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Czech Foreign Policy – Small State or Middle Power Approach?

Ladislav Cabada

Abstract: *The majority of countries in the world are small states. Their role grew up rapidly in the period after the Second World War and especially after the end of the Cold War. In this period new themes appeared in the international relations and small states profiled on them as so-called middle powers. Development aid and cooperation or support for human security were two such a themes. The Czech Republic too could in the near future aspire to become a medium-sized power. Czech foreign policy was formed in the dynamic period after the end of the bipolar conflict of the Great Powers and the disintegration of the Czechoslovak Federation. Nevertheless, since the very beginning the Czech Republic has been able to define its clear priorities, often with reference to the historical development of Czechoslovak statehood. The euphoric period when the Czech Republic was established could be one of the reasons why the first official concept of Czech foreign policy was presented as late as 1998. These policies, and later policies since 2002, represent a combination of small state and medium-sized power strategies. The article analyses which themes could be the vehicle for transforming Czech foreign policy from that of a small state towards the policy of a middle power.*

Key Words: *small states, middle powers, foreign policy, international relations, Czech Republic*

Introduction

The Czech Republic is one of the newest European states. It came into being on 1 January 1993, when after the peacefully agreed split of the two parts of the Czechoslovak Federal Republic two emergent states appeared on the map of Europe – the Czech and Slovak Republics. After the break-up of Czechoslovakia the foreign policy philosophy and activity of both states had to reflect the new geopolitical and foreign policy realities in which they found themselves – in the case of the Czech Republic undoubtedly to a lesser extent than was the case in the Slovak Republic⁶² – even if basic foreign policy remained the same.

⁶² The political representation of the Czech and Slovak Republics during talks on the disintegration of the Czechoslovak Federation agreed that neither of the Republics would be the exclusive state emerging from the disintegration of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republics. Therefore, both states shortly after their formation asked to join the UN and other international organizations; until then the Czechoslovak Federation was a member of the UN. Despite this, it can be said that with regard to mental image the Czechoslovak Federation has been replaced by the Czech Republic rather than Slovakia. This is also because of several symbols, most tangibly the Czechoslovak flag, but also the Czechoslovak anthem (first part), and the election of the former Czechoslovak President Václav Havel as President of the Czech Republic. Furthermore, the Czech Republic was more frequently understood as the continuation of former Czechoslovakia.

The abandonment of the Czechoslovak Federation by the Czechs and Slovaks and the creation of two independent states meant, among other things, the diminishing of the “real“ size and international-political significance of both states. On the other hand, however, at least this was understood by some of the Czech and Slovak political actors as a clarification and at reorganization of the geopolitical position of the states that is their position in international relations. After the disintegration of Czechoslovakia both countries consciously joined a group of small European states that corresponded more or less to the diplomatic rhetoric of their representatives.

Early after its foundation the Czech Republic declared⁶³ that good relations with its neighbours, entry to Western economic, political and military structures (European Union and NATO) and good relations with powers were its basic foreign policy priorities. These aims have basically not changed at all in the almost 13 years of existence of an independent Czech Republic. However, it would be a mistake to say that in the sphere of Czech foreign policy nothing has changed.

The aim of this article is to analyse the foundations of the foreign policy of the Czech Republic as a so-called small state and compare them with the development, changing foundations, ambitions and actual manifestations of Czech foreign policy. I would like to concentrate especially on the question of whether Czech foreign policy is from now on exhibiting the policy characteristic of a small state or whether it is moving to a position which we could consider as the policy of a medium-sized power, i.e. a medium-sized country. I would like to put the research, which is based on both an analysis of policy matters (foreign policy, security policy, development aid policy and the like), executive institutional-political institutions in the Czech Republic (especially the Government and individual ministries) and on current analyses of Czech experts concerned with international relations and international policy, into a theoretical framework of research of small states and their role and position in international politics.

The Czech Republic – a small or medium-sized state?

Although the issue of the role and position of small states in international relations is among the most analysed themes in the field of international relations, there is not a single definition of a small state. Experts agree on the fact that small states make up the majority of countries in the world, and the basis of this statement is use of the dichotomy of the small state versus a power. In this concept a small state is every state, which on the basis of criteria that is frequently subjective, cannot be regarded as a power. This dichotomy is naturally disrupted in the “descent” from the global to a lower, especially regional level. States which would from a global perspective not be regarded as powers can, in a regional context, including only a sub-continental sector,

⁶³ For example in the speech of Josef Zieleniec, Minister of Foreign Affairs, before the Lower Chamber of Parliament of the Czech Republic on 21 April 1993 (see below), which to a certain extent addressed the lack of foreign policies of the first Cabinet of Václav Klaus.

aspire to the role of a “regional power“. In the global perspective Poland is regarded as a small state rather than a power, but if we concentrate on the Central European Region then it is regarded as a regional power.

Small states were regarded by advocates of realistic approaches mainly as an object rather than a subject of international relations; their existence was regarded as temporary, possibly limited in their full sovereignty by the positions of large states. This approach is succinctly formulated by American researcher Nicholas Spykman, who wrote: “Small states represent a vacuum in the field of high political pressure. Their existence does not come from their strength but the fact that nobody claims their territory or that they have to be preserved as buffer states or weights in the power balance of interests of powerful nations. When this balance disappears the small states usually disappear with it” (Krejčí, 1993: 3).

The difference between a large and a small state, like the difference between a small state and a regional power, can be determined on the basis of various criteria, for example territorial extent, size of the population, ability to contribute to conflict resolution in a regional context and the like. All of these characteristics determine the strength and power of a state, which are the criteria dividing states into groups of small, and possibly large states. However, according to Petr Robejšek, it is evident that the basic criteria of the power of a state in contemporary international relations are represented by its economic power. “Even several years ago foreign policy meant military power. Sooner or later it depended on who had more soldiers. Today economic power occupies first place, and international policy moves on an escalating scale from trade to trade war” (Robejšek, 2002; 30).

According to Robejšek, therefore, the international-political strength of individual states can lead to their economic power. I personally feel that this is a rather simplistic approach because firstly, it is not clear under which criteria the author is judging economic power (high gross domestic product, high income *per capita*, high growth percentage of gross domestic product or other criteria and secondly, economic power does not necessarily give individual states a sphere of influence in international relations (the Sultanate of Brunei is undoubtedly a rich state but in international relations it remains a small country and is only barely noticeable).

I do not want, however, to repudiate the criterion of economic strength as a sign that a specific state is not a small state. There is no doubt that among states that have a similar size or populations there may be fundamental differences from the viewpoint of economic efficiency, and we have a tendency to “elevate“ economically more successful states from the category of small states to the category of others. In this regard, the considerations of political scientists and politicians move in the right direction, included in the dichotomy of the small state versus the “central” power type, i.e. a medium-sized state. These states – especially in Western and Northern Europe but also, for example, Canada – are in specialist literature in particular indicated by the term middle powers, which should mean states exceeding the standard limitations of so-called small states in international politics.

For example, according to Canadian political scientist Donald M. Behringer (2003: 1–2), during the Cold War research in international relations, which was dominated by realists, concentrated above all on the role and function of powers. In the period after the end of the Cold War attention is being turned, however, to medium-sized states, which in some areas of international relations (development aid and cooperation, human security concepts and the like) take a *leadership role*. As Behringer states, medium-sized states considered, for example, to be countries such as Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway⁶⁴, are not characterized by “objective“ criteria, such as population size or gross domestic product: their definition is linked to behaviour in international relations. Medium-sized states show the tendency to push for multilateral solutions to international problems or a tendency to adopt a compromise position in international disputes. According to Behringer, the main characteristic of middle powers is the acceptance of the fact that “citizens and governments of the industrialized countries have an ethical responsibility towards those living beyond the boundaries of this world, which suffers from want and poverty“ (Behringer, 2003: 2).

The thesis mentioned above suggests that we must search for medium-sized powers especially, if not exclusively in the Euro-Atlantic sphere. This assumption to a certain extent corresponds to the division of small states offered by Jiří Štěpanovský (1998: 21). In his text he concentrates only on Europe, but if we replace the term “Europe” with “Euro-Atlantic sphere”, we can make use of his conclusions without restrictions. According to Štěpanovský, there were types of small states in the Cold War in Europe: 1) small states of Central Europe under the control of the Soviet Union; 2) small European states which are members of the European Union and NATO; and 3) neutral states developing economic relations with the West and at the same time emphasizing their orientation towards a policy of non-engagement. According to Štěpanovský, the partial reconfiguration of small European states again into three groups occurred after the end of the Cold War. The groups are: 1) small Western European states experiencing peace and relative prosperity, which are joined by neutral states; 2) small Central European states in transition; and 3) small states in the Balkan zone, suffering from open conflicts (Štěpanovský, 1998: 21).

Let us disregard the fact that in his analysis and second typology the author does not include small states in the post-Soviet region, i.e. the states that are independent of the EU, and let us make use of the positive results of his analysis. In my judgment, the author correctly anticipates the shift of neutral countries (Sweden, Finland, Austria) to Western Europe, characterized by greater involvement in international relations, including discussion on the benefits and character of neutrality in the countries menti-

⁶⁴ Some authors regard Czechoslovakia before 1989 as a medium-sized power. For example, B. Wood (1988, cit. according to Hampson, 1992: 193) classifies Czechoslovakia in a group of medium-sized powers including Italy, China, Brazil, Canada, Spain, The Netherlands, India, Mexico, Australia, Poland, Nigeria, South Africa, Argentina, Yugoslavia, Venezuela, Romania, Norway, Finland, Hungary, Pakistan, Algeria, South Korea, Switzerland, Saudi Arabia and Iran. In this view the only superpowers are the Soviet Union and the USA; other countries are not countries of medium-sized importance, even if they could be strong economically (e.g. Germany and Japan).

oned. The second group of countries is noteworthy – the central European countries in the period of transition. The Czech Republic can be included here without a doubt. As Štěpanovský states, small Central European states do not show the same characteristics as small Western European countries. Although the author does not develop this idea further, we can suspect that he considers the position of small Western European states as stronger than the position of Central European states. Some Western European small nations can be characterized as “small powers“, i.e. medium-sized countries.

The third country mentioned by the author is likewise noteworthy; for its classification he used the term “Balkan Zone State”. The small countries in Southeastern Europe found themselves in the vortex of conflicts, which basically changed their position in international relations. From the viewpoint of the theme of this article the decline in economic efficiency and stability of these states (we should remember that the average income per capita in Macedonia is the same in Namibia in Africa) is especially noteworthy. These countries became the recipients of significant international aid, without which the whole regions and countries would have been threatened by a serious crisis, possibly the collapse of state power, as we witnessed in 1997 in Albania.

I would like to conclude the theoretically-oriented introduction to the issue of research of small, i.e. medium-sized countries, by stating that it is not possible to determine objective and always usable criteria for differentiating small states, i.e. medium-sized powers. Economic prosperity in combination with a willingness to engage in the chosen field of international politics, on the basis of other than (neo)realistic approaches to international relations, appears to me as fundamental.

Historical roots of Czech foreign policy

Czech, i.e. Czechoslovak, foreign policy was first formulated during the period after the outbreak of the First World War. Even during earlier periods, analyses were made of the position of the Czech nation in international relations. The studies, however, were limited and influenced by the actual position of the Czech nation within the Hapsburg monarchy (e.g. the thesis of František Palacký on the necessity of existence of a strong state in Central Europe, which would, on the one hand, divide Western Europe from the Ottoman Empire and Russia and, on the other hand, would blunt radical Pan-German ideas and activities, which regarded Central Europe as German; or Kramář’s vision of a Slavic Empire including the Kingdom of Bohemia). In my opinion, the conditions for the consideration of the independence of the Czech (Czechoslovak) state were evidently not created until the First World War.

Credit for the international-political establishment of the notion of an independent Czechoslovakia (and other Central European, Baltic and Balkan States) goes mainly to T. G. Masaryk and, through him, the governing Czechoslovak International Committee, which gained the support of France, Great Britain and especially the USA, for this idea. Masaryk’s ideas of the form of Czechoslovakia during the war years basically did not change (See Map “Masaryk’s Idea of Bohemia in 1914“ in Krejčí,

1993: 66), however his consideration of the securing of the Czech (Czechoslovak) state in Europe, i.e. international relations, underwent quite radical changes.

As stated by Masaryk, the fears addressed by Palacký became reality, i.e. the domination of Austrian policy by the Pan-German programme of the German Emperor. For him, Germany and the Germans became the main threat to the Czech state, and for stopping German expansion he suggested the creation of a bloc of Slavic states in Central Europe – Czechoslovakia, Poland and Yugoslavia – including the corridor between Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, which would divide Austria and Hungary. An alliance of these three countries would be guaranteed by Russia (Krejčí, 1993: 65).

However, the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia put a stop to Masaryk's geopolitical considerations, and he returned to an agreement with the Western Powers, mainly the USA and France. The territory lying between Germany and Russia now appeared to Masaryk as a "danger zone" (Štěpanovský, 1998: 20). The efforts of the nations living in this zone (*Zwischeneuropa*) had to be, according to Masaryk, oriented towards mutual cooperation and supporting democracy, which linked them with the Western Powers. In his notion the idea of a Central European (con)federation reaching from Finland to Greece (Cabada, 2002: 17), appears, and there were other versions of this federation, which were smaller. Even in 1918, just before the declaration of the independent Czechoslovak Republic, Masaryk became the Chairman of the Mid-European Democratic Union in Philadelphia, in which representatives of 16 nations from Denmark to Greece were brought together. In view of the tensions between the old and new Central European states, which flared soon after the end of the First World War, the Union never began to work properly however (Štěpanovský, 1998: 20).

We can, without a doubt, regard Czechoslovak interwar foreign policy as more multilateral than bilateral; it could even be said that in bilateral relations, especially with neighbouring countries, Czechoslovakia had great problems. The forum for Czechoslovak foreign policy of a multilateral orientation became both the League of Nations and also the Little Entente, a military-political association of Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia, aimed primarily against Hungarian revisionism. The protracted League of Nations crisis, which had already started with the USA refusing to join, limited the multilateral activity of Czechoslovakia from the very beginning, and the Little Entente underwent a crisis in the second half of the 1930s, which is linked especially with the turn away from democracy in Romania and Yugoslavia. Despite this, the Foreign Minister and second Czechoslovak President Edvard Beneš had similar intentions as Masaryk when the former tried (unsuccessfully) to turn the Little Entente into a confederate structure. The Munich Agreement, the occupation of the Czech lands in 1939 and also post-war development confirmed Spykman's observations on small states mentioned at the beginning of the article. Even during the Second World War Beneš developed a proposal for a Czechoslovak-Polish federation, which was of course simply unacceptable to Stalin.

We can, in my opinion, evaluate Masaryk's and Beneš's conception of Czech (Czechoslovak) foreign policy as a mixture of realism and idealism. Realism is shown

especially in the effort to anchor Czechoslovakia to a power; the USA, Russia, Great Britain and France were came in question, and Italy partially also. After the war the USA of course withdrew into isolationism and Great Britain back to “splendid isolation”. Russia and, soon after the war, Italy, were governed by non-democratic political representation. The logical orientation towards France was limited by a decline in the power bases of this state and also the opportunism of the French political élite after the Marseille attack in 1934, during which Yugoslav King Alexander and French Foreign Minister Barthou were assassinated (Cabada, 2002: 21).

We could regard the policies of interwar Czechoslovakia, using contemporary terminology, rather as the politics of a medium-sized state. The relatively high ambition represented by such policies (for example the thesis on the island of democracy in Central Europe, from which democratic ideas spread to the surrounding areas) became the subject of criticism due to its apparently unrealistic nature after the Munich Agreement. Critics pointed to the fact that Czechoslovakia overestimated itself when it did not want to be a small state. a new foreign-political policy had to be the clear focus of a small state towards a regional hegemony such as Nazi Germany⁶⁵ (Rataj, 1997: 147), and the Soviet Union after the Second World War. We can understand the Communist coup and the subjection to the Soviet Union, including the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968, as further confirmation of Spykman’s thoughts on small states.

After 1989 the foreign policy of Czechoslovakia, later the Czech Republic, was reconstructed on the basis of the aforementioned principles, i.e. from the historical experiences of Czechoslovak statehood.

Foreign Policy of the Czech Republic

The first foreign policy of the Czech Republic, in the form of a coherent document, was formulated in 1998, on the initiative of the minority Social Democratic Government of Prime Minister Miloš Zeman. This does not of course mean that a Czech foreign policy, with its own foundations and priorities, had not been formulated prior to that. As Václav Kotyk (1995: 65) writes, in the first years of its existence the Czech Republic had no foreign policy, but rather the ideas of policy priorities, which were an effort to join the EU and NATO, development of multilateral relations with neighbouring countries and world powers and support of multilateral activities to secure peace. The creators of the foreign policy, which corresponded to the changed priorities, were mainly Prime Minister Václav Klaus, Foreign Minister Josef Zieleniec and President Václav Havel.

President Havel, in particular, showed the tendency to push for such a foreign policy, which would go beyond the classic strategies of small states. Pragmatism

⁶⁵ Geopolitically oriented considerations of small states only seldom consider the nature of a political régime of a specific state. The (regional) power is always a hegemony and the small state must therefore reflect this reality without consideration of the character of the political system in this country.

belongs especially to this strategy, which P. Robejšek regards as “discreet egoism”. According to Robejšek, “discreet egoism is the first commandment of a foreign policy of a small state. One of the permanent goals of foreign policy of a small state should be an intensive search for situations which enable it to share in the benefits of activities whose costs are borne predominantly by others (“free rider position”). Possible future ethical doubts are irrational” (Robejšek, 2002: 31).

In some cases Havel’s foreign policy activities quite significantly exceed this demarcation. Let us remind ourselves of his engagement in the field of the defence of human rights, invitations to the Dalai Lama of Tibet or the official representative of Taiwan and the like. The activities of President Havel of course frequently had a markedly personal nature and need not always be presented as the foreign policy of the Czech Republic. We can say the same, to a certain extent, about the president’s support of the ideas of the Visegrád cooperation. Furthermore, the official formulator of Czech foreign policy is, under the constitution, not the President but the government, which is responsible to the Parliament of the Czech Republic (Lopez-Reyes, 1999: 31).

The foreign policy basis of the first government of Prime Minister Klaus can be deduced mainly from a speech made by Foreign Minister Josef Zieleniec before the Lower House of the Parliament of the Czech Republic in April 1993. Minister Zieleniec stated in the speech that: “through the division of Czechoslovakia the Czech Republic, from the geopolitical viewpoint, split itself from the part of the Danubian region, which immediately neighbours the unstable zones of Eastern and Southeastern Europe“ The Minister further defined the priority of Czech foreign policy: good relations with neighbouring countries; entry to the EC/EU, NATO and the WEU; good relations with powers and monitoring of the situation in Eastern and Southeastern Europe. The foreign-political activity of the Czech Republic should, according to J. Zieleniec, concentrate on part of Europe, i.e. the Euro-Atlantic zone; on the other hand, “countries in the Euro-Atlantic zone do not represent an existential, strategic or specific priority for the near future”.

We can see, therefore, that the foreign-political priorities of the Czech Republic during Klaus’s government could be regarded as characteristic of the policy of a small state. The basic goal was integration into Euro-Atlantic and Western European structures, the development of good relations with world powers (in his speech Minister Zieleniec named the USA, Germany, France Great Britain, “other European states“, Japan and Canada) and smooth relations with neighbours. It is noteworthy that in foreign-political priorities the issue of Central European political and economic cooperation does not appear. This approach corresponds, according to V. Kotyk (1995: 70–71), to the lack of interest on the part of V. Klaus and J. Zieleniec in Visegrád Four cooperation; as Kotyk mentions, both politicians assumed that regional cooperation in Central Europe (in addition to the Visegrád Four, there is also the Central European Association of Free Trade/CEFTA and the Central European Initiative/CEI) could hinder the “star pupil” which is how both politicians regarded the Czech Republic.

Let us remind ourselves that theoreticians regard involvement in a multilateral strategy to be one of the main characteristics of medium-sized states. On the other hand, small states advocate bilateral foreign policy as the best strategy (Robejšek, 2002: 32). In the first years of the Czech Republic Klaus's governments advocated a bilateral foreign policy, meaning that instead of coordinated negotiations of Central European countries with EU bodies there would be "separate" negotiations of each Central European country with the European Union.

Czech foreign policy in the first half of the 1990s was formed in clear connection with the process of transformation of the security situation of the Czech Republic. After the disintegration of the Soviet Bloc and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact in 1991 the first task of Czech (Czechoslovak) policy to be dealt with was ensuring security. In discussions two basic possibilities arose: 1) the idea of neutrality based on the Austrian model, as part of the framework of security order in Europe, guaranteed especially by the CSCE; and 2) the idea of joining NATO and the WEU. The first idea, advocated in the first months and years by the official representatives of Czechoslovakia too, was rejected after the outbreak of armed conflict in the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union, even if a definite alternative appeared in the years to come⁶⁶.

The idea of neutralization of the group of countries lying between Western Europe (NATO) and the Soviet Union (Russia) was to a certain extent based on the aforementioned notions of T. G. Masaryk. The "neutralization" of this Central European zone (*Europe in between*) would of course expose the Czech Republic to a far greater risk than being oriented to Western Europe, i.e. the Euro-Atlantic alternative, even if it included Germany, which in the past was aggressive. The fear of the power ambitions of Germany, indicating a certain misunderstanding of the development of (West) German politics after the Second World War, could have to a certain extent influenced considerations of official Czech (Czechoslovak) representatives in the first years after the fall of Communism.

The tendency towards the idea of strengthening of membership of NATO of course did not completely quell the fears of the Czech public and parts of the political élite of Germany. The fears of Russian hegemonic ambitions, possible "resentment" of Germany as a power after its reunification, and also the realistic response of the real strengths/weaknesses of France and Great Britain logically led Czech diplomacy to the idea of understanding the USA as a priority security partner. In this idea all the main representatives of the Czech foreign policy agreed. The American presence in Europe was understood by Czech politicians not only as an instrument of controlling Russia but also Germany (Waisová, 2004: 192). The fact that Bill Clinton promoted to the post of Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, a Czech émigré with very friendly relations with Václav Havel and the whole Czech Republic, undoubtedly contributed to good Czech-American relations.

⁶⁶ In his article, V. Kotyk (1995) draws attention to the idea of Zdeňek Mlynář of a zone of neutral states from Sweden to Austria, which would also include the Czech Republic.

The basic foundation of Czech foreign policy did not change even after the election of governments where the Czech Social Democrats predominated. Indeed it was the Cabinet of Miloš Zeman that presented a coherent foreign policy of the Czech Republic. The first sentence of this document characterizes the Czech Republic as a medium-sized state in a European context. At a time when the Czech Republic had already been promised NATO membership (Madrid summit in 1997), the priorities were EU membership; involvement in securing European and international security; better quality relations with Slovakia and good relations with other neighbours; regional cooperation in Central Europe and active involvement in international organizations. The development of good relations with Russia and states of Southeastern Europe, and economic relations with the countries of Asia, Africa, Australia and Latin America, are mentioned as partial intentions of Czech foreign policy. The Czech government declared its preparedness to participate in the framework of the possibilities for the formulation and fulfilling of the new international development strategy.

We see, therefore, that the new government, and Foreign Minister Jan Kavan, presented a far more coherent idea of the foreign policy of the Czech Republic than its predecessors, which included also some fields which at least partially exceeded the concept of how theoreticians define the foreign policy of a small state. Here I have in mind both the idea of regional cooperation of post-Communist Central European states⁶⁷, and the issue, for example, of development aid, which of course after 1995 was being dealt with by Klaus's government, and then the government of Josef Tošovský. The philosophy, in my judgment, displayed a greater foreign-political awareness of Czech diplomacy, which at least in some considerations exceeds the paradigm of a small country. Several statements of Foreign Minister Jan Kavan testify to this reality (see Kavan, 1998; Kavan 2002), and also some concrete steps of the Czech government. One of these was, for example, the "Czech-Greek initiative", which should have contributed to the stopping of NATO aerial bombardments of Yugoslavia in 1999. This initiative signified the first more serious split between Czech diplomacy and the USA, which we can regard as the first step in the process of the cooling of Czech-American relations (Waisová, 2004: 192).

In his statements Minister Kavan himself was not completely unambiguous concerning his understanding of the position of the Czech Republic in international relations. As we mentioned, the government policy of 1998 marked out the Czech Republic as a medium-sized state; as for example J. Kavan did in his article *Foreign Policy of the Czech Republic: the Possibilities of a Medium-Sized State* (2001). At other times he confirmed that the Czech Republic belongs among small states (Kavan, 1998: 4). The strongest opposition party, the Civic Democratic Party (ODS), on the other hand, regarded the foreign policy of Zeman and Špidla's government as the policy of a small state, and especially in the relationship to the EU and the dominant countries in it.

⁶⁷ Especially within the framework of revitalized Visegrád cooperation, which should have helped the new Slovak Government of Prime Minister M. Dzurinda to lead Slovakia into the second wave of enlargement of NATO and, at the same time as other nations of the Visegrád Four, into the European Union.

According to J. Zahradil (2002: 8), this policy manifests itself by a loosening of the Euro-Atlantic ties, and anti-Americanism, which is not in accord with the national interests of the Czech Republic. Zahradil also argued that Czech diplomacy should play a similar role to the foreign policy of Scandinavian countries, which he says: “have long had a visible foreign policy profile (in their case in the field of human rights protection and active involvement in multilateral world organizations)” (Zahradil, 2002: 8). We see, therefore, that the Shadow Foreign Minister J. Zahradil regards the foreign policy philosophy of the Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) as the policy of a small state, which is too subservient to the pressure of the powers of the core of the EU (especially France and Germany). Personally, I would want Czech foreign policy to be rather the policy of a medium-sized state based on a Euro-Atlantic tie (understood as the USA) and international organizations.

We cannot, however, fail to mention that the Civic Democratic Party and its Honorary Chairman and, from 2003, President of the Czech Republic, V. Klaus, has adopted a stance against some American activities too, which they understood as unilateral. Here I have in mind the position of the political élite on military intervention in Afghanistan and, above all, in Iraq. Politicians representing, and possibly influencing Czech foreign policy in its positions towards the USA, are divided into three groups: 1) the pro-American stream, represented especially by Václav Havel and Foreign Minister Cyril Svoboda (since July 2002); 2) anti-American, represented by the Czech Communists, but also by definite groups in the Czech Social Democratic Party (for example V. Laštůvka and J. Kavan) and the Civic Democratic Party; and 3) the stream “in the middle”, represented by the government (Waisová, 2004, 195).

It would be a mistake to speak about relations of Czech official representatives to the USA as anti-Americanism, as does J. Zahradil; “pure” anti-Americanism occurs mainly in political parties which we can regard as radical (primarily the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia). Rather than anti-Americanism we could speak about the critical tendency of American policy to act unilaterally. These tendencies are shown also by Czech politicians, whom we can otherwise regard as significantly pro-American. Let us remind ourselves, for example, of the very critical position of President Václav Havel on the convergence between NATO and Russia ahead of the Prague NATO summit. When Havel gave a speech to senators on 27 November 2001 he presented a number of reasons why NATO should be “very reserved, very careful and very cautious” in convergence with Russia. One of the reasons why Havel fears convergence is “creeping bipolarization” is because “ahead of every summit of the Alliance these two largest and most powerful members (i.e. the USA and Russia) meet and agree a little on how everything will continue” (Havel, 2002: 8). In Havel’s speech we see fear of the dominance of the USA inside NATO, and also fear a return to power politics, in which small states are the object of international relations.

The so far most recent official Czech foreign policy was accepted on 3 March 2003, for the period 2003–2006. Despite some differences that can be found, the material is very similar to the policy of 1998. In the policy, the Czech Republic is again defined

as a medium-sized state on the European scale. In this policy, unlike that of 1998, China does not appear as a strategic economic partner. In it the question of emphasis on adherence to human rights, in countries with which the Czech Republic wishes to deepen mutual relations, is toned down. Less space is devoted also to international development aid in the policy. Mention of CEFTA has entirely disappeared from the document.

We can therefore summarize that the policy materials of the Czech Government and further significant political institutions portray Czech foreign policy as the policy of a small state whose goal is to be included in the Euro-Atlantic sphere (which, with entry to NATO and the EU, was successful), develop good relations with non-neighbouring countries (which was more or less successful) and develop economic diplomacy. The policy contains some other points, but in comparison with the priorities mentioned earlier they are not regarded as too important.

In my opinion, what is most puzzling is the absence of a more consistent analysis of Czech-German relations and their further development. Practically all authors of the analysis of Czech foreign policy (e.g. Had – Kotyk, 1998; Pick, 2002; Rouček, 2002; Robejšek, 2002) agree with the opinion that in view of the already increased trade between Germany and the Czech Republic already, Czech diplomacy must regard relations with Germany as of key importance. In the analysed policies it is clear that the same space was devoted to relations with Germany as, for example, to relations with Hungary, with which the Czech Republic has no borders. Czech-German relations have, furthermore, an “asymmetrical” character – while Germany is a key partner for the Czech Republic, German diplomacy understands the Czech Republic as one of a number of neighbours; the German media thus mentions the Czech Republic mainly in connection with the Sudeten German problem (Huddala, 2004).

Analysts evaluate that the “danger zone” between Germany and Russia was “disturbed” by the democratization of Germany after the Second World War⁶⁸, but in a significant section of Czech politics suspicion of the “good intentions” of Germany remained, and especially in connection with the fear of pressure for damages or other type of settlement in connection with the post-war transfer of the German minority from Czechoslovakia. Neither can relations with the USA be regarded as uncomplicated. Czech politics understood, and still understands good relations with the USA as a safety guarantee against Russia and Germany, but currently it does not have an understanding of some American foreign policy activities and fears a new “agreement” between the USA and Russia along the lines of the “Yalta” model.

Part of Czech politics sees a solution in the tendency towards the pro-federalist group in the EU, including strengthening of the European pillar of NATO (Foreign Minister C. Svoboda and the Christian Democratic Union-Czech People’s Party /KDU-ČSL/) and part of the Social Democratic Party); another section sees it rather in preference to American policy and the dominance of USA in the Euro-Atlantic space;

⁶⁸ On the other hand a (justified) lack of faith in Russia, i.e. the idea, that Russia has abandoned its hegemonic policy towards Central Europe, remains (Dobrovský, 2001)

and a third group rather vaguely speaks about the importance of multilateral activities to ensure security (Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (*KSČM*)). If anything was lacking in Czech foreign policy it was mainly the policy of securing vital national interests.

Czech foreign policy as the policy of a small state

The question of whether Czech foreign policy is the policy of a large state or whether it is about the policy of a medium-sized state cannot be, in my opinion, answered completely unambiguously. Regardless of the frequently very high ambitions of foreign policies of Czech governments after 1998 Czech foreign policy continues in the manner set in place by the first government of V. Klaus, which we can unambiguously regard as the course of a foreign policy of a small country. This becomes the case, for example, in comparison with foreign policy of another Central European state, i.e. Poland. Of course due also to its geostrategic position, territorial extent and population size – as early as the beginning from the 1990s Poland is showing tendencies that it is becoming a regional hegemony.

I do not want to suggest that Polish foreign policy is, in comparison to its Czech counterpart, qualitatively better. Instead, I am inclined to the opinion of M. Had and V. Kotyk (1998: 15), who say that Poland has the tendency to overestimate its possibilities. Czech foreign policy has, in my opinion, overestimated its possibilities only once (the aforementioned Czech-Greek Initiative), otherwise it has followed a careful path. On the other hand, comparisons with Poland can reveal that Czech foreign policy lacks a coherent policy on a number of questions, frequently in cases which concern regions or countries situated in the immediate proximity of the Czech Republic. An example could be the issue of Ukraine, where Czech diplomacy resorts only to empty phrases which lack substance. To expect that Czech diplomacy engages in the same way as Poland or Lithuania⁶⁹ is evidently exaggerated, but the ambitions of Czech diplomacy undoubtedly show that in the issue in question it was not possible to present a clearly and analytically grounded basis.

In certain cases it is clear that Czech Republic has shown, and continues to show, efforts to be a medium-sized state and at the standard already mentioned by J. Zahradil, i.e. the level of an international political profile which is visible in the long-term. We can regard the contact of V. Havel with significant dissidents at the national and international level as such an activity (paradoxically, this is exactly what is frequently criticized by Zahradil's party as damaging the economic interests of the Czech Republic). Others are a long-term stable critical position regarding the state of human rights in Cuba, the work of Czech soldiers in the international military and stabilizing missions or efforts to strengthen Czech development aid⁷⁰. However,

⁶⁹ There is more on this question in the article by Jerzy J. Wiatr and elsewhere in this issue.

⁷⁰ Development aid or development cooperation are without doubt are two the activities through which small states can gain the profile of a medium-sized power. Nations such as Norway, the Netherlands or

Czech policy in these sectors in the meantime operates in a markedly inconsistent and selective way. Practically the entire political élite in the most recent period resigned over the critical position of the attitude towards the state of human rights in China; in this light therefore, the “Cuban activity” appears as unsystematic. Likewise, it is important to mention that development cooperation is frequently developed not entirely transparently – there was, for example, no explanation of basis on which the criteria was agreed for deciding the reduced number of countries on which development aid was focused.

In conclusion, Czech foreign policy in the medium-term perspective could become the foreign policy of a medium-sized state. This assumption here is mainly a strengthening of the economic power of the Czech Republic and the effective investment of the means gained through this, especially into transparent development aid. Therefore, the Czech Republic can be classified alongside the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands.

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Canada distinguished by a high GDP, which is used to fund development projects. Czech development aid was revived in the second half of the 1990s, when the Czech Republic gradually changed from “being a recipient to being a donor. The Development Aid Policy for the period 2002–2007 assumes a continual increase of funds and at the same time a lowering of the number of countries receiving aid, from originally dozens to around 15 or even eight. For more about the Aid Policy see Lebeda, 2001; Jelínek, 2004.

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