



**CZECH FOREIGN POLICY AND
ELECTIONS 2006**

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ENGLISH SUMMARY



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The **Association for International Affairs** (Asociace pro mezinárodní otázky, AMO) is a Czech non-governmental organization that conducts research, and hosts educational programs in the fields of international affairs, foreign policy and security studies. The Association's primary regional focus is on the Czech Republic and Europe. AMO, established in 1995, is currently one of the leading institutions of its kind in the Czech Republic.

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ENGLISH SUMMARY

The Czech Foreign Policy and 2006 Parliamentary Elections dossier examines various ideas and aims regarding foreign policy, which can be found in political manifestos drawn up by relevant Czech political parties. Having briefly outlined foreign policy principles and main ideas, the authors go on to compare these principals and specific ideas in the light of key foreign policy challenges. In the second part, one can find contributions by external scholars and experts on foreign policy debate during the 2006 parliamentary elections campaign. We inquired Bohumila Doležala, Jiřího Pehe and Jiřího Schneidera about the importance of foreign policy for the parliamentary elections and to what extent this might affect the overall course of Czech foreign policy after the elections.

Being the essential part of the whole dossier, the last chapter presents foreign policy recommendations as put forward by AMO's analysts for the new government. AMO's researchers have suggested hosts of issues which are not fully reflected in the platforms offered by the relevant Czech political parties. Indeed, we would like to fulfill the role of a think-tank, which AMO aspires to play, by producing and disseminating new ideas for the Czech foreign policy debate. However, at the end of the day, it will be up to the politicians to decide. Unlike experts, politicians have to defend their convictions and beliefs in front of the electorate.

We analyze all political parties represented in the Czech Parliament in 2002-2006 (i.e. ČSSD, ODS, KSČM, KDU-ČSL a US-DEU) and two other parties holding seats in the Czech Senate (Green Party, SNK-ED). The parties are listed according to their performance in the 2002 parliamentary elections.

For better or worse, foreign policy is not seen by any Czech political party as a decisive issue in the 2006 elections. In fact, political parties focus all of their foreign policy agendas on the Czech Republic and its membership in the European Union, NATO and Czech-US relations.

It can be argued, however, that the main political parties often stress different foreign policy priorities. Sadly, no political party offers a comprehensive enough foreign policy agenda for the regions of Eastern Europe and the Middle East, which in the long run might prove too short-sighted with regard to Czech long-term security concerns. Promoting Human Rights is not mentioned that much either, despite the fact that this is one of the key goals of the Czech Foreign Policy.

FOREIGN POLICY AND POLITICAL PLATFORMS

Although, the **Czech Social Democratic Party** (ČSSD) and the **Civic Democratic Party** (ODS) discuss almost every foreign policy issue we have been scrutinizing, they are vague and equivocal rather than proposing concrete and feasible goals for Czech Foreign Policy. In its foreign policy manifesto, the **Communist Party** (KSČM) is mostly preoccupied with castigating the current course of Czech Foreign Policy and rejects the main tenets of the contemporary international order.

So far the most comprehensive foreign policy manifesto has been conceived by the **Christian Democratic Party** (KDU-ČSL). There are many concrete and specific proposals addressing current issues in Czech Foreign Policy.

The **Union of Freedom** (US-DEU) puts forward too vague a foreign policy manifesto causing voters to hardly understand where the party really stands.

The **Green Party** brings forth new, though often controversial ideas. The party's foreign policy manifesto is a reflection of the party's philosophy rather than a blue print for the country's sound foreign policy.

Closely focused on European integration, the **SNK and European Democrats** (SNK-ED) avoid any other major foreign policy issues with an exception for security and defense challenges.

POLITICAL PARTIES' PLATFORMS

Discussing the European Union, the political parties by and large elaborate on an acceptable level of European integration. Furthermore, they focus on the Common Foreign and Security Policy. Even though, they genuinely attempt to address the future of the EU, none of the parties, however, openly back the notion of European federalism. Indeed, only CSSD and KDU-CSL pay attention to the Czech Presidency of the EU. Collectively, the parties want to push for scraping all the temporary restrictions on the free movement of labor.

The predicament of championing the strong transatlantic link on the one hand and pursuing the Common Foreign and Defense policy on the other is being thoroughly pondered by all the parties. They nonetheless differ in whether to prioritize on the latter or the former - e.g. while for the ODS the transatlantic link is the priority; the Green Party promotes the European pillar of Czech Security.

Central European Integration does not assume any significant role in any political manifesto reviewed by AMO. Indeed, only the CSSD, KSCM and the Green Party mention it briefly. Similarly, the only party which declares its support for continuing the cooperation within the framework of the Visegrad Group is the CSSD. Other parties then emphasize the importance of bilateral relations with neighboring countries – especially with Slovakia. With regard to Germany and Austria, while the Green Party promotes education and cross-border cooperation as a means to enhance a mutual understanding between Germans and Czechs, the Communists warn against interference by Sudeten Germans.

The region of **Eastern Europe and Russia** is not covered in most of the parties' manifestos at all. Being the only party, the CSSD stresses the importance of economic cooperation with Russia and emphasizes the Eastern European dimension of the EU neighborhood policy.

Similarly, the Czech political parties do not take much stock of the Middle East. The ODS calls for better coordination in formulating a European policy towards this region.

Security and Defense issues are mainly discussed within the framework of transatlantic relations with a strong emphasis on the EU Common Foreign and Defense Policy. By and large, Czech political parties give relative little attention to the fight against terrorism.

Regarding **asylum and immigration policy**, the Czech political parties consider it to be a part of the domestic agenda rather than a foreign policy issue. Instead of proposing pro-active immigration policy, political parties concentrate on the fight with illegal immigrant workers and crime-related activities committed by these immigrants. Generally speaking, the Czech political parties speak of **human rights** in rather vague terms. They limit themselves to stressing the need to promote human and citizen rights in the world.

Trade Diplomacy is mainly concerned with liberalizing the European and world economic systems and boosting Czech export policy. In addition, the ODS and the KDU-ČSL call for improving the Czech Republic's image abroad through a more effective communication campaign.

Development Cooperation is seen by many parties as an effective tool to fight poverty. In this respect, the ČSSD ascribes quite a significant role to the United Nations. The Green Party, for its part calls for creating a new agency to coordinate development aid. Similarly, the ODS acknowledges the need to streamline mechanisms for administering development aid.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

AMO's analysts strive to cover as wide a range of challenges as possible which should be addressed by the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy. With regard to the Czech Republic's national interests, European integration and transatlantic relations come at the fore-front of our analysis here.

Regarding the **European Union**, the Czech Republic should work towards making this intergovernmental and supranational union more politically integrated, more democratic under full democratic control of its citizens with the economy based on

liberal principles without internal economic barriers. The European Union should be able to assume the role of one of the key world actors in the 21st Century. The Czech Presidency of the EU in 2009 has to become a priority for Czech Foreign Policy, which will require thorough preparation and to define its political priorities. The Czech Republic should pursue liberalizing the internal market and reforming the Common Agricultural Policy. Furthermore, it is quite essential that voters can get an ever bigger say in European affairs through strengthening directly-elected representatives to the EU institutions. Finally, the Czech private and public sectors should be able to extract funds from Brussels more easily.

Not only from the security point of view, are the **transatlantic relations** immensely important for the Czech Republic, but there is also a strong political aspect to it. The Czech Republic has to insist on cooperation between the EU and NATO in defining and countering political and security threats and risks.

Central European Cooperation still seems to be a natural opportunity for Czech Foreign policy to pursue – e.g. promoting democratization in Eastern Europe or coordinating asylum and immigration policy.

Energy security, the economy, human rights and immigration make **Eastern Europe** an important priority for the Czech Government, which should monitor the region closely. In fact, the government might also try to specialize in Eastern European affairs within the European Union.

Because of its global importance, one can not simply close their eyes to the **Middle Eastern region**. The Czech Republic should endorse democratization processes taking place in countries across the Middle East. Until it rejects its utmost goal of destroying Israel, ends its open support for terrorism, and embraces democratic principles, the government run by Hamas can not be recognized internationally.

The main pillar of Czech and European **security policy** has to remain centered on the strong transatlantic bond. This should also help to strengthen the Common Foreign and Security Policy based on intergovernmental mechanisms, which is something that the Czech Government has to endorse. Czech energy security should be facilitated by diversifying among key energy suppliers.

Asylum and immigration policy seems to be quite a decisive topic affecting significantly the domestic political scene. Currently, the Czech Republic needs to prepare for entering the Schengen System and attempt to make the EU external borders securer but also in a more “user-friendly” manner.

Promoting human rights should remain one of the top priorities for Czech Foreign Policy. Drawing on its history, Czech diplomacy should consider human rights as universal values. An open dialogue about human rights is not necessarily in conflict with Czech economic interests.

Czech Trade Diplomacy has to be strengthened both by increasing its capabilities and formulating its new territorial priorities. In this case, coordinating political and economic priorities lies at the hands of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Apart of trade diplomacy should also be devoted to effectively developing and streamlining the Czech Republic’s image abroad.

In correspondence to its foreign policy engagements, the Czech Government should pursue **Development Cooperation**. In this respect, it is quite essential that there is an increase in development aid. Similarly, it should be desirable to create a new governmental agency, which would effectively administrate the development aid effort.