**Number of Mandates**	
PD	EPP-ED	13	(28.8%)
PSD	PES	10	(23.0%)
PNL	ELDR	6	(13.4%)
Liberal Democratic Party, PLD[16]	EPP-ED	3	(7.8%)
UDMR	EPP-ED	2	(5.5%)
Independent	The Greens / European Free Alliance	1	(3.4%)
		Total: 35 seats *Voter turnout: 26.5%*	

Due to its late modernization and the rigidity of Nicolae Ceausescu's regime, Romania was, according to some (Crowther 2004: 365), one of the lesser-prepared post-communist countries to carry out the process of democratization and transition that began in 1989. The society was fractured along class and ethnic cleavages with no sound political alternatives or an opposition to the ruling Romanian Communist Party, which displayed no reformist tendencies. In 1989, popular protests against the regime, started by ethnic Hungarians in Timisoara, took place in Bucharest and other big cities; after the army mutinied, hundreds of soldiers were killed in fighting against regime-loyal forces. After the fall of the regime, the hastily created National Salvation Front (FSN) involved the leaders of the spontaneous uprising, several reform communists, and the elites of the former regime who had abandoned it timely. The FSN seized power on December 22, 1989,[17] headed by Ion Iliescu, the former high-positioned communist party member, declaring no electoral intentions.[18] However, after making some adjustments to its structure and composition[19] and coming under pressure from its emerging opposition,[20] the FSN changed

16) The Liberal Democratic Party (PLD) split from the PNL at the beginning of 2007; see footnote 15.

17) In December 1989, Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife were tried and executed.

18) The FSN was declared to be a non-political umbrella organisation created to follow the interest of all anti-regime forces (Crowther 2004: 366).

19) Reform communist, military representatives, and significant elements of former communist party administrative network joined the party (Crowther 2004: 366).

20) The FSN was labelled a neo-communist organisation – The Romanian Communist Party, a symbol of the regime, was abolished in January 1990. FSN's declaration to run in the elections led to a new wave of street demonstrations in Bucharest that were ended by force (Crowther 2004: 369).

its attitude towards running in the elections. Although the opposition parties were emerging slowly, usually building on the traditions and echoes from the interwar period,[21] new parties were established as well; the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) had already started operating in Transylvania in January 1990 (Crowther 2004: 366). In March 1990, the Provisional Council of National Unity approved a law for electing a President and a bicameral Parliament, consisting of a Chamber of Deputies and a Senate; May 20, 1990 was set as a date of the elections.[22] The FSN, enjoying the advantage of being a governing force, won the parliamentary as well as the presidential elections; Ion Iliescu, the FSN leader, became the first president, credited with 85% of the votes; Petre Roman was appointed the Prime Minister.[23] After the elections, the anti-communist forces remained fragmented. The Parliament was charged with drafting a new constitution, which was enacted and approved in a referendum in December 1991. The new government initiated a programme of limited reforms; however, the public turned dissatisfied with some of the FSN's steps, forcing PM Roman to resign in September 1991.[24] Consequently, the FSN fragmented in 1992, with president Iliescu's splinter, the FDSN, representing the conservative left part of the former party, and ex-PM Roman's FSN the reformist one. In the 1992 local elections, 14 liberal parties formed a coalition to contest the ruling force. However, this coherence was not long-lived; the PNL (National Liberal Party) withdrew from the coalition just before the elections. The other impetus was a growing nationalist rhetoric, with two parties – the Greater Romania Party (PRN) and the Romanian National Unity Party (PUNR) – embodying this trend; the UDMR withdrew from the coalition in order not to hamper the coalition's electoral results (Crowther 2004: 370). Although the 1992 elections showed larger support for the opposition forces, President Iliescu was re-elected, paving the way for the FDSN to win elections to the both parliamentary chambers; the FDSN experienced a drop in its support with the lost votes distributed across the ideological spectrum (Crowther 2004: 376). In July 1993, the FDSN united with three smaller parties and changed its name to the Party of Romania Social Democracy (PDSR). The PDSR governed with the support of the extremist parties; in 1994, the link became more explicit by inviting two ministers from the PUNR to the govern-

21) These included the so-called historic parties – the National Liberal Party (PNL), the National Peasant Party- Christian Democrats or the Social Democratic Party of Romania (PSDR) (Crowther 2004: 366).

22) More then 70 parties participated in the elections.

23) Number of votes declared invalid was abnormally high; foreign observers declared numerous irregularities on the polling day (Crowther 2004: 368).

24) Theodor Stolojan, unaffiliated at that time, was appointed PM.

ment of PM Nicolae Vacaroiu. A conclusion of an open agreement on cooperation among the PDSR, the PUNR, the PRN, and the Socialist Labour Party followed in 1995 (Crowther 2004: 383). This move imposed a burden on the government, which strived to re-orient its foreign policy and gain acceptance of the West. To improve its image minority policy-wise, the parliament ratified the Charter for the Protection of National Minorities in February 1995 and improved its relations with Hungary and the Hungarian minority in Romania. Nevertheless, the alliance with the nationalistic parties became difficult to manage; before the 1996 elections, the PDSR tried to distance itself from its allies (Crowther 2004: 383). The 1996 elections mark the first change of power after 1989, with the Democratic Convention (CDR) winning both Chambers and its candidate Emil Constantinescu succeeding in the presidential race. The CDR formed a government with the UDMR and the Social Democratic Union.[25] The changes allowed for the further transformation of the country's foreign policy position and for pursuing a course towards accession into the Western structures.[26] However, due to several reasons (Crowther 2004: 387), the new government failed to deliver the reforms; the worsening economic situation, together with the intra-coalition disputes, resulted into the government's reshuffling; PM Victor Ciorbea was replaced by Radu Vasile, who managed to improve the economic situation but could not overcome the tensions in the government. In December 1999, another switch of the PMs occurred; the National Bank's President, Mugur Isarescu, was installed into office. In the next elections (November 2000), the disillusionment with the reformist centre-right parties and their impotent campaign resulted in poor election results. The nationalist Greater Romania Party came in second after the PDSR in the parliamentary vote; its leader, Corneliu Vadim Tudor, gained 28.3% of the votes in the first round of the presidential elections. Such a result was a shock to the remaining moderate centre-right parties. Facing the prospect of an extremist President leading the country into international isolation, the centre-right parties called on their electorate to support Ion Iliescu in the second round of the presidential race. In December 2000, Ion Iliescu won in the second round with 66.8% voter support. The PDSR formed a government with the support of the UDMR. In June 2001, the PDSR merged with the Romanian Social Democratic Party and was renamed the Social Democratic Party (PSD). Adrian Năstase,[27] a former foreign minister, was appointed Prime Minister, supporting integra-

25) Composed of the PD, the former FSN – Petre Roman's party and the Social Democratic Party.

26) Extensive changes were also implemented in the Defence Ministry and the intelligence services.

27) Adrian Năstase became the party chairman not long after being appointed PM.

tion to the Euro-Atlantic structures and further reforms. In the 2004 elections, the coalition of the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and the Humanist Party of Romania (later the Conservative Party) won the highest number of votes; nevertheless, after the elections, this coalition split, causing the ruling coalition to be formed by its opponent – the Justice and Truth Alliance, consisting of the PNL and the PD, supported by the UDMR; a ruling coalition was formed with the former election coalition partner of the PSD – the Humanist Party of Romania. In the presidential elections, the Justice and Truth Alliance candidate, Chairman of the PD and Mayor of Bucharest, Traian Băsescu, succeeded. Due to the internal crisis of the ruling coalition, embodied in the clash between the PM, Călin Popescu Tăriceanu, and President Traian Băsescu, the PD was expelled from the government and the minority government of the PNL and the UDMR was formed in spring 2007. President Băsescu faced impeachment procedures; he was suspended by the Parliament for abusing his constitutional powers but re-instated into office by a popular vote in May 2007.[28] Due to the 2004 election result, the PSD experienced an internal crisis; however, thanks to the developments of the ruling coalition, the PSD, in fact, returned to power because the minority government of the PNL and the UDMR was dependent upon its support for crucial votes (including during the impeachment). In the elections to the European Parliament, which were held in November 2007, the PD won the highest number of seats (13), together with the PLD mandates (3); this development signalled the continuation of high public support of President Băsescu.[29]

Left and Right

The positioning and doctrine of some Romanian political parties is not clear; their image and label can also differ when seen from the domestic and external perspective. **The Greater Romania Party (PRM)** has been labelled far right by many in the West. Truly, the alliance it forged in the European Parliament, resulting in the creation of the new group 'Tradition, Identity, Sovereignty'[30] of extremist parties, would support such a claim. However, its self-definition leans rather towards the left, although a clear statement defin-

28) In the meantime, while suspended, the presidential functions were fulfilled by the interim president; Nicolae Vacaroiu (PSD) was nominated for the post.

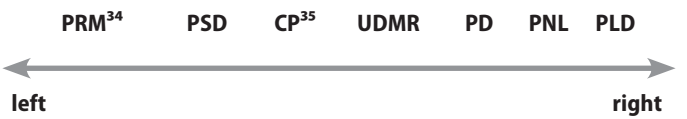
29) The campaign before the EP election was dominated by the internal political scandals and echoed the spring developments in the ruling coalition. Voter turnout and public awareness of European issues was very low (SAR 2007).

30) The group was already dissolved in November 2007 after the PRM left it in protest against anti-Romanian remarks by Italian MEP Alessandra Mussolini

ing where the party sees itself is hard to find – the key word in its representatives' discourse is the 'national interest;' in fact, this is not well articulated or defined at all. According to experts, the Romanian public sees the PRM as a left wing party.[31] Party positions in the parliamentary votes were always more aligned with the Social Democrats (PSD); according to experts, its representatives mostly acted as an opposition to the centre-right coalition. The PRM is not anti-EU and has been part of the foreign policy consensus among the political parties;[32] it opposed all issues that were put forward by their European counterparts against the US presence in Europe. The party is also not opposing Turkey's EU membership aspirations. The party was never in the government. According to some experts, its electorate is dropping.

The PSD represents the social democratic left; it is a member of the Socialist International and the Party of European Socialists (PES) in the European Parliament; according to some, it displays a certain tendency towards adopting a modern left image. Compared to its European counterparts, the PSD is more pro-Atlanticist than the rest of the PES group in the European Parliament. The party representatives talk at length about the current confusion in Romanian foreign policy – they argue that, after the country's NATO and EU accession, a long-term goal is missing and that the country experiences a loss of pretext; Romania is unable to articulate its own foreign policy concepts and interests.[33]

Positioning of the Romanian Political Parties on the Right – Left Axis



31) In the foreign policy field, the favourable party position towards the regime in Cuba would support such a claim. Otherwise, there are no specific positions on Cuba among the Romanian political parties; they would generally support the US stance and policy towards the island.

32) '…they are rather internally populist.' The PRM representatives have had a certain say in the field of foreign policy. For a long time, the party Chairman was a Vice-President of the Senate and, in this capacity, took part in international delegations; the party representatives sit in the important parliamentary Commissions on Foreign Policy and Security as well.

33) PSD Chairman and former Foreign Minister Mircea Geoană's speech at the Military Club in Bucharest in May 2007 (personal record).

34) The Greater Romania Party – its position is unclear; for details, see above.

35) The Conservative Party.

The Conservative Party (**CP,** the former Humanist party of Romania[36]) stood in the last general elections in alliance with the PSD; however, right after the elections, the coalition split, causing the CP to begin supporting the Justice and Truth Alliance. It is rather difficult to assess its positioning on the left-right axis; the party has no clear self-identification value-wise. According to some experts, it is closest to the image and definition of a centrist party. Its electorate consists mostly of SMEs owners and employees, plus a stress on issues like social protection can be found in their programme documents.[37] Its electorate dropped to 2–3%; most likely, the party will not cross the threshold for entering the Parliament in the next elections.

The UDMR seems to be a party without a clear political identity; some classify it as a neo-liberal entity (SAR 2007). The party still defines itself as a representative of the Hungarian minority, resting on an ethnic-based electorate that is rather stable, oscillating around 7%. It has a high coalition potential and has been in the government since 1996.[38] It mobilized itself before the European Parliament elections and, according to some (SAR 2007: 3), was the best prepared party, offering a common position on most of the issues in question.

The Democratic Party (PD), party of President Băsescu, is a splinter of the Social Democrats (FSN). For a long time, the PD was pushing for its membership in Socialist International. In the last three years, it turned into a 'people's' party and applied for membership in the EPP-ED group within the European Parliament; a redefinition from left to right took place; nevertheless, according to some experts, the public perception is that the party is still on the left; an unclear profile remains to be displayed in some respects. Its electorate is rising, namely due to the popularity of the President.

36) There was a conservative party in Romania before WWII; it was a party of the old landowners who became one of the modernizing forces of Romanian society. 'The new political landscape felt that some old labels are needed to suggest that there is some kind of continuity and that not everything was invented over night; but the CP is not a conservative party, but a pure invention,' an expert states.

37) The parliamentary commission, an entity that was set up in order to investigate alleged abuses of the Constitution by the president in spring 2007, was chaired by the head of the party, Dan Voiculescu; the report it produced was generally seen as containing absurd accusations. There were 19 alleged constitution violations on which the impeachment was based. The President was suspended by a majority of 322 lawmakers in April 2007.

38) The UDMR was not supporting President Băsescu during the impeachment crisis and formed a minority government with the PNL.

The National Liberal Party (PNL), the party of Prime Minister Tăriceanu, has been often labelled neo–liberal. In the Romanian perspective, the PNL is one of the 'historical' parties; in the interwar period, its position was rather centre-left. Its electorate is currently decreasing on behalf of the popularity of President Băsescu.

The Liberal Democratic Party (PLD) is a splinter from the PNL, which emerged at the beginning of 2007. Its members were supporting President Băsescu[39] during the impeachment crisis. At first, the dissident group wanted to change the PNL leadership but did not succeed. At the time of this writing, the merger of the PD and the PLD was discussed in order to strengthen the right; however, some experts say that there is a reluctance to accept the PLD in the PD; the alliance is an option. The PLD won 3 seats in the European Parliament elections. According to some (SAR 2007: 4), the PLD is the most liberal and most eurosceptic of them. There is, in fact, little ideological difference between the PNL, the PLD, and the PD; the UDMR is not far from their doctrine, either.

The New Generation party emerged as another populist party in Romania three years ago; its leader has scored as the second most popular politician in Romania for some time. The party has had no electoral credentials thus far. According to some experts, it could play a role in Romanian politics in the future.

The 'nature of transformation' cleavage was decisive for the political parties' preferences and alterations in Romania. The dissatisfaction with the performance of the 'ideological' parties, namely in the field of economic reforms, combined with an unclear definition and self-definition of the right, led in time to the advancement of populist parties like the Greater Romania Party or the New Generation Party. The semi-presidential political system, which distributes the executive power between the President and the Prime Minister without setting clear boundaries of competence, often resulted into government reshuffling and, in combination with a proportional electoral system that has delivered diminishing majorities in the last four electoral cycles (SAR 2008: 1), produced weak majorities and unstable (minority) governments.[40]

39) Also in his stance for troops withdrawal from Iraq, see below.

40) For example, President Băsescu and PM Tăriceanu clashed severely over the President's wish to call early elections in order to get a larger majority in the Parliament.

The dominance of the PSD, combined with the absence of a unitary opposition, dominated the whole 2001–2004 period; the executive and administration was a key actor within the system. In spring 2007, the systemic problems resulted into a clash of institutions.[41] The political scene became radicalized; however, not along the right-left (or any other socio-economic) cleavage – the divisive issue became a pro- or anti-Băsescu attitude of the political actors; this development resulted into factional behaviour and cooperation on ad hoc utilitarian bases. The political system has become dominated by a strong President as the result of the crisis.[42]

As to the Europeanization of the political parties, the experts say that the parties will align with the positions of their political groups in the European Parliament, even though the process won't go beyond this level for some time. Due to the lack of a foreign policy vision or programme, the internal insecurity and factional behaviour within the parties results only in playing the foreign alliances or EP political families' membership card as a proof to the domestic audience that the parties are friendly with their EU counterparts and part of the developments on the EU level.[43]

The 'National Consensus' and the Relevance of Foreign Policy

In the last years of communism, Romania took an isolationist stance in international relations. At the beginning of the 1990s, the country focused on its membership in the Organisation on Security and Cooperation in Europe, as it was perceived as the best guarantee against the possible threats posed by the still-existing Soviet Union, as well as the spectre of ethnic separatism. As the initial transition tensions gradually diminished, Romania started to look for a wider security framework. In order to move closer to the West and

41) The cohabitation of the government and President was modelled according to the French example; President Băsescu was very active in order to assume a bigger executive role with PM Tăriceanu, rather than indulging his efforts during the first two years of the Băsescu mandate.

42) On the course of this development, a problem with the representation of the country on the EU level emerged – according to the Constitution, the foreign policy issues are mostly the President's responsibility; the government should only manage the policies. On the other hand, the PM has always had a stronger voice than the President in Brussels. The PNL stated that president Băsescu was unpopular with the EU leaders due his Atlanticist stances and became marginalized during the EU Councils; the issue became a divisive factor in the Romanian society.

43) Some experts suggest that there will be a substantive impact on the PSD (a changing level of Atlanticism) and the PNL, which is the only party in power among ALDE members. Some experts say that the PDS would not push for the prioritization of the EU agenda. Also, the influential party of foreign policy figures (MEP Adrian Severin) are not anti-American and would not give in to the anti-American attitudes in the PES or the European Parliament.

to join NATO and the EU, a strong consensus of all the political forces was developed as of 1996[44] (Ionescu 2004: 264; King 2003: 248).

At beginning of the 1990's, the FSN was reluctant to start the process of joining the Euro-Atlantic structures; all other parties were 100% committed to being pro–European and pro-American. In 1994–1995, the FDSN started to change its attitude towards the EU and NATO integration and became more engaged in achieving these foreign policy goals. **NATO** membership was considered a priority for political leaders since the Alliance and the US, in particular, were regarded as the best security providers.[45] During the accession process, numerous statements were issued by representatives from all political parties, expressing Romania's aim to enter NATO (Ionescu 2004). Public opinion seemed to have shared this attitude, ascribing great importance to NATO membership in the polls. The consensus became at risk when Romania was denied participation in the first wave of NATO's enlargement; however, the perceived failure to move closer to the West was compensated by the bilateral agreement on privileged partnership with the US in 1997. In the 2000 elections, an elite change in the PSD took place; new leadership made NATO and EU accession a top priority (the 'NATO first, EU second' approach). Virtually all political parties, including the populists, were supportive towards this agenda; foreign policy was the only public policy that was consensual, enjoying a high amount of public support. EU membership was targeted concomitantly; given this strict accession criteria, the way into the EU took longer and proved to be more difficult. In 1995, Romania announced its candidacy for membership and became an EU associate member; the negotiation process started in 1999. After NATO accession, an enormous consensus emerged for focusing on the EU membership; the accession negotiations were concluded in 2004; the Accession agreement was signed on April 25, 2005; thus, Romania became an EU member as of January 1, 2007.[46]

The Kosovo campaign in 1999 proved to be a serious test of the foreign policy consensus. President Emil Constantinescu (CDR) was firm to put

44) With the exception of some extremist political parties; on the other hand, the populist parties usually play a domestic card, rather than foreign policy one.

45) Since 1994 Romania has participated in the Partnership for Peace activities, in 1999 it became part of Membership Action Plan, in 2002 was invited to join and in 2004 it finally joined NATO.

46) After the EU accession, the political crisis impacted the way Romania conducted its policies in the EU, according to some experts, the line ministries were not cooperating well and Romania was incapable of defending its interests effectively. As to the coalition building in the EU, the PDS would like to see Romania and Bulgaria in the V4, together with the Baltic countries this group should push for their policies. There is also an affinity towards the Mediterranean group – as some suggest, there are 'natural cultural links', economic interests and large Romanian minorities in Italy and France.

Romania on the side of the NATO countries. The support to the allies was an important part of his discourse and policy in support of Romanian NATO membership. Part of the Social Democratic party (the PDSR, at that time) – a group of politicians around Ion Iliescu – opposed NATO membership and embarked upon a rhetoric of blaming the US and NATO for infringing on a sovereign state, as well as accusations of international law violations.

The terrorist attacks of **9/11** enhanced the possibilities of cooperation with the US. In order to gain NATO membership, Romanians put a lot of effort into making the country a visible US ally; Romania sent troops to Afghanistan,[47] enhanced cooperation on intelligence matters and sharing, supported the Iraq war, and endorsed the US positions on issues such as the missile defence system and the US attitude towards the **International Criminal Court (ICC)**[48].

Facing the rift in transatlantic relations during the **Iraq** crisis, the Romanian political elites stressed commonalities between Europe and the US, insisting that there were no real conflicts between the partners, but rather occasional disputes related to specific interests. It was essential for Romania to have good relations with both partners; the Romanian stance was interpreted by some to be highly pro-American and anti-European; the bilateral relations with some European countries went cold, namely with France. The PSD-led government offered troops and a Romanian military base in support to the operation of the US-led forces.[49]

The priorities in the foreign policy field shifted a bit with the new government in 2004; the main priorities were generally twofold – the 'dignified' accession to the EU and the further strengthening of a privileged partnership with the US and Great Britain. Playing a stronger role in the Balkans

47) The participation of the Romanian troops was never disputed.

48) Romania signed and ratified the Rome Statute on 11 April 2002; the Agreement on Privileges and Immunities was signed on 30 June 2004 and ratified on 17 November 2005. In August 2002, Romania also concluded a bilateral agreement (Bilateral Immunity Agreement, BIA) with the US to give American officials and soldiers immunity from the International Criminal Court; at that time, Foreign Minister Mircea Geoană (PSD) said that Romania would not ratify the accord unless a common stand was accepted by the US and the EU. The Romanian Ambassador to Washington said that the BIA was a natural extension of the Agreement between Romania (PM Adrian Năstase, PSD) and the United States regarding the Status of United States Forces in Romania (SOFA) that was signed the previous year (October 2001). In the light of this EU criticism, Romania stated that it intended to change the BIA before submitting it to the Parliament. This stalled the process because Romania couldn't amend the agreement unilaterally. Under EU pressure, the ratification of BIA was finally withheld.

49) The decision to join the US-led operation was made in a closed circle of political actors – the President, the PM, and the ministers represented in the Council for foreign relations and security were involved. In February 2003, the Parliament approved a request made by President Ion Iliescu in a 351–2 vote. There were 74 abstentions from the nationalist Great Romania Party, which was against Romania taking part in any military intervention not approved by the United Nations. Romania deployed 278 troops and offered the Constanta and Fetesti airports in the eastern Black Sea region, plus the Timisoara airport in the western part of Romania.

and the wider Black Sea region followed; furthermore, a need to improve relations with Ukraine and Russia was also mentioned in the government programme (*Government programme 2005–2008*). The country's relationship with Moldova was declared one of the special foreign policy priorities, as well as Romanian minorities abroad and fight against terrorism. When taking office in December 2004, President Băsescu talked about the focus of Romanian foreign policy, stating that the axis between Bucharest-London-Washington was his prime interest. As the dispute between the President and the Prime Minister unfolded during the course of 2006 and 2007, the issue of Romanian **troops' presence in Iraq** became salient. As the situation in Iraq became complicated and many European countries that, at the beginning, had supported the US, began to retreat,[50] a race started between the two main political opponents over who would be the first to pick up the subject. At first, President Băsescu suggested that there could be a policy change and, immediately after the PNL and PM Tăriceanu picked the subject, turned it into a political item on the agenda in June 2006. In the discussion that followed between the government and the President, the President blocked the proposal; in the Parliament, the PNL proposed to withdraw troops from Iraq in March 2007.[51] The **PSD** has been acting as a moderately pro-American party;[52] during the dispute over the troops' withdrawal from Iraq, the PSD's position was ambiguous. In the end, the party Chairman proposed a timetable for the withdrawal, supporting the Prime Minister.[53]

The possibility to set up **US military bases** on Romania's territory was commonly seen as beneficial, since all political parties perceive the alliance with the US as a vital national interest; there was no dissenting voice against the bases even from the populist or extremist parties.[54] When president Băsescu was

50) Namely, the withdrawal of Italian troops in September 2006 was mentioned. The Romanian troops in Iraq numbered up to 860; until the end of September 2007, the contingent suffered 3 casualties.

51) No in-depth discussion on the withdrawal of troops from Iraq took place, despite several deadlines made by the PNL; no consultations among the political parties were held, according to the experts. The principal argument behind the PNL move was that the withdrawal was discussed in the other countries as well. The experts largely agreed that the dispute was motivated by the inter-parties struggle, not by anti-US stance of the PNL, in the case of the Iraq campaign. The PM's move was complemented by a change of the Foreign Minister. In February 2007, Foreign Minister Mihai Ungureanu (PNL) was asked to resign – coming from the same political party, the PM allegedly insisted on his resignation due to his close relations with President Băsescu. The official reason for his resignation was that he had failed to report to the government on the detention of two Romanian workers by coalition forces in Iraq. The President named him afterwards head of the Foreign Intelligence Service.

52) Mircea Geoană, the PSD Chairman, is a former ambassador to the US with many personal links in Washington DC. Some experts say that the PSD is more pro-American than the Liberals.

53) At the time of this writing, Romanian troops remain in Iraq.

54) Those Romanian citizens opposing US troops on Romanian soil (or those who are against the EU) have not had a political voice so far.

elected in 2005, he took a very pro-Atlanticist approach; according to some experts, his attitude was not so much based on solid strategic considerations or realism, but rather on certain idealism and personal promises. It materialized in the agreement on having US military bases in Romania, with the President acting as a driving force and the Parliament rubber-stamping the agreement. The negotiations were concluded in October 2005 and signed by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in Bucharest in December 2005. The agreement includes Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base in Constanta, Babadag in the Black Sea inland region, Cincu in central Romania, and Smardan in eastern Romania.

Romania is often raising its profile in foreign policy through the military;[55] although some major achievements were accomplished due to the military engagements, the country is still very much attached to the strategic partnership with the US; moreover, NATO's future effectiveness is seen as a key foreign policy goal. The concept of the **ESDP** is not resonating in Romania; it is not an issue; the parties display random answers without having an elaborated a stance on ESDP development. Even though the EU is not seen as the important security provider, together with the US, it should play a role of the ultimate security guarantor in Europe. The EU missions are generally preferable on the condition that they are complementary to NATO and suitable where, when NATO and the U.S cannot act, but EU wants to play a role. The EU battlegroups should not receive prioritization over NATO commitments. The idea of a European army receives neutral to negative reactions – the populists and nationalists would be against it because the army is considered a symbol of national identity.

The Balkans is of strategic interest to Romania. Due to internal turmoil, the informal dialogue on foreign policy issues among the political parties disappeared, according to the PDS; the Romanian policy towards the region lacked coherence. On the issue of the independence and recognition of **Kosovo**, the PNL, the PD, and the PSD all followed the same anti-recognition line; the official government position was to withhold recognition until Kosovo independence is declared to be in conformity with international law.[56]

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55) The Romanian military amounted to 400,000 soldiers under the communist regime; it was forced to reduce its numbers down to 70,000; the whole structure of the military was changed – it was a radical and quick process for a country whose reform path was otherwise rather slow. The army reform has not finished yet; another two to three years is the limit estimated for the completion of the transition reforms. According to the interviews, the process of military reform was internally driven, the role and need of the external pressure was not as significant, as in the case of other post-communist countries like Bulgaria.

56) The government also supported the idea of an EU mission to Kosovo, but on several conditions – only if there is a consensus on the mission and if the mission would be sent forth before the declaration of independence; sending a mission after the declaration of independence would mean an implicit recognition of Kosovo, which is something Romania has strived to avoid.

The PSD stated that the Ahtisaari plan has gone too far; however, to oppose it would be counterproductive; special rights to the Serbian minority should be guaranteed by the West.[57] Before the independence declaration, the PNL stated that the status of Kosovo should be resolved in the framework of the existing international law and that Romania would not recognize the unilateral steps of Kosovo.[58] After independence was declared in February 2008, President Băsescu (PD) confirmed several times that Romania would not recognize Kosovo.[59] The main reason behind the Romanian position is the issue of the Transylvania region (Székely land), a section of the country with Hungarian majority of the population that demands territorial autonomy; Romanian politicians (with the exception of the UDMR) oppose autonomy based on ethnic considerations. Accepting Kosovo's independence would, in the eyes of Romanian politicians, weaken the principle of territorial integrity. Another reason is the concern over Romania's relations with Serbia, which are considered well-functioning in the problematic region. The UDMR was naturally not in line with the official government stance, calling for the recognition of the former Serbian province and welcoming the declaration of independence.[60] In the case of Kosovo, a strong domestic interest and the imperative of territorial integrity overrode the Atlanticist foreign policy line of the state representation.

All key political parties agree that Romania should play a greater role in **the Black Sea region;** however, the aspirations have remained largely on paper so far, despite the declared success of the Black Sea region strategy. Although Romania and Bulgaria succeeded in overcoming their mutual competition and became more cooperative after the EU accession, their joint approach to the region is missing as well as their advocacy efforts in the field of the EU's Eastern Policy that was aimed at bringing more focus to the region.[61] All Romanian parties are supportive towards Turkish EU aspirations

57) PSD Chairman and former Foreign Minister Mircea Geoană's speech at the Military Club in Bucharest in May 2007 (personal record).

58) Foreign Minister Adrian Cioroianu stated that: "For Romania, the resolution of the Kosovo issue should be in accordance with international law that is currently in force. Romania will not recognize the independence of Kosovo if these principles are violated," (B92 2008).

59) (Beta, Tanjug 2008); Romania has not recognized the independent Kosovo at the time of this writing. Together with Spain, Romania also blocked the Kosovo issue of inclusion on the agenda of the NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008.

60) "Sooner or later, Romania will have to recognise Kosovo as a new independent state," said Marko Bela, leader of the UDMR. The leaders of the Szeklers National Council (CNS) stated that Kosovo's independence signalled the EU's support for autonomist movements (BalkanInsight.com 2008).

61) In security terms, Romania considers the EU as ill-equipped to guarantee the peaceful development in the region; the idea was that lobbying NATO would engage others more effectively in the region; the April 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest was a disappointment in this sense, vis a vis the decision on Ukraine and Georgia –their request to join the MAP will be reviewed in December 2008. In this sense, the US bases in Romania are seen as a security guarantee.

and see **Turkey** as a vital country for their national security. For historical reasons, **Russia** invites rather tense perceptions among the Romanian public.[62] Under the PSD government, the Treaty on friendly cooperation between Romania and the Russian Federation was signed by President Ion Iliescu and Russian President Vladimir Putin in July 2003. The PSD sees relations with Russia as a key for the Black Sea region stability; a vicious circle of historical anti-Russian feelings and attitudes in Romania should be broken in order to rebalance bilateral ties with Moscow and not to damage the alliances of which Romania is a member.[63] After the 2004 elections, the government parties adopted a pragmatic approach towards Russia; while keeping business interests high on the agenda, they criticized Russia for its energy policy[64] and its role in Moldova. The future of **Ukraine** is seen as crucial, namely for the development of Moldova; however, Romanian foreign policy displays an absence of a higher agenda regarding Ukraine.

Although the interest of the public concerning the situation in **Moldova** is low,[65] the issue embodies a clash between the European and the US approach – two logics, stability and security vs. democratization are in tension here; the Romanian representation feels sceptical about the possibility to be able to influence the issue if the transatlantic consensus is not in place. Generally, the parties have articulated no clear positions on Moldova, causing the discussion to be rather shallow; it is a matter of the individuals interested in the development. The issue was highly prioritized by the President; the other parties only reacted to it. According to the analysts, President Băsescu somehow rediscovered the topic of Moldova; hinting at some historical references, a possible unification was spelled out; however, the only tangible outcome of the discourse was an offer to grant Moldavians Romanian citizenship in December 2007, raising tensions with their problematic neighbour.[66] Besides the idea of citizenship and a state-

62) Unlike in Bulgaria, the views on Russia are unfavourable in Romania and rather centred around on emotional bases. Many people were, for example, persuaded that Russia was behind the impeachment against the popular President Băsescu and that only an accusation of cooperation with Russia could have ended this politician's career. Security-wise, the perception is that only the US can stand up to Russia – the Europeans are too weak to lead and the EU does not have a sufficient voice in security matters.

63) PSD Chairman and former Foreign Minister Mircea Geoană's speech at the Military Club in Bucharest in May 2007 (personal record).

64) Despite the fact that the country's dependence on Russian energy imports is not extensive compared to other Central and Eastern European countries – Romania imports 30% of its gas from Russia; the rest is covered by domestic production. The current government is also a supporter of the Nabucco gas pipeline project.

65) According to an expert, there has been no public debate in Romania on Moldova since 1996; also, the expert debate is not very extensive. Historically, Russia took over the eastern province of Romania in 1812; Romania regained Moldova in 1918 and lost it again to the Soviet Union in 1940–41.

66) Some experts say that the President's move was playing into the hands of the pro-Russian forces in Moldova.

ment that Moldova should join the EU, there was no clear plan for how to help solve the problems in the country. The PSD resonates with the popular demand 'to let Moldova be'. In the party's view, Romania is not capable of putting the agenda through the iEU in a way in which the current policy goals would be reached. There is a fundamental criticism of the government and, specifically, of the President's approach and policy towards Moldova. The PSD claims that Romania should put aside a notion that it is responsible for Moldova.

The debate about **the Guantanamo Bay base** and the CIA flights unfolded in Romania in connection to the European Parliament's report on the CIA flights. All political parties criticized the report, including the PSD and the liberals;[67] the parties stated that the report was not fair to Romania or the US. On a general level, the UDMR would be rather supportive to the arguments against the procedures carried out in the Guantanamo Bay base on the basis of legalistic arguments contained within the Geneva Conventions; however, all parties would be cautious to blame the US openly for unethical conduct of the imprisonments.

Although the issue of establishing new **US Radar and missile bases** in Europe is neutral and not discussed, it would find general support in all parliamentary parties, with the exception of the National Initiative Party,[68] which supports a dialogue with Russia.

According to the survey 'Public Perceptions on Foreign Affairs in Romania' (Voinescu and Dobre 2005), the interest in foreign policy among the **Romanian public** is rather low, with only defence matters attracting more attention. In this context, the level of the citizens' knowledge on foreign policy issues is also claimed to be rather insufficient. Both the political elites and the public favour balanced transatlantic relationships. The EU itself enjoys an overwhelmingly good image (70% of the population). However, according to 'Transatlantic Trends,' (GMF 2007) it should not address international threats independently (34%), but only in partnership with the US (57%). This is connected to the fact that the EU is seen mainly as an economic power, not as a security provider. The security arrangements must be made within the transatlantic space; the EU must gain greater military capabilities to be on equal footing with the US.[69]

67) The report was drafted by Social Democrats and liberals within the EP.

68) The National Initiative Party (PIN) is a small (two-man) party, established in 2006 as a splinter from the PD; it enjoys less than 1% support.

69) The capabilities of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy were described by the Romanian leaders as merely 'wishful thinking' rather than reality.

NATO holds a good to very good image (64%); however the public expresses contradicted opinions on the issue. Romania's strongly pro-American stance is proved by its strong support for US leadership in world affairs, favouring the Iraq war by 49% of the population, in comparison to 42% of those against the invasion.[70] At the same time, only less than a half of the citizens believe that NATO membership generates more advantages than disadvantages. Although the presence of the US military bases on Romanian territory enjoys support, it is also considered as a factor that could increase the dangers of terrorist attacks in the country and turn the opponents of American policies against Romania as well. Romanians are also disappointed by the small economic involvement of the US in their country. Moreover, while the public states its willingness to send Romania's troops to international missions and take part in solving international problems, the majority also opposes the presence of Romanian troops in the missions they are already engaged in (Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kosovo).

After EU accession, the common goal of the political parties disappeared; there is a certain confusion in the field of foreign policy and internal incoherence, vis a vis issues like the Balkans. The state of political affairs in the country resulted into an incapacity of the top country elites to formulate a post-accession foreign policy agenda and interests, despite the country's aspiration to play the role of regional leader, which largely rests on the paper of the political programmes. There is also a lack of substantial debate on the foreign policy issues in Romania; due to foreign policy consensus, the Atlanticist orientation of the country has been a guiding principle beyond any discussion. Regardless of a party's orientation on the right-left axis, the political class has claimed that foreign policy will never be divided along US vs. EU or NATO vs. ESDP lines; in their view, there is no benefit in such an approach, the differing views must be accommodated because there are no separate paths, but rather, two ways how to serve the national interest; therefore, one cannot be played against the other. Post-2004 election development and the diverging positions on particular foreign policy issues (i.e. the withdrawal of troops from Iraq) within the governing coalition are not based on ideological concepts or attitudes, but driven by the personalized clash of institutions (pro vs. anti-Băsescu cleavages) with a 'pro-European' Prime Minister opposing

70) The response from the public to the PNL proposal to withdraw troops from Iraq was only timid. The experts say that it was due to several reasons: First, a lack of debate and a split of the public on the issues with a large group of those who would be undecided if asked whether they favor the withdrawal; Second, the number of Romanian casualties was very limited – out of three casualties suffered up until September 2007, one case was a suicide and only two fell victim to military operations and combat – the perception, thus far, is that the Romanian army is professional and that the soldiers are choosing their career voluntarily.

an Atlanticist President. Among the public policies, foreign policy is the most isolated in terms of being projected and conducted in Romania. There is a clear gap between the political elite and the citizens. The only foreign policy issue that really comes to people's minds is the issue of the country's morals and its image in the international arena. This kind of preoccupation is somehow projected into the person of a President, adding to the existing clash of institutions and competition over the electorate.

Conclusion

After the EU accession, the common goal of the political parties' disappeared and a certain confusion took over. Some say that foreign policy fell victim to two accessions and claim collective responsibility from all the political parties for not preparing for the post-accession phase. On many issues of Romanian interest, the political parties have not elaborated their positions or policies.

The foreign policy making became problematic in Romania due to turmoil on the domestic scene; political elites were not able to articulate their foreign policy visions and aims; foreign policy is influenced by internal political developments. Because foreign policy is highly personalized, some foreign policy issues become part of the internal political struggle.

Atlanticism remains a constant of Romanian foreign policy that must be accommodated with the other foreign policy commitments (EU). A hypothesis on the impact of positioning of the political parties along the right-left axis on the foreign policy attitudes does not hold water in Romania at the moment. Although the PNL plays the European card and adopts the discourse, it is not a matter of ideas or convictions, but rather of who is the president.

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SLOVAKIA

Tomáš Weiss

Table 1: Parties in the Slovak Parliament

Term	Parties Represented in the Parliament (Number of Mandates)		Governing Coalition
1992 – 1994	HZDS (74) SDĽ (29) KDH (18) SNS (15) Coalition of Hungarian parties (14)		HZDS – SNS
1994 – 1998	HZDS (61) Common Choice (18) KDH (17) MK (17)	DÚ (15) ZRS (13) SNS (9)	HZDS – ZRS – SNS
1998 – 2002	HZDS (43) SDK (42) SDĽ (23) SMK (14)	SNS (14) SOP (12)	SDK – SDĽ – SMK – SOP
2002 – 2006	HZDS (36) SDKÚ (28) SMER (25) SMK (20)	KDH (15) ANO (15) KSS (11)	SDKÚ – SMK – KDH – ANO
since 2006	SMER (50) SDKÚ-DS(31) SNS (20) SMK (20)	ĽS-HZDS (15) KDH (14)	SMER – SNS – ĽS-HZDS

Source: www.statistics.sk

Parties in the Slovak Parliament:

ANO	New Citizen Alliance
DÚ	Democratic Union
(ĽS-) HZDS	(People's Party-) Movement for a Democratic Slovakia
KDH	Christian Democratic Movement
KSS	Communist Party of Slovakia
MK	Hungarian Coalition
SDK	Slovak Democratic Coalition
SDKÚ (-DS)	Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (-Democratic Party)
SDĽ	Party of Democratic Left
SMER	SMER – Social Democracy
SMK	Hungarian Coalition Party
SNS	Slovak National Party
SOP	Party of Civic Understanding
ZRS	Union of Slovak Workers.

Students of the Slovak party system cannot complain of a lack of substance. Since establishment of an independent Slovak state in 1993, there has hardly been a single year when a new political party would not be established or when few prominent representatives and/or MPs would not break away from one of the major parties. Sometimes, as in 2002, such splinters even had a significant impact on the general election results.

The semi-democratic character of the government until 1998 distorted party-building in Slovakia. General elections were, to a large extent, focused on a single issue in 1998 as well as in 2002 (whether Vladimír Mečiar should remain in the Prime Minister's office, and EU and NATO accession, respectively). Ideology did not play as significant a role as interpersonal relations and power games. Some parties, such as former president Rudolf Schuster's Party of Civic Understanding, were established as a lift to power for certain persons (or groups of persons) to work round the existing party system. Even if some of them could be very successful in the short term, only a few survived as relevant political forces. However, the political scene has now settled down following the last parliamentary elections. Nevertheless, although the parties seem to have gained their own distinctive profiles, there is no guarantee that new splinters or parties will not emerge before the next elections.

It is, therefore, very difficult to point out which parties are currently relevant and will remain relevant in Slovakia over the long-term. This study

follows the current distribution of power and investigates the positions of the parties that managed to get over the 5% hurdle necessary for entering Parliament in the last elections in 2006. Even though there were three other parties that obtained a significant share of votes – the Communist Party of Slovakia (Komunistická strana Slovenska, KSS), the Free Forum (Slobodné Fórum, SF), and the New Citizen Alliance (Aliancia nového občana, ANO) – and were represented in Parliament during the last term, one can argue that these parties will hardly become relevant in the future. The KSS were elected into the last Parliament only because of the complete breakdown of the Slovakian political system that was present before the 2002 elections. Since then, the political space on the left has been dominated and united by the SMER, causing the KSS to lose its temporary relevance. The Free Forum never gained access into the Parliament through elections – it came into existence as a splinter from the SDKÚ. Finally, ANO's 2002 success can be ascribed to its freshness and its collection of protest votes. It failed in confirming its appeal in 2006 and, as it has never had any ideological space on its own and had lost its freshness, there is only a slight chance that it will resurrect its power in future.

Thus, the positions of the following parties are investigated in this study only: SMER – Social Democracy (SMER), the Slovak National Party (Slovenská národná strana, SNS), the People's Party – Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (Ľudová strana – Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko, ĽS-HZDS, mainly referred to as HZDS only), the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party (Slovenská demokratická a kresťanská únia – Demokratická strana, SDKÚ-DS, mainly referred to as SDKÚ only), the Hungarian Coalition Party (Strana maďarskej koalície, SMK), and the Christian Democratic Movement (Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie, KDH).

Left and Right

Although the left-right division has always existed in post-communist Slovakia, it was overshadowed by other issues for the most of the country's existence (Haughton and Rybář 2004: 117). Hloušek and Kopeček (2005) identify several cleavages in Slovak politics. There is a socio-economic cleavage that most closely corresponds to the intuitive understanding of the left and right based on the West European party systems. There is, however, also a national cleavage focused on ethnic or national identity, as well as a nature-of-the-system cleavage. These other cleavages (and some other minor ones)

can be found in some Western European countries as well. However, their influence is not as strong as it has been in Slovakia.

It was the nature-of-the-system cleavage above all that shaped Slovak politics during the 1990s. The coalition of 1994–1998 led by Vladimír Mečiar's HZDS, maybe the most stable coalition of the independent Slovakia, comprised an extreme right party (SNS) together with an extreme left party (ZRS). Similarly, the "anti-Mečiar" opposition that won the elections in 1998 embraced the post-communist, socialist SDĽ, as well as the conservative and anticommunist KDH, among others. In the 2002 elections, Prime Minister Dzurinda won a second mandate (with a slightly altered coalition) on "anti-Mečiarism" again. The main argument was the struggle for NATO and EU membership, which was seen impossible with Vladimír Mečiar, who was feared and denounced for his semi-democratic steps in the West.

The national cleavage played an important role in the early 1990s and towards the creation of an independent Slovakia. Mr. Mečiar, the champion of independence, used to disparage his opponents as "Czechoslovakists," meaning "those who do not care for the Slovak nation." Later, although the national cleavage gave way to the fight over the nature-of-the-system argument, one could see the remnants of the former in the sheer existence of the ethnic-based Hungarian Coalition Party. The Hungarians became an integral part of the anti-Mečiar coalitions, but never lost their ethnic orientation. Recently, the national cleavage tends to be coming back to the fore. Whereas relations between Slovakia and Hungary are at their lowest in a long time, the SMK has found itself abandoned, even by its former coalition partners.

Due to the afore-mentioned reasons, the socio-economic cleavage (i.e. more or less the left-right cleavage) has been rather weak in Slovakia. So far, it reached its peak during the 2002–2006 period when the coalition was completing the reforms of the welfare state. Thus, Hloušek and Kopeček claimed that "Slovak politics headed towards the logic of right-left competition" (2005: 21). Yet, the picture has remained blurred (compare Rybář 2004: 40).

On the centre-right of the political spectrum, there are the parties from the former coalition – **the SDKÚ, the SMK and the KDH**. All of them are members of the EPP-ED group in the European Parliament; all of them champion conservative values. Whereas the SDKÚ and KDH have religion in their respective names, the SMK has had its base in ethnic Hungarian villages of Southern Slovakia. The level of conservatism, however, differs. The KDH has been powerful in the countryside; its representatives describe the KDH as a right-wing party and display their religiousness on every occasion.

The party even left the coalition due to its refusal to accept a controversial treaty with the Vatican.

The SDKÚ, on the other hand, has been strong mainly in cities. Mikuláš Dzurinda, the party chairman, calls the SDKÚ a "union of centre-right political streams" (quoted in Mesežnikov 2000). As Prime Minister, Mr. Dzurinda advocated the label "centre-right" for the whole coalition of 2002–2006 (Leška 2006: 280). The party crystallized into a union of conservatives and liberals (Mesežnikov 2006: 82). This is especially true after the fusion with the liberal Democratic Party in 2006.

The Hungarian Coalition Party also labels itself as a centre-right party comprised of a Christian and a liberal wing, or even a right-wing party appreciating conservative values (Mesežnikov 2000: 94). Scholars, however, pointed out that the SMK remained more leftist than its fellow centre-right parties. Although it also stood for traditional conservative values, it wanted more redistribution and state subsidies on economic issues than the other parties (Rybář 2006: 87). The SMK was established through the fusion of three Hungarian political parties in 1998 due to an *ad hoc* modification of election law by the Mečiar's coalition. As such, the party has always won voters on ethnic profile rather than a coherent ideology.

Whereas we can put, more or less, all opposition parties under the heading of centre-right, the situation is much shadier in the coalition. Power seemed to be more important for its creation than programme conformity. The way in which the newborn coalition appointed their people to important positions during their very first night in office supports this reading of the situation.

As its very name suggests, the **SMER – Social Democracy** presents itself as a classical left-wing party. When the former vice-chairman of the post-communist SDĽ, Robert Fico, established the party in 1999, the ideological direction of the new subject was far from clear, however. Mr. Fico kept refusing to label the party within any established categories. He described the SMER as a "non-ideological party" (Mesežnikov 2000: 119), or a third way – "a compromise between leftist and rightist solutions" (Mesežnikov 2001: 69). This led some students of Slovak politics to categorize the SMER, beside several other Slovak parties, such as the SOP and the ANO, as centrist populists (Učeň 2004: 53). Others, however, argue that the inclination of the party to social democratic values has been clear from the very beginning (Leška 2006: 261). Whatever the original plans had been, with a centre-right government in power, Mr. Fico re-discovered the left-wing rhetoric rather

quickly. The SMER's new goal was to become a "dominant centre-left subject" of the Slovak political scene (Mesežnikov 2003b: 90) and position the party to join the PES. After absorbing the remnants of the "classic" leftist parties (SDĽ, SDSS, and SDA), the SMER adopted a social democratic agenda and changed its name in 2004–5 to SMER – Social Democracy. The party has dominated the left side of the political spectrum in Slovakia uncontested ever since.

While in the height of its popularity and power during the 1990s, the **HZDS** retained a very broad, yet unclear, ideological profile with elements of populism, nationalism, and etatism. The party's own representatives argued that, in the long term, they wanted to operate in the middle of the political spectrum (Mesežnikov 1998: 60). After its removal from government in 1998, the party revised its position and started moving slowly to the right. In 2001, Mr. Mečiar defined his party as a "centre-right subject" and called for cooperation with other centre-right parties (Mesežnikov 2003a: 92), but foreclosed any cooperation with the SMER. The present position of the party is far from being clear. On the one hand, the HZDS changed its name in 2003 to the People's Party – Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (ĽS-HZDS), which would suggest a further move to conservative values. At the same time, however, the party aspires to join the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe in the European Parliament (Mečiar 2007). Moreover, the party formed the government with the SMER, rather than with the centre-right parties of the former coalition after the 2006 elections.

The last of the parliamentary parties, the **Slovak National Party**, is also the most difficult to classify. The party representatives label themselves as "national-Christian" or "right-wing" (Mesežnikov 1999: 105). Attributes such as "nationalist right" or "populist" fit, however, much better. Since the SNS remains the main representative of what Hloušek and Kopeček call the national cleavage, it is extremely difficult to place that party on the right-left spectrum based on the socio-economic cleavage. The election programmes include a mix of traditionally leftist and rightist agendas, such as the refusal of "selling of national wealth" or criticism of welfare state reforms on the one hand, and an emphasis on a small and flexible state on the other (compare SNS 2006). The national tone predominates in the party's rhetoric, as well as its documents. In total, the party can be classified as a far right party, but its position on the political spectrum is extremely contestable for the purpose of this research.

On the basis of the previous paragraphs, the spectrum for the purpose of this study can be drawn as follows:

Positioning of the Slovak Political Parties on the Right – Left Axis

Positions of the Slovak Political Parties

Although plentiful, few Slovak political parties have had an important role in foreign policy-making. Mostly, the Prime Minister's party has also appointed the Minister of Foreign Affairs. In other words, the HZDS, the SDKÚ (SDK in 1998–2000) and the SMER, respectively, have held the two most important foreign policy jobs during the whole existence of independent Slovakia. This is not to say that their coalition partners have not had any influence on the country's foreign policy. The junior parties have always nominated state secretaries. Some of them could be rather influential, such as the position of the chief negotiator with the EU, Ján Figeľ of the KDH. It does, however, say a lot about the relevance of foreign affairs for Slovak domestic politics, where, unlike in most European countries, the junior partners opt for other positions in the government.

Before we take a closer look at the specific positions of particular parties and their representatives, it is necessary to address a very specific foreign policy issue that cuts across the political spectrum – the future of Kosovo. All Slovak political parties are against Kosovar independence with the sole exception of the Hungarian Coalition Party. In this particular question, it does not matter for them what the EU or the US prefer. Rather, their decisions on the matter come with regard to the possible implications for Slovakia itself. The hostility towards an independent Kosovo follows the (possibly unfounded) anxiety about the future of Southern Slovakia, an area populated mainly by a Hungarian-speaking minority. Slovak politicians fear that Kosovo would constitute a precedent, on which political bases of Hungarians in Slovakia could attempt to break away and join Hungary in the future. It can be regarded as one of the manifestations of the extent to which the national cleavage is taking ground recently.

The following foreign policy positions of the Slovak political parties are constructed on the basis of their election programmes, the media appearances of their representatives, as well as on questionnaires and interviews with those responsible for the party's foreign policy formulation. The party sections are further divided along research areas, i.e. US military presence in Europe, the relationship between NATO and the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), Iraq in particular, external aspects of the war on terror, and other foreign policy issues.

SMER – Social Democracy

The SMER won the 2006 parliamentary elections by a big margin and managed to form a government. The party has appointed not only the Prime Minister, but also the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Although the SMER has been the leading force on the Slovak left and has swallowed up most of the other, potentially significant, leftist parties in recent years, it was not able to find a suitable minister within their own ranks and opted for a professional diplomat, Ján Kubiš. This has left the Prime Minister and SMER chairman, Robert Fico, as a major influence over the party's foreign policy views.

US Military Presence in Europe

The SMER's position on the US military role in Europe can be described as slightly confused. The party has always supported both the country's accession to NATO and the EU, but refrained from developing its stance any further. This corresponds with a general lack of concern for foreign policy in the party; the general election programme of 2002 contained no special section on foreign policy. It only listed the country's accession to NATO and the EU as one of the two main tasks for the future government (together with fighting unemployment) (SMER 2002).

Although the 2006 general election programme already contains a foreign policy section, its two paragraphs at the very end of the document are rather undersized compared to the 28 pages of the rest of the text (SMER 2006). Those in the party responsible for foreign affairs do not offer a much clearer view. On one hand, they say that the planned US anti-ballistic missile defence bases should be built only if necessary (although not on Slovak soil!). On the other hand, they doubt whether the missile defence would enhance European security. The same dichotomy influences official declarations of

the Slovak administration. Whereas the foreign ministry has welcomed the missile defence plans as "centred on enhancing security in Europe," the Prime Minister, at the same time, declared that the system "would not change the security situation" and that he would not agree with deploying parts of the system in Slovakia (SME 2007c).

A refusal to take a clear stance on foreign policy is reflected in the principles of Slovak foreign policy as presented by Mr. Fico and his party. Mr. Fico's statement that "Slovakia is in the centre of Europe, not of the United States" (Mesežnikov 2004: 105) would suggest a certain separation from the US. The idea of the "four points of the compass" that was included in the 2006 election programme even hints to a certain separation from the West in general: "The compass has four points. Therefore, the foreign policy of the SMER – Social Democracy will also be oriented to the West as well as to the East, North, and South." (SMER 2006: 29). Moreover, Mr. Fico criticised the past government for its one-sided foreign policy orientation towards the US administration and gross disregard for the country's relationship with Russia (Marušiak et al. 2006: 257).

However, at the same time, other SMER representatives would welcome cutting down the US military presence in Europe, not because of any wish to limit US influence in Europe, but on the basis of more necessary tasks elsewhere – a position that bears evidence of a rather positive interpretation of the role of the US throughout the world.

Relations between NATO and the ESDP

When asked specific questions, the SMER representatives responsible for foreign policy issues tend to regard the emerging ESDP cautiously. They voice concern for the ESDP's possible consequences for NATO and its future. They believe that the EU and NATO, in close cooperation, should guarantee security in Europe. Nevertheless, they give precedence to the use of force within the Alliance. A European army is thinkable only if closely coordinated with NATO. Even if the European Union should be able to conduct its own, autonomous operations, these should be restricted to Europe and Africa only.

Official documents of the party fully supported the accession to both NATO and the EU (SMER 2002: 1) and acknowledged the will to fulfil obligations resulting from NATO membership (SMER 2006: 28).

When approaching their voters, however, the SMER delivers a slightly different image. As Mesežnikov reports, Robert Fico claimed that, "the basic

task for Slovakia was not as much to enter NATO as to join the European Union" (2000: 70). On the basis of Mr. Fico's appearances in the pre-accession period, Leška also concludes that the SMER's chairman "did not consider NATO accession a priority" (2006: 167). During the Iraq crisis, Mr. Fico called for a greater level of orientation towards France and Germany (Marušiak et al. 2006: 257) and supported an heightened development of the CFSP (Marušiak et al. 2004: 352). Boris Zala, the vice-chairman of the party, suggested in 2002 that Slovak foreign policy should be conducted in a "European, not an American way" in the future (SME 2002).

After forming the government, the SMER has not had many opportunities to present its relationship to NATO or the ESDP in deed. However, as the discussion about a transfer of the Slovak contingent in Afghanistan to a more dangerous area of Kandahar illustrates, the government is ready to support NATO operations, but is not overexcited and very careful about the conditions (compare Marušiak et al. 2007: 291; Pravda 2007).

Iraq

Even if the SMER may be unclear and opaque on foreign policy direction in general, it was not so on the Iraq war in particular. The party opposed the military solution of the Iraqi crisis from the very beginning. All its representatives criticised it in a very coherent way.

The SMER stigmatised the invasion in Iraq as a dangerous precedent violating international law (Hospodárské noviny 2003). Robert Fico, a lawyer by education, was also worried that the actions in Iraq would undermine the authority of the United Nations (Mesežnikov 2003b: 95), which has, according to the party, an irreplaceable role in preserving stability in the world (SMER 2006: 28). Party representatives even criticise the current presence of US soldiers in Iraq and believe that democratisation should be conducted using other international structures.

A big part of the opposition was directed against the government, which had supported the coalition of willing formed by the US through the so-called Vilnius letter. The government was described as "irresponsible, non-European, and bellicose" (Mesežnikov 2003b: 95). Withdrawal from Iraq was one of the promises that the SMER made in its 2006 election programme.

After assuming power, the SMER wanted to withdraw Slovak soldiers from Iraq immediately. However, all other political parties, as well as the President of the Republic, opposed such a decision. In its mission statement, thus,

the government promised only a clear schedule for the withdrawal, created after consultations with partners and the Iraqi government (Programové vyhlásenie vlády Slovenské republiky 2006: 52). Although the bulk of the Slovak contingent left Iraq in February 2007, some officers remained to serve in the headquarters and to train Iraqi soldiers, ultimately leaving later that year (compare at www.mosr.sk).

External Aspects of the War on Terror

The SMER keeps a low profile on all aspects of the war on terror. A discussion is missing from party members; party representatives do not issue strong statements. In contrast to the intense criticism of the US policy towards Iraq, SMER representatives do not pay much attention to the US base at Guantánamo Bay. Even if they would oppose the detention of any Slovak citizens, they seem to be rather unconcerned with the base's existence. Although they would prefer a different setting for interning terrorist suspects, their animosity is not strong enough to provoke an active criticism. Even the Ministry of Foreign Affairs supports the EU's condemnation that the prison does not meet international standards, but admits that it is not a sensitive issue in Slovakia since the country has "just a small Muslim community" (SME 2007a).

Similarly, the SMER seems uninterested in the alleged CIA flights in Europe. Although the party would not welcome any CIA bases on Slovak territory, it does not care much if other countries do. Beyond these particular cases, a general cooperation between the US and Slovak intelligence services is seen as desirable.

Other Foreign Policy Issues

On other foreign policy issues, the SMER keeps in line with the European Union. The party supports the International Criminal Court unambiguously. With regard to the EU position, it also criticises the US support of Israel during the 2006 Lebanon crisis. The SMER does, however, admit that US diplomacy can have a positive impact on the Israeli-Arab peace process. SMER representatives would also like the EU to replace the US in the strategically important region of Central Asia.

Even if these foreign policy questions do not attract much attention in the party, there is one issue, sensitive in transatlantic relations, that has received

publicity during this term. On Cuba, the SMER takes the side of those European countries that call for a reappraisal of the current approach. Mr. Fico gave rise to a big upheaval on the Slovak political scene when he attended the anniversary party of the Cuban revolution at the Cuban Embassy in Bratislava in 2007 (Hospodárské noviny 2007a). However, the Foreign Minister tried to calm down the situation, insisting that, "the foreign policy orientation of Slovakia has not changed, which is also true regarding the position on Cuba" (Hospodárské noviny 2007b).

ĽS-HZDS – People's Party – Movement for a Democratic Slovakia

Before 2006, the HZDS won every single parliamentary election, even if with an ever-shrinking number of received votes. Although the party had a great influence on Slovak foreign policy during the 1990s, it lost power due to a low level of coalition potential after 1998.

The HZDS has always officially supported Slovakia's accession to both NATO and the EU. However, even if NATO accession was one of the priorities of the HZDS election programmes as well as its government missions, the party was much more reserved in practical policy. Before the referendum on NATO membership that was held in 1997, the HZDS supported a positive answer officially, but did not communicate this backing to the voters. Moreover, on their initiative, additional questions on nuclear weapons had been added to the poll that should have influenced the voters to say no (Mesežnikov 1998: 62). In 1997, Mesežnikov argued that the party had kept to an "anti-integration policy and displays of isolationism and anti-Westernism" (1998: 61). Marušiak considers the HZDS government after the Madrid summit to be overtly anti-American (1999: 280). In 1999, several MPs from the HZDS criticised the NATO operation against Yugoslavia as an "overt aggression against a sovereign country" and condemned the decision of the government to provide Slovak air space to NATO forces (Mesežnikov 1999: 102).

A profound change in the party's approach marked the adoption of the Political declaration at the HZDS congress in Trnava in 2000. The declaration points out that the country's NATO and EU accession as in the "national interest and the highest foreign policy priority of the Slovak Republic" (HZDS 2000). In 2007, Mr. Mečiar declared that the HZDS was the "guarantee of stable pro-European and pro-Euroatlantic developments" (Mečiar 2007). Mere words would not persuade a sea change, however. The official support

of membership had been in all previous party documents as well. It was the actions that followed that persuaded students of Slovak politics that it was a real possibility. The HZDS interrupted its cooperation with the SNS because it could not work together with a party that did not want to enter into NATO, attempting to persuade the voters to support the membership (Leška 2006: 256 ff.). The party also agreed with the Slovak government's decision to grant overflight rights to the allied forces during the Afghanistan operation in 2001. In 2007, Mesežnikov described the HZDS as "clearly pro-integrationist and pro-atlantic" (2007: 81).

At the same time, however, the new position has not kept HZDS politicians from making the passing of necessary acts difficult in the Slovak parliament during their terms in opposition (Leška 2006: 258). Nor did it stop them from entering the Fico government shoulder to shoulder with the SNS.

US Military Presence in Europe

After Slovakia had dropped out from the accession negotiations due to concerns about the level of democracy in the country, Mr. Mečiar (then Prime Minister) declared that if they were not wanted in the West, they would turn towards the East (Malová et al. 2005: 96). Today, the picture is completely different: the HZDS, as the only member of the coalition, supports the establishment of the US ABM defence bases in Europe and would even support one of the bases in Slovakia. According to the vice-chairman of the party, Milan Urbányi, Slovakia needs long-term protection – and a base would provide it (SME 2007b).

It is questionable, however, whether the enthusiasm for the radar and interceptor bases is part of an elaborate and keen pro-Americanism or just a position on the particular issue. When ask more generally on the US military presence in Europe, the party representatives refrain from answering clearly whether it should be strengthened or diminished.

Relations between NATO and the ESDP

The HZDS position on the relationship between NATO and the ESDP is similarly careful. The party declares a profound support for the European integration project that includes deepening, in addition to widening, the initiative (*Vyhlásenie LS-HZDS…* 2006). Mr. Mečiar even supports progress towards a federal model and hopes to live to see the United States of Europe

(Mesežnikov 2006: 101). The party voted for the European Constitution in the Slovak Parliament.

At the same time, HZDS politicians accentuate NATO membership and the role NATO plays in providing European security. They support EU autonomous missions, but only in Europe and Africa. They believe that the development of the ESDP must not undermine the activities of NATO, which should be, together with the EU, the basic guarantor of security in Europe. They refrain from declaring a clear position on the military issues, such as the creation of a European army, the question of precedence of the NATO Reaction Force, or EU battlegroups. In the government, the HZDS supported the redeployment of Slovak soldiers in Afghanistan to the more dangerous area around Kandahar on the basis of the country's obligations to NATO (Pravda 2007).

Iraq

On Iraq, the HZDS was again the most open-minded among the members of the current coalition. Although a part of the party's MPs voted against the deployment of Slovak soldiers, another part supported it. During the 2006 debate on withdrawal, the HZDS was ready to take the contingent back home; however, unlike the SMER politicians who wanted to withdraw immediately, the HZDS argued that the political situation in Iraq must be the determining factor (Mesežnikov 2004: 2007: 81). The party also believes that, at the moment, the US presence in Iraq is necessary for a democratic transformation of the country.

External Aspects of the War on Terror

As with other foreign policy issues, the HZDS keeps a low profile on the war on terror and is not very much involved in a public discussion. In general, the Movement is interested in and supports a cooperation between US and Slovak intelligence services. It recognises that "all countries must keep an eye on terrorism" (SME 2007b).

At the same time, however, the party expresses doubts whether the US base at Guantánamo Bay is the right way of detaining terrorist suspects. It would strongly disagree if a Slovak citizen was to be kept there and would not be in favour of CIA or other US agencies interrogating suspects on Slovak territory.

Other Foreign Policy Issues

After looking at HZDS foreign policy positions, one can almost get the impression that the party produces statements on particular topics only after they become widely-discussed issues in Slovak politics. The party representatives had to have an opinion on the war in Iraq, US bases in Central Europe, or the EU Constitutional Treaty because they were either supposed to vote on them in Parliament or their position was requested by a fierce public debate. The same is true for the party's position on the Cuban embargo, which made it into the headlines after Mr. Fico's visit to the embassy. The HZDS, as on most of the above-mentioned issues, disagrees with the SMER and supports the US embargo against the Cuban regime, although it concedes that the future political development of Cuba will be the determining factor.

On other questions, such as the International Criminal Court or the US role in the Israeli-Arab peace process, the party representatives keep silent and refuse to present a clear opinion.

SNS – Slovak National Party[1]

Foreign policy has never been an area of key importance for the Slovak National Party. Even though it has been part of the governing coalition for a significant part of the Slovakia's independent existence, the SNS has never appointed a Foreign Minister. Although quite clear in its visions of Slovakia's interests and desirable policies, the main consequences of the SNS's participation in the coalition are visible in Slovak-Hungarian relations and, to a lesser extent, in the West's initial mistrust in the new government. This mistrust became evident when the Party of European Socialists suspended the SMER's membership due to its cooperation with the SNS after the government had been formed.

US Military Presence in Europe

The SNS clearly opposes any significant US presence in Europe. From the very beginning, the party promoted neutrality as the best option for Slovak security policy. This neutrality should be anchored in a pan-European security system, binding both the West and the East (SNS 1998). With this in mind,

1) Unlike other parties' representatives, the SNS refused to answer standard set of questions that form one of the main sources of this paper. The positions of the party have thus been put together using party documents, daily press, and secondary literature only.

the party refused NATO accession and regarded the Alliance as a "Cold War product" (Mesežnikov 2001: 102). Such a pan-European project would allow for taking in Russia, which is seen as the most important strategic partner of Slovakia due to its Slavic ethnicity and membership in the UNSC. The United States, the United Kingdom, and France, all members of the UNSC, come only in second place along with Germany as world powers (SNS 2006: 41).

The pan-Slavism of the SNS, which should serve as a "protection against Anglo-Saxon and Islamic culture" (Marušiak 2007: 285), was also displayed in the debate on the US radar and missile bases in Central Europe. The SNS opposed the necessity of such installations. According to SNS chairman Ján Slota, the bases would solve nothing because "in Europe, there is no enemy" (SME 2007b). This can be interpreted as a clear reflection of the Russian criticism of the US plans.

Relations between NATO and the ESDP

When pushed to choose between NATO and the EU, Slovak nationalists find themselves between a rock and a hard place. Whereas the rock of NATO remains very solid at any occasion, the hardness of the EU may be unbearable at times. From the very beginning, the SNS has accepted the economic necessity of EU membership, but warned that one had to be careful to enter too early. The political integration, on the other hand, has been considered evil. The party declines federal principles in the EU, accentuates national sovereignty, and even criticises the supremacy of EU law (*sic!*) (SNS 2002: 8). Mr. Slota argued at one public rally that the ideas of Maastricht are "perverse" (Mesežnikov 1998: 70). Another leading figure of the party said that the "dictate of Brussels was becoming worse than the dictate of Moscow used to be" (Malová et al 2005: 95).

Sometimes, however, even perverse ideas may be the better option. In 2006, the party's election programme argued for the creation and strengthening of a military-political identity within the EU (SNS 2006: 3). The worse option is clearly the country's continuing membership in NATO. Mr. Slota argued in December 2007 that NATO should be dismantled the same way as the Warsaw Pact had been and that Slovakia should not take part in any NATO missions in the future. At the same time, he argued again for European own security and defence structures, including military forces (Extra plus 2007).

Even the SNS is, however, able to conform to governmental responsibility. Whereas the party was against the operation in Afghanistan in 2001, it sup-

ported extending the Slovak military presence there in 2007 and presented NATO obligations as the reason (SME 2007d).

Iraq and Other Foreign Policy Issues

Slovak nationalists have been against the military intervention in Iraq. They called for an instant withdrawal in 2004 after 3 Slovak soldiers had died, and again in 2006. Other policy issues have not been paid continual attention, with several exceptions only. The party's position is strongly anti-Israeli (Mesežnikov 2003a: 77) in general, which influences interventions on Middle-Eastern issues.

Some of the statements on the war on terror have been rather provocative. Before the nationalists opposed the operation in Afghanistan, their current vice-chairman, Anna Malíková, claimed that the 9/11 terrorist attacks were a result of the US foreign policy during the past few decades. Mr. Slota has further criticised the practice in Kosovo, where, as he believes, the EU, NATO, and the US support Islamist terrorists, unlike on other continents where they shoot them (Extra plus 2007).

SDKÚ-DS – Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party

To some extent, the SDKÚ was established only as a result of external pressure. Due to the change of election rules shortly before the 1998 elections, the anti-Mečiar opposition had to form a single party (the Slovak Democratic Coalition, SDK) in order not to be disadvantaged by the new law. Since then, although the ways of the partners parted, former Prime Minister Dzurinda, who sprang from the KDH originally, appeared with a brand new party, the SDKÚ, established independently in 2000, which has managed to beat all the SDK founding parties in both subsequent elections.

The party (or better to say, the politicians who later moved into it) held both key foreign policy positions, the offices of Prime Minister as well as Foreign Minister, in both terms 1998–2006. It is, therefore, understandable that the party sees foreign policy as one of the flagships of the party programme and regards itself as the representative of the ideas of integration. This, in turn, may explain both the party's success in 1998 and 2002 elections, as well as its defeat in 2006 when foreign policy, plus EU and NATO membership, ceased to be the key election topic.

US Military Presence in Europe

SDKÚ clearly counts on the US for security issues. In its election programme in 2002, the party stressed the importance of a "permanent American engagement in the European security architecture" (SDKÚ 2002: 4) because the US will always be seen as Europe's partner, not an enemy (Ondrejcsák 2004: 53). Similarly, already as a member of the EU, the SDKÚ supported a high level of cooperation with "the strategic partner, the United States of America" (SDKÚ 2006: 42).

The party wants to keep the bond between US and the European security; however, at the same time, its representatives support the deepening of European integration, even if with unanimous decision-making (SDKÚ 2003). They also believe that the US military presence in Europe should be diminished and that the EU should gradually take over European defence. This defence should also include operations on the European continent. Yet, the creation of a common European political area should not endanger the US role in Europe (Mesežnikov 2003b: 70).

It is not surprising that the SDKÚ supports the planned anti-ballistic missile defence in Central Europe that the US has negotiated with the Czech Republic and Poland. In addition, the party's politicians are convinced that the system will enhance security in Europe.

Relations between NATO and the ESDP

In short, the SDKÚ is enthusiastic about both NATO and the ESDP. NATO is seen as the "most important pillar of European security and the guarantee of economic stability" (SDKÚ 2002: 3). NATO activities should, in this view, be broadened and include humanitarian operations (SDKÚ 2006: 42) and NATO's protection of the interests of its member states everywhere in the world (SME 2004).

At the same time, the party supports the further development of the European Security and Defence Policy (SDKÚ 2002: 3). In Europe's immediate neighbourhood, ESDP operations should even have precedence over NATO-led missions (even if NATO should be the option everywhere else). Moreover, the SDKÚ is also very supportive of the idea of a European army, which, as some add, should be established only if all member states agree on its creation.

Cooperation is the keyword for the SDKÚ. NATO and the EU should be responsible together for European security. NATO should be responsible in

the broader sense of global issues and general defence; the ESDP should be responsible (complementarily, in particular) for operations in the European neighbourhood and where all actors agree that the EU is more suitable for such a task. In such cooperation, the emphasis should be put on capacity-building and the reduction of duplications within the Berlin Plus system.

Iraq

Prime Minister Dzurinda was one of the signatories of the so-called Vilnius letter that expressed confidence in US evidence presented to the UN Security Council and backed a military action against Iraq. Later on, SDKÚ initiated a deployment of more than 100 soldiers to the Multinational Force in Iraq; all MPs elected for the party voted in its support. The party has stuck to the decision and continued to refuse any withdrawal (Mesežnikov 2004: 80). Currently, the SDKÚ also appreciates the endeavour, although its representatives admit that it was a difficult undertaking.

When asked about the present US military presence in Iraq, all SDKÚ representatives agree that it should be maintained because it is necessary for the democratic transition of the country.

External Aspects of the War on Terror

Although the SDKÚ is very supportive of the US and regard it as a strategic partner and a key factor for European security, it does not automatically mean that it agrees to everything that the US undertakes. In particular, the Guantánamo Bay detention base has not won support from SDKÚ politicians. Some regard it as a violation of human rights; some doubt whether it has been necessary at all. Even if some do not believe that closing down the base would solve the problem, it is rather a call for a deeper, systemic response to such practices than a support of the methods used. Nor would they support the detention of any Slovak citizens on the base.

An opinion of the alleged CIA flights is not very strong within the party; it is rather seen as a bare necessity that could not be avoided. In general, however, the SDKÚ strongly supports bilateral cooperation between Slovak and US intelligence services. In addition to this, some members of the party would agree to special CIA or US military bases on Slovak territory that would be used for the interrogation of terrorist suspects. In this case, a strong supervision from the Slovak side would be a precondition, however.

Other Foreign Policy Issues

Whereas the positions of the party are rather unified on issues such as Iraq or the relationship between NATO and the ESDP, if we look at other, more peripheral foreign policy issues, we can spot slight differences. This is, to some extent, true in the case of US support of the 2006 Israeli intervention in Southern Lebanon. Some SDKÚ representatives understand the support because they believe that Israel simply responded to terrorist activities. For others, however, Israel went further than a pure defence operation, causing, as such, the US support to be rather unfortunate.

Differences in the interpretation of the particular political situation on the spot also cause a different evaluation of US policy in the case of Cuba. Some believe that the Cuban regime has not changed a bit and that the US embargo is, therefore, fully justifiable. Others, however, see the situation in Cuba as changing and would support a reassessment of the US position as well.

In general, SDKÚ representatives support the establishment of the International Criminal Court; but again, some of them would feel better if the US also ratified the charter and became part of the system.

The party also presents its full support for the presence of the US in Central Asia. The SDKÚ would welcome an increased US presence in the region because it could have a positive effect on energy security in Europe.

SMK – Hungarian Coalition Party

The Hungarian Coalition Party considers foreign policy to be an important issue. It has also had experience, to some extent, because its present chairman, Pál Csáky, used to be the vice-premier responsible for European affairs in the second Dzurinda government. Moreover, the SMK's József Berényi served during the same term as State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

As a party based on an ethnic principal, it is only logical that the SMK puts emphasis on national minority issues and measures for the protection of minorities. With the experience of Slovak nationalists' participation in the government during the 1990s, the SMK developed a general enthusiasm for Western institutions, i.e. both the EU and NATO, which had been seen as parts of a single package. Having considered accession the best tool for promoting minority rights, the party has always been its prominent advocate.

US Military Presence in Europe

To a large extent, the SMK's views of the US role in Europe are similar to those of the SDKÚ, as described above. The party believes that the US has a role to play in Europe and would like to see the American political, as well as military, presence in Europe maintained (SMK 2006: 62). At the same time, however, party representatives argue that this US presence should be reduced because the EU should gradually take over European defence.

One of the cases where the SMK supports the maintenance, and even the strengthening, of the US presence in Europe is the issue of ballistic missile defence. The party agrees to the plans to establish radar and interceptor bases in Central Europe and believes that they would probably improve Europe's security.

Relations between NATO and the ESDP

The Hungarian Coalition Party combines vivid Europeanism with strong reliance on NATO. Party representatives support the further development of the ESDP, which should be, together with NATO, a guarantor of European security, and even believe that the EU should create a European army. The EU should conduct its own independent missions in Europe and Africa; in these missions, the European battle groups should take precedence over NATO troops.

On the other hand, in areas other than the EU's immediate neighbourhood (Europe and Africa), NATO or US-led missions are considered more appropriate for the task. It must also be said that, even though the SMK supports the EU military dimension, the party considers NATO the only organisation that can guarantee international security (SMK 2002). Moreover, it finds European security without an active participation of NATO to be beyond imagination (SMK 2006: 61). When thinking about tasks for Slovak security forces, the party regards NATO obligations as the only source, a position without reference to an EU level of commitment (SMK 2006: 57).

In their mutual relationship, both sides of the Atlantic should perform better, according to the SMK. Whereas the US should learn how to listen to its allies more, the Europeans should deliver more in terms of military efficiency (SMK 2006: 62).

Iraq

All parliamentarians elected for the SMK voted in favour of the deployment of Slovak forces in Iraq. The reasons why they supported the war may vary within the party. Some did so because it was a coalition operation led by the United States; others believed that it was correct to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime (Pravda 2004).

Likewise, the SMK supports the present US military presence in Iraq because it is seen as necessary for the democratic transition of the country.

External Aspects of the War on Terror

Similarly to the SDKÚ, the Hungarian Coalition Party seems to be critical of some methods used by the US in the war on terror, despite the fact that the party supported the invasion of Iraq. Party representatives would prefer if the US had used a different arrangement for the detention of terrorist suspects and would definitely oppose any detention of Slovak citizens at Guantanamo Bay.

A slight caution can be noted also in possible cooperation with US intelligence services. Although the SMK would support bilateral intelligence cooperation between Slovakia and the US within the framework of the war on terror, a certain level of supervision would be a precondition. If not entirely necessary, the SMK would also oppose any special US establishments for interrogating terrorist suspects built on Slovak territory.

Other Foreign Policy Issues

US policies in the world are considered as correct within the SMK. The party appreciated the US support of Israel during the intervention in Lebanon in 2006 because it believes that the intervention was a just reaction to an escalation of terrorist activities. Similarly, it backs the US embargo against Cuba, although the party accepts that the political situation on the island may change in the future and could require a reassessment of the current sanctions. It also considers the US role in Central Asia as a contribution to energy security in Europe. The SMK backs the establishment of the International Criminal Court without any preconditions.

KDH – Christian Democratic Movement

The Christian Democrats have been a stable part of the Slovak political scene since the change of the regime. The party was established as early as February 1990. Whereas it has always been very successful in municipal elections, relative to other parties, it has never been overly strong in the run for seats in the Slovak Parliament (compare election results at www.statistics.sk). This is the consequence of the party's strong conservatism and religiousness, which appeals more in the countryside where there are more municipalities than in the cities, where general elections are decided.

The KDH was the main author of the Slovak Democratic Coalition; one of its members, Mikuláš Dzurinda, also became the chairman of the SDK. Later, although the KDH left the Coalition, it has always been defeated in general elections by the newly-formed SDKÚ. In 2006, as a reaction to the refusal of a treaty with the Vatican, the KDH left the governing coalition as well, which led to early elections.

Although never occupying the highest jobs in foreign policy-making, the KDH appointee for Foreign Ministry State Secretary, Ján Figeľ, was responsible for the EU accession negotiations.

US Military Presence in Europe and the Relations between NATO and the ESDP

The Christian Democratic Movement is probably the most fractionalized Slovak party regarding the approach to NATO and the EU. Although the party always supported the accession to both organizations in general terms (Mesežnikov 2001: 81), some of its top representatives have been reluctant, critical, or even completely hostile. As a result, some of them would support the reduction of the US military presence in Europe because such forces are needed somewhere else and that the Europeans should bear part of the responsibility for common defence. Others, such as Vladimír Palko, former chairman of the Parliamentary Defence and Security Committee, suggest strengthening the European dimension (through the ESDI!), which would lead to the gradual abolishment of US dominance in Europe and result in the transformation of the Alliance into a two-block of North America and Europe without any US military presence in the latter (Mesežnikov 2001: 82). Finally, some in the KDH, such as long-time chairman, Ján Čarnogurský, have been against NATO membership all along (Marušiak et al. 2006: 257).

Mr. Čarnogurský has declared that the Alliance does not have any future (Mesežnikov 2007: 96). As a member of the government, he voted against flyover permission to NATO aircrafts during the Kosovo crisis in 1999 (Mesežnikov 2000: 21).

Similarly, some in the KDH refrain from commenting on the US plans for ballistic missile defence bases in Central Europe. Others, however, criticise them right away as provoking Russia and would not support any such bases in Slovakia (The Slovak Spectator 2007).

Nevertheless, the KDH still considers the transatlantic cooperation decisive for European security and NATO the most important security pillar of the transatlantic area (KDH 2004; KDH 2006: 11). The cohesion of the EU security and defence policy should be reached within the conditions and structures of NATO and the ESDI (KDH 2004). A European army should be avoided because it could undermine NATO. Again, some in the party support an evolution of the ESDP and even believe that the ESDP should guarantee security in Europe; however, all this is considered suitable only in Europe and its neighbourhood. NATO should take care of the rest of the world.

The KDH calls for preventing duplications with NATO in the EU's defence policy (KDH 2002) and even labels the ESDP a "supplement" in tasks that NATO is supposed to deal with (KDH 2006: 11). The EU should engage only where NATO does not act.

The apparent love/hate relationship with NATO can partly be explained by the same view of the European Union. The KDH does not see the ESDP as a possible alternative to NATO, even if it is not very happy with the Alliance, because parts of the party are very reluctant or even sceptical towards the EU. The whole party has been against deepening European integration (Mesežnikov 2007: 97) and has presented many red lines, such as taxes or the asylum policy (compare KDH 2006). In the second pillar, the KDH admits that the EU should speak with one voice in the world (Šťastný and Gábelová 2004: 16–17), but also insists on preserving unanimous decision-making (KDH 2004). The party opposed the Constitutional Treaty and is now against the Lisbon Treaty as well because it argues that the treaty established a new state (Hospodárské noviny 2007c). Mr. Čarnogurský went one step further again when he labelled the whole EU as an "artificial product" (Mesežnikov 2007: 96).

To sum up, the KDH is neither very enthusiastic about NATO nor the EU and seeks ways on how to balance them out against each other in order to

provide Slovakia with the most autonomy and sovereignty in foreign policy. Except for extreme individuals, however, it does not go as far as to refuse NATO or the European integration. When put together, the KDH clearly chooses NATO before the ESDP.

Iraq

The KDH was the only government party that criticised the US decision to invade Iraq and opposed the deployment of Slovak forces. The party argued that it was a mistake, a war fought for the wrong reasons. In Iraq, the West lost its moral superiority acquired after the 9/11 terrorist attacks necessary for the victory in the war on terror (Palko 2004). In the government, KDH ministers voted against granting the coalition permits to fly over Slovak territory (Marušiak et al. 2003: 280). In the Slovak parliament, the MPs were not given any advice on how to vote, with two of them supporting the deployment of Slovak soldiers. Ten others, however, voted against this measure, which Mesežnikov accredits to the opposition by the Pope and the Conference of Slovak Bishops (2003b: 80).

Later on, the KDH argued for a withdrawal of Slovak troops, but never took any active steps (Mesežnikov 2004: 91). In the 2006 election programme, the party promised a withdrawal by the end of the term, i.e. 2010 (KDH 2006: 12).

The current US presence in Iraq is regarded as unfortunate because the democratic transition of Iraq should be carried out by other international structures. It is not believed to have influenced the Slovak relationship towards the US, however.

External Aspects of the War on Terror

The KDH does not see any need to have establishments and procedures such as those at the base at Guantánamo Bay. Remarkably, however, its representatives, as the only such ones in Slovakia, admit that Slovak citizens could be held in the base in exceptional cases. Such a necessity led, in their opinion, to the decision made by some European countries to allow for CIA flights over their territories. Only if not possible otherwise, they would also agree to the establishment of an US interrogation base in Slovakia. In general terms, however, cooperation between Slovak and US intelligence services is considered as necessary.

Other Foreign Policy Issues

The Christian Democratic Movement was the loudest critic of the current government's moderate position on Cuba and the Prime Minister's participation at a Cuban embassy banquet (KDH 2007). The party believes that the sanctions against the Cuban regime should remain in place until all prisoners of consciousness are set free. Therefore, it also considered the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and some EU member states to be an "unfortunate and wrong step" (Hospodárské noviny 2005).

The US role in the Middle East is seen as potentially positive, but sometimes wrong, such as during the Israeli intervention in Lebanon, which went too far for a defensive war. In Central Asia, on the other hand, it is the EU who should play a more active role.

The KDH also supports the establishment of the International Criminal Courts, but would prefer if the US took part as well.

Conclusion

The Slovak political scene has been rather unsettled since the establishment of an independent Slovakia. Moreover, other cleavages than the left-right (or socio-economic) cleavage have been important most of the time. Lining the parties up along the left-right axis is, thus, easily contestable. However, if we accept the classification of the Slovak parties as made and discussed in this paper, we can draw several conclusions with regard to the relationship between the position on the left-right axis and the foreign policy preferences.

Firstly, for the segment of the axis marked by the SMER on the left and the SDKÚ on the right, it can be argued that, the more to the left the party stands, the more sceptical of the policies of the US it will be. The SMER has been very critical of many US efforts in the last years, starting with the Iraq war and ending with the ballistic missile defence. The rest of the parties have been supportive on most issues, or, in the case of the HZDS, supportive on some issues and silent on others.

Secondly, with the same parties, the more left the party stands, the more Europeanist it is in regard to its rhetoric. It is, however, questionable whether this rhetoric is positively pro-European or just a way of criticising the US. All parties, without exception, have formulated the preservation of the NATO's exclusive role in the European security system as the main prerequisite of the further development of the ESDP.

Thirdly, the right-wing parties have been heavily influenced by the nationalist cleavage. This is definitely true for the SNS, but to a large extent also for the KDH. This nationalism leads to a pan-Slavic rhetoric and distrust of the US, and sometimes of the West in general. For these parties, or at least a significant and loud part in the case of the KDH, both NATO and the EU are suspicious organisations. It must be said, however, that unlike the SNS, the mainstream KDH has always accepted the necessity of the accession to both organisations despite the criticism. On security issues, the KDH also clearly prioritises the Alliance before the EU.

Unlike in some other Central and East European countries, Slovak political parties do not change their positions much once they enter the government. Although there is some pragmatism present, the bulk of the rhetoric and the main points remain in place. In this context, we can understand the voting of KDH ministers against the Kosovo and Iraq wars as well as the effort of the SMER to withdraw from Iraq as soon as possible. This is what students of Central Europe may appreciate with the Slovak political scene, which is not very transparent in many other terms.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

David Král

The Director of the EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy graduated from the Law Faculty at Charles University. He is a certified trainer in EU modules for public administration. He lectured at the Department of European Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague and at the University of Public Administration and International Relations in Prague. In 2002/2003, he was in the advisory group for the State Secretary for European Integration on the Convention and the advisory group for the Prime Minister for the EU Intergovernmental Conference (IGC). Main areas of expertise: EU institutional issues, EU Enlargement and External Relations, Justice and Home Affairs (Schengen).

Věra Řiháčková

The research fellow at the EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy graduated from the Faculty of Social Science in Political Science and International Relations and from the Faculty of Humanities, Charles University in Prague. She studied political science at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark. She is a PhD candidate in International Relations at the Charles University, Prague. She attended the Fulbright–US State Department Program on US National Security and Foreign Policy Post 9/11 at the Institute of Global Conflict and Cooperation, University of California, San Diego, in 2006. Main areas of expertise: EU institutional reform, Transatlantic relations, European Neighbourhood Policy, and Security and Counterterrorism.

Tomáš Weiss

The research fellow at the EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy graduated from the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague and from Hamburg University of Economics and Politics, both in European Studies. He is a PhD candidate in Area Studies at the Charles University in Prague. He accomplished an internship at the EU Institute of Security Studies in Paris in 2004 and took part in the 10th International Summer School of the German Council on Foreign Relations that focused on international security in July 2006. He lectures at the Department of West European Studies of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague. Main areas of expertise: European Common Foreign and Security Policy, European Security and Defence Policy, as well as Transatlantic relations.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

MISSION

The EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy is a non-profit, non-partisan, and independent institute. It focuses on the issues of European integration and its impact on the transformation of political, economic, and legal milieu in the Czech Republic. EUROPEUM strives to contribute to the long-lasting development of democracy, security, stability, freedom, and solidarity across Europe. EUROPEUM formulates opinions and offers alternatives to internal reforms in the Czech Republic with a view of ensuring its full-fledged membership and respected position in the European Union.

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The Future EU Programme focuses on the analysis and recommendations for Czech positions towards EU reform and its future function, as well as key EU policies. The main areas of research include EU institutional issues, the issue of the Constitutional Treaty, and future EU enlargement including countries such as Turkey, the Western Balkans, or Ukraine.

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recommendations for the EU and the Czech Republic in this respect. Special attention is paid to the relationship between the EU and the USA as key transatlantic partners.

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One of EUROPEUM's target groups is secondary school students for who in 2006/2007 EUROPEUM organized the 4th year of **EuropaNostra** – a contest on the European Union *(www.Europanostra.cz).* In September 2007, a new contest was launched called **EuropaSecura,** focusing on security issues, the EU, and NATO *(www.EuropaSecura.cz).*

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Contact Information	
EUROPEUM **Institute for European Policy** **Rytířská 31** **CZ-11000 Praha 1** **Czech Republic**	**Phone: (+420) 221 610 207** **Fax: (+420) 221 610 204** **E-mail: europeum@europeum.org** **www.europeum.org**

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