CHARLES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of International Studies

Department of North American Studies

Master's Thesis

2022 **Bc. Renée Bastlová**

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The Trump Administration and its Impact on Czech Foreign Policy

Master's thesis

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Study programme: Area Studies

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Year of the defense: 2022

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on May 3, 2022. Bc. Renée Bastlová

References

BASTLOVÁ, Renée. *The Trump Administration and its Impact on Czech Foreign Policy.* Praha, 2022. 93 pages. Master's thesis (Mgr.). Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Area Studies. Department of North American Studies. Supervisor PhDr. Jan Hornát, Ph.D.

Length of the thesis: 129,249

Abstract

This thesis examines the impact of the Trump Administration on Czech foreign policy. The aim is to analyze the changes that have occurred and explain what they have meant for the Czech Republic. The thesis uses the method of foreign policy analysis to achieve its goals. In his campaign, President Trump criticized multilateralism and what he saw as an unfavorable position of the USA in transatlantic relations. He withdrew from a number of multilateral organizations and imposed tariffs on European imports to the US by which he limited free trade. Among other things, President Trump used an aggressive style when calling on NATO member countries to honor their pledge to contribute two percent of GDP to the common defense. Trump's approach to the transatlantic relationship posed a challenge, as his actions contradicted the main goals of Czech foreign policy, which are security, prosperity, and sustainable development. The relationship between the two countries is asymmetric, and the Czech Republic must adapt to changes in US foreign policy. On the other hand, due to the growing influence of China and Russia, the US has increased its presence in Central and Eastern Europe. This attention resulted in the Czech Republic's leadership in the 5G talks. At the same time, space has opened up for the creation of a new Czech foreign policy agenda. The relations have neither significantly deteriorated nor improved during this period.

Abstrakt

Tato práce se zabývá dopadem Trumpovy administrativy na českou zahraniční politiku. Cílem je analyzovat změny, ke kterým došlo, a vysvětlit, co znamenaly pro Českou republiku. Práce k dosažení svých cílů využívá metodu zahraničněpolitické analýzy. Prezident Trump ve své kampani kritizoval multilateralismus a zdůrazňoval nevýhodné postavení USA v transatlantických vztazích. Vystoupil z řady multilaterálních organizací a uvalil cla na evropský dovoz do USA, čímž omezil volný obchod. Mimo jiné prezident Trump používal agresivní styl, když vyzíval členské země NATO k dodržování slibu přispívat dvěma procenty HDP na společnou obranu. Trumpův přístup k transatlantickým vztahům představoval výzvu, jelikož jeho kroky byly v rozporu s hlavními cíli české zahraniční politiky, jimiž jsou bezpečnost, prosperita a udržitelný rozvoj. Vztahy mezi

oběma zeměmi jsou asymetrické, a proto se Česká republika musí přizpůsobovat změnám v zahraniční politice USA. Na druhou stranu kvůli rostoucímu vlivu Číny a Ruska zvýšily USA svou přítomnost ve střední a východní Evropě. Tato pozornost vyústila ve vedoucí postavení České republiky v jednáních o 5G. Zároveň se otevřel prostor pro vytvoření nové agendy české zahraniční politiky. Vztahy se v daném období ani výrazně nezhoršily, ani nezlepšily.

Keywords

Czech foreign policy, US foreign policy, the Trump Administration, asymmetry, multilateralism, transatlantic relations

Klíčová slova

česká zahraniční politika, americká zahraniční politika, Trumpova administrativa, asymetrie, multilateralismus, transatlantické vztahy

Title

The Trump Administration and its Impact on Czech Foreign Policy

Název práce

Trumpova administrativa a její dopad na českou zahraniční politiku

Acknowledgement

I want to express my gratitude to my supervisor PhDr. Jan Hornát, Ph.D., whose comments and insightful remarks helped me conceptualize the topic and guided me in the right direction. I would also like to thank everyone who accepted my interview request.

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Introduction

In 2017 President Donald Trump assumed office. In his campaign, he criticized multilateralism and emphasized what he saw as an unfavorable US position in transatlantic relations. President Trump abandoned the traditional US approach toward Europe, challenging long-established norms. This was a significant change in tone and policy practice compared to the previous Obama Administration.

In his book, *Great Again: How to Fix Our Crippled America*, published in 2016, Donald Trump explained his thoughts and visions for America. He was convinced there had to be a change in the execution of US foreign policy because, in recent decades, the US administrations had been overly supportive of states that did not return the favor. From his point of view, the president should not continue to allow these states to exploit the US. He argued that it would be wise to increase hard power in foreign policy instead, even at the expense of soft power. Hard power is a coercive approach involving military power, whereas soft power is a persuasive approach that consists of economic or cultural influence. Additionally, Trump insisted that the base for foreign policy was a strong army, its modernization, and a greater contribution to security. If the US army was so large that it was merely invincible, it would serve as a strong enough deterrent, and the US may never have to come to use it. This development, according to Trump, did not occur in the last decade. Moreover, he maintained that it was crucial to have a strong economy. That shows strength as well – it could discourage countries from coming into conflict with the US. It could also help US allies that would help America in return.[1]

[1] Donald. J. Trump, *Vraťme Americe její velikost: Jak dát do pořádku ochromenou Ameriku* (Prague: Alpha Book, 2016), 46-48 and 62.

In his 2017 inaugural address, Donald Trump confirmed his determination to fulfill his campaign promises and put America first:

> It is the right of all nations to put their own interests first…For many decades, we've enriched foreign industry at the expense of American industry and subsidized the armies of other countries while allowing for the very sad depletion of our military. We've defended other nations' borders while refusing to defend our own. And spent trillions and trillions of dollars overseas while America's infrastructure has fallen into disrepair and decay. We've made other countries rich while the wealth, strength, and confidence of our country has dissipated over the horizon.[2]

His approach to foreign policy, transatlantic relations, and multilateralism differed from how previous administrations handled these issues. His decisions were based on nationalist rhetoric. He rejected globalism and multilateralism, arguing that they were hurting US sovereignty, the economy and American workers. Trump as president annulled a number of Obama's landmark foreign policy initiatives. He abandoned the Trans-Pacific Partnership, Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, and Paris Climate Agreement. He also withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA), UNESCO, and other international agreements and withdrew US membership from international institutions. As a US president, Trump urged European countries to comply with their promise to contribute two percent of GDP for the common defense of NATO. He even threatened to refuse to affirm NATO's Article 5 in those countries that did not fulfill the promise.

The key to the prosperity of transatlantic relations is consensus in three areas: shared values, liberal trade, and defense strategy. The Trump Administration had difficulties reaching this consensus with Europe. However, this did not come as a shock since the US has always had a slightly different understanding of freedom and democracy and what

[2] "Full text: 2017 Donald Trump inauguration speech transcript," *Politico*, January 20, 2017. https://www.politico.com/story/2017/01/full-text-donald-trump-inauguration-speech-transcript-233907 (Accessed January 24, 2022).

these terms meant than the Europeans. But they had always found a way to cooperate. During the Trump administration, the transatlantic relationship was on the verge of crisis.[3]

President Trump's actions empowered a wave of anti-globalism in Europe and raised the question of state sovereignty, which caused some disagreement within the EU.[4] Trump was quite critical of the EU and the reservations influenced Czech foreign policy. His America First vision contradicted Czech interests as multilateralism and transatlantic cooperation are two essential pillars of Czech foreign policy. Since the Czech Republic is a small state, multilateralism is the basis for its foreign policy. When Donald Trump assumed office, the Czech foreign policy faced a challenge, so the year 2017 was a transitional one for the US and the Czech Republic as well.

The main goal of this diploma thesis is to analyze how Czech foreign policy reacted to the Trump Administration, what impact it had and how the Czech Republic accommodated changes. For these purposes, the thesis uses the method of foreign policy analysis in combination with elite interviews. It is divided into three chapters – in the first one, theoretical concepts are presented. The chapter lists the priorities and interests of the Czech Republic and describes the country's position in world politics. With the help of international relations (IR) theories, concepts of small states, and asymmetric relationships, it seeks to explicate why the government has specific priorities and what US-Czech relations mean for the Czech Republic. These theories are essential for explaining how foreign policy is formed and how it reacts to the actions of other states. The second part deals with case studies of changes in Czech foreign policy that indicate

[3] Jan Hornát, "Nové pojetí multilateralismu? Evropská integrace a české zájmy v období administrativy Donalda Trumpa," in *Analýzy ÚMV: České zájmy v roce 2019*. (Prague: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, 2019), 41. https://www.dokumenty-iir.cz/Knihy/ceske_zajmy_2019_web.pdf (Accessed January 20, 2022).

[4] Jan Hornát, "Transatlantic "Othering": European External Action Identity and the Trump Administration" *Studia Europejskie – Studies in European Affairs* (January 2019): 27, https://www.ce.uw.edu.pl/pliki/pw/1-2019_Hornat.pdf (Accessed March 20, 2022).

the Trump Administration's impact. The third chapter examines the impact of these changes on the Czech Republic and explains the difference between President Trump's style and traditional American foreign policy. The findings are tied back to the theories presented in the first chapter. In addition, interviews with elites are included in this section to strengthen the arguments of the thesis and provide insight into the personal experience of experts.

Despite the significance of the US-Czech relations, the existing literature does not comprehensively focus on the impact of US administrations on Czech foreign policy. The Association for International Affairs (AMO) engages in international relations research and publishes an *Agenda for Czech Foreign Policy* each year. Experts analyze foreign policy events and provide recommendations for future years in these publications. The CEVRO school of political studies is involved in similar activities, and in the past, the Institute of International Relations, too, used to publish yearbooks on Czech foreign policy. But no literature explicitly explores the influence of the US on Czech foreign policy.

However, multiple books and articles deal with theories that help analyze the foreign policy of the Czech Republic and the US influence. The article *External behavior of small states in light of theories of international relations*[5] by Abdelraouf Mostafa Galal, and the book *Small States and International Security: Europe and Beyond*[6] by Clive Archer, Alyson J. K. Bailes, and Anders Wivel deal with the theory of small states. Based on their arguments, one can learn why the Czech Republic is categorized as a small state and understand what limits it presents. In his book *Asymmetry and International*

[5] Abdelraouf Mostafa Galal, "External behavior of small states in light of theories of international relations," *Review of Economics and Political Science* 5, no. 1 (2020): 38-56. http://www.proquest.com (Accessed March 30, 2022).

[6] Clive Archer, Alyson J. K. Bailes, and Anders Wivel, *Small States and International Security: Europe and Beyond,* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), http://www.proquest.com (Accessed March 30, 2022).

Relationships[7], Brantly Womack examines the theory of asymmetry in the international system. The book helps to explain why the US-Czech relations are asymmetric. Considering the IR theories, the book *Realism and International Relations*[8] by Jack Donnelly focuses on realism, articles *Identity Politics and Foreign Policy: Taiwan's Relations with China and Japan, 1895-2012: Identity Politics and Foreign Policy*[9] by Yinan He and Samuel Huntington's famous essay *The Clash of Civilizations*[10] address constructivism. All of them are essential for the discussion of foreign policy.

Moreover, the 2015 *Concept of the Czech foreign policy*[11] that the Government published presents a detailed overview of the priorities and goals of the Czech Republic. The theoretical part helps to understand the content of the document. Additionally, the base for the analytical part are news articles, official statements, speeches, treaties, etc.

Methodology

The method used for the research is the foreign policy analysis (FPA). It is "… the study of how states, or individuals that lead them, make foreign policy, execute foreign policy, and react to the foreign policies of other states."[12] The thesis uses the second-generation FPA methodology in that it emphasizes qualitative analysis and traditional methods of

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[7] Brantly Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships* (Cambridge University Press, 2015). https://www-cambridge-org.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/core/ (Accessed March 30, 2022).

[8] Jack Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations* (Cambridge University Press, 2009). https://www-cambridge-org.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/core/ (Accessed March 30, 2022).

[9] Yinan He, "Identity Politics and Foreign Policy: Taiwan's Relations with China and Japan, 1895-2012: Identity Politics And Foreign Policy," *Political Science Quarterly* 129, no. 3 (September 2014): 469-500, https://search.ebscohost.com/ (Accessed February 18, 2022).

[10] Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 22. http://www.proquest.com (Accessed February 18, 2022).

[11] "Koncepce zahraniční politiky České republiky," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic*, 2015, https://www.mzv.cz/file/1565920/Koncepce_zahranicni_politiky_CR.pdf (Accessed February 18, 2022).

[12] Philip B.K. Potter, "Methods of Foreign Policy Analysis," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies,* March 1, 2017. https://oxfordre.com/ (Accessed April 18, 2022).

historical research. The second part of the work deals with case studies of interactions between the countries that are either conflicts or cooperation, both verbal and physical.[13] It focuses on more profound research of foreign policy decision-making, the broader context of Czech foreign policy, its goals, and reactions to US foreign policy. Drawing from the research findings, the thesis seeks to generalize Czech state behavior and determine whether there are some patterns in the relations.[14]

Apart from the standard academic literature, the work uses two essential methods in foreign policy analysis – content analysis and interviews.[15] Content analysis helps interpret trends in Czech foreign policy and connects them back to the theories. To avoid bias, the work uses both domestic and foreign media. The interviews help get insights on the given topics that could not be obtained otherwise. The discussions contribute to the work and support its arguments.[16] The interviewees were selected based on their expertise in the field of foreign policy and the US as well as Czech politics. They include former Ministers of Foreign Affairs, former Ambassador to the US, the Director of the Foreign Affairs Department of the Office of the President of the Republic, and an advisor to the Prime Minister in foreign affairs and human rights. Given their work experience, these individuals have first-hand experience with the topics discussed.

1 The Czech Republic in Foreign Affairs

This chapter strives to explain the sources of Czech foreign policy and US-Czech relations. It reveals the position of the Czech Republic in the international system and depicts it as a small country with limited capabilities for achieving the goals of its foreign policies. If attacked, it cannot defend itself against great powers because its military is

[13] Potter, "Methods of Foreign Policy Analysis."

[14] Jean A. Garrison, Juliet Kaarbo, Douglas Foyle, Mark Schafer, and Eric K. Stern. "Foreign Policy Analysis in 20/20: A Symposium" *International Studies Review* 5, no. 2 (2003): 157–158. http://www.jstor.org (Accessed April 23, 2022).

[15] Potter, "Methods of Foreign Policy Analysis."

[16] Potter, "Methods of Foreign Policy Analysis."

not large enough. Therefore, the Czech foreign policy emphasizes membership in multilateral organizations and maintaining good relations with its allies. This helps the state to pursue its interests, both political and economic. And most importantly, it ensures its security.

The chapter also deals with two IR theories (constructivism and realism) that explain the nature of the foreign policy. The idea of constructivism maintains that foreign policy is influenced by an identity deeply rooted in a country's international relations history. Ideals and interests play a significant part in the procedure as they determine how a state behaves in the global system. Governments are usually fond of those countries that have similar values as them. The theory of realism focuses on the role of power and its distribution. The Czech Republic is a small power, meaning it must choose its allies wisely to pursue its interests successfully. The chapter also deals with the theory of asymmetry in international relations, which interprets states' reactions. An asymmetric relationship is the one between a leader and a subordinate. This trend is evident in US-Czech relations. Lastly, this chapter describes the transition from the Obama Administration to the Trump Administration and explains its meaning.

1.1 Czech Foreign Policy and Small State Theory

Czech foreign policy consists of rules and norms designed to be followed by the government. *The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Czech Republic,* approved by the government in 2015, is a strategic document of prime importance. The three main global interests of the Czech foreign policy are security, prosperity, and sustainable development. Apart from that, the Czech Republic considers European values, including human rights (home and abroad), and economic growth as its own. The security of the Czech Republic includes explicitly state sovereignty, maintenance of democracy, the safety of the citizens, and the option to carry out its foreign policy securely. The Czech Republic must avoid conflicts and other threats to achieve and maintain security. If there

is to be a threat, NATO guarantees Czech security.[17] It commits its members to protect each other as they are bound by the principle of collective defense, which is enshrined in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty.[18] "Article 5 provides that if a NATO ally is the victim of an armed attack, each and every other member of the Alliance will consider this act of violence as an armed attack against all members and will take the actions it deems necessary to assist the Ally attacked."[19] Considering the current situation with Ukraine, it is more than important that the Czech Republic is one of the members of NATO and can thereby rely on a certain level of protection and deterrence. Moreover, the Czech presence in other multilateral organizations ensures prosperity and sustainable development.

Therefore, membership in the EU, OSCE, or the UN is beneficial for the state. Primarily, the EU provides the prosperity and sustainable development of the Czech Republic. More specifically, it is secured by European integration that comprises the European Single Market and overall cohesion of policies. The foreign policy goals are also accomplished by being active in the UN, economic diplomacy, and having good relations with the neighboring countries and members of the organizations the Czech Republic is a part of.[20]

Furthermore, the Czech foreign policy also has two national goals. These are good service to its citizens, the good reputation of the republic outside its borders, and the presentation

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[17] "Koncepce zahraniční politiky České republiky," 1-4.

[18] The Article 5 reads: "The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defense recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area."

"Collective defence - Article 5," The Official Website of NATO. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_110496.htm (Accessed March 10, 2022).

[19] "Collective defence - Article 5," The Official Website of NATO.

[20] "Koncepce zahraniční politiky České republiky," 6.

of the country in a positive way. The first goal comprises consular and visa services for Czech and foreign citizens. The latter means that the Czech Republic must put effort into the state's branding. Branding is the promotion of a particular product or company by advertising – in this case, advertising of a country. The state uses Czech Centers abroad and the CzechTourism agency to achieve a good reputation.[21] Czech Centers use social and cultural promotion outside the borders. CzechTourism encourages foreigners to visit the Czech Republic through activities like publishing brochures and maps.[22]

The Czech foreign policy focuses on Central Europe – the Visegrad Group (Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary), Austria and Germany, Southeast Europe – Western Balkans, Turkey, and Eastern Europe – Eastern Partnership. The US ensures European security and is a critical ally in terms of Czech economic prosperity and sustainable development. The UK and France play a similar role. According to the concept, the Czech Republic should strive to improve US-Czech relations. Especially for cooperation in science, research, and even greater trade liberalization between the EU and the US. The Czech Republic must consider global politics and its context. In today's world, there are three trends: a shift to multipolarity, which relates to the transformation of power, an increase in the influence of non-governmental actors, and the growing world interconnection. These trends are likely to influence domestic politics as well.[23]

The Czech Republic is considered a small state. According to the UN, a small state has an area of 100 000 km^2 or less. Moreover, it is a country that uses multilateral organizations and bilateral treaties to ensure its security as it cannot defend itself against stronger opponents with greater military capabilities. The foreign policy behavior of

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[21] "Koncepce zahraniční politiky České republiky," 3.

[22] "Czech Centres, About Us" Official Website of the Czech Centres, https://www.czechcentres.cz/en/about-us and "About CzechTourism" Official Website of Czech Tourism Agency http://test.czechtourism.com/about-czt/ (Accessed March 30, 2022)

[23] "Koncepce zahraniční politiky České republiky," 11-14.

states is determined by three criteria – capabilities, perception, and international membership variable. The capability means the power and influence the small state has in the global system, usually the economic and military strength. Perception of power is also essential, small states do not possess the power to influence the international system, and they are aware of that. That is why they prefer multilateralism over unilateralism, they need to be a part of international organizations that increase the chance of gaining influence. Since small states are not strong militarily, they are inclined to use soft power rather than hard power.[24]

Historically, small states have had little impact on international affairs. They have been forced to adjust to the great powers because they lack the material power (i.e., population size, GDP, and military capabilities). The powerful create rules, and the weaker ones must obey them.[25] Small states choose to cooperate with great powers to impact the geopolitical space. Great powers are influential in the international system, and by taking their sides, small states actively contribute to the political arena. They consider it beneficial as the great powers help them gain influence, achieve their goals, and provide security.[26]

A small state is considered the weaker side of an asymmetric relationship. In Czech-US relations, the Czech Republic is unambiguously the weaker side, and therefore one defines it as a small state (the issue of asymmetry is discussed in the following subchapter).[27] The Czech Republic is a small state whose resources are limited compared to the resources of great powers. It is well-aware of its capabilities and thus seeks power

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[24] Galal, "External behavior of small states in light of theories of international relations," 41-45.

[25] Archer, Bailes, and Wivel, *Small States and International Security: Europe and Beyond,* 4-6.

Donald. J. Trump, *Vraťme Americe její velikost: Jak dát do pořádku ochromenou Ameriku* (Prague: Alpha Book, 2016), 46-48 and 62.

[26] Mari-Liisa Sulg, Crandall Matthew, "Geopolitics: The seen and unseen in small state foreign policy," *Journal of Regional Security 2020* 15, no. 1, 110-113, https://scindeks.ceon.rs/ (Accessed March 30, 2022).

[27] Archer, Bailes, and Wivel, *Small States and International Security: Europe and Beyond*, 9.

and security in multilateral organizations, primarily in the EU, the UN, and NATO. It cooperates with the US, which, along with the organizations, helps it follow its interests and helps to stop those actions that could harm its interests, like being left out of trade treaties, for example. Just as importantly, the US is considered the leading security guarantor.

1.2 Asymmetric Relationships in International Relations

The foreign policy of states depends on their power in the international system. A country that has more power can influence others. An asymmetric relationship is the one between a weaker state and a more powerful state, it emerges when there are inequalities in resources and influence between states. It is also connected with one's needs, values, and interests.[28] The weaker state does not have the capabilities and power to challenge the powerful state. Thus, it seeks an alliance to prevent threats to its existence. The coalition ensures the security of the small state. However, the mighty state still has leverage as it creates rules of the relationship, and the weaker state follows these rules. The interests of the two will be similar as they shape their behavior. Nevertheless, the difference in the capabilities will determine the perspective of the interests and the approach to achieving the goals. And even though one's aspirations might be the same as the aspirations of another, factors like size, location, resources, and history will define country's goals. The state must set reachable goals to achieve them.[29] The asymmetric relationship can benefit both sides, but the relationship is more important for the weaker side. Therefore, it is willing to "sacrifice" more to maintain the alliance, which, along with the limited capabilities, makes it vulnerable. The powerful state, A, can influence the weaker state, B, which is not likely to challenge A, as it is not powerful enough and would be risking the existence of the alliance that is so important for B.[30]

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[28] Liviu Bogdan Vlad, and Florian Coldea, "Symmetry And Asymmetry In International Relations," *Strategic impact* 38, no. 1 (2011): 100, https://www-ceeol-com.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz (Accessed March 30, 2022).

[29] Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships*, 41 and 50.

[30] Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships*, 44-45.

Since A has greater capabilities and B is vulnerable, it can be forced to do things A wants. It is bullied into doing something by A using both reward and punishment.[31] "In the typical asymmetric relationship, there is little likelihood that A can be challenged by B, or that B can be dominated by A."[32] It is common for A to be arrogant and use its superiority. If B does not support A's decisions and does not follow the rules, it will be punished economically or militarily, depending on the seriousness of the issue and the nature of the relationship. Suppose B complies with A despite disagreeing with it. In that case, it is usually because the relationship is beneficial for B. If B feels that the relationships create advantages for A, their disagreement will be evident as they might also be coerced into following A. However, mutual benefit is needed to maintain the relationship, so, A should not bully B, and B should act subordinately. If the alliance is threatened, so are security and the interests of B. The weaker side is then likely to create other alliances, either with states or through multilateral institutions.[33]

The Association for International Affairs (AMO) maintains that the Czech-US bilateral relations are highly asymmetric. Because of its weaknesses, the Czech Republic needs the EU and transatlantic multilateral ties. Without them, it is hard for the Czechs to have their way.[34] CEVRO Institute, too, maintains that the Czech-US relations are asymmetric.[35] Petr Pavel, a retired Czech army general (Ex-Chairman of the NATO Military Committee), said in March 2019 that: "A country of our size cannot afford the

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[31] Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships*, 50.

[32] Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships*, 55.

[33] Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships*, 55-56 and 60.

[34] Petr Boháček et al., "Agenda pro českou zahraniční politiku 2021," *The Association for International Affairs* 2021, 138. https://www.amo.cz/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/AMO_Agenda_2021_CZ_2.pdf (Accessed March 30, 2022).

[35] John K. Glenn et al., "Česko-americké vztahy: Jak dál?" *CEVRO Insitute* (Praha, 2015): 12. https://www.cevroinstitut.cz/upload/ck/files/PCTR/Publikace/2015/Česko-americké%20vztahy%20-%20jak%20dál%20--%20Czech-American%20Relations%20-%20A%C2%A0Roadmap%20for%20the%20Future%20(web).pdf?fbclid=IwAR2uJb9Pbx9T-ryFKHgmb0c_iO3dYPzm2Pq-xu1iqRdZoPYBrmb3jqTLWbk (Accessed March 30, 2022).

luxury of neutrality or stand alone."[36] In an interview with me (see Appendix A for the full transcript), diplomat and a former Minister of Foreign Affairs (2002 – 2006) Cyril Svoboda responded to the question about whether there was an asymmetry in the relations, saying: "Why would not there be? We are a country of 10 million people and I honestly think some of the US presidents do not even know where the Czech Republic is, we are not Germany, Brazil, or India."[37] Former ambassador to the US Martin Palouš agreed and said it was a "plain fact" that the relationship was asymmetric and could never change.[38] The Czech Republic is a small state which does not possess the power to influence other states, and it is the weaker side in its relationship with the US.

1.3 Realism and Neo-realism in Foreign Policy

The IR theory of realism has the state at its core and considers it the leading actor in the global system, not individuals. It maintains that human nature always prevails. Human nature is unchangeable, self-interested, and motivated by interests. The behavior of states reflects the characteristics of people. It has a pessimistic view of the world in which states seek power and where there is social conflict. According to the theory's pessimistic outlook, any conflict is inevitable, and war is ever-present. The absence of world government causes anarchy – thus, the state's power is central to the theory.[39] Kenneth Waltz argues that power distribution is the most important in the international system because it defines its structure. States are arranged hierarchically or non-hierarchically and seek to balance against a more powerful rival. This means that even if a state does not share all interests of some other state, it might align with it based on perceived threats from another powerful state. The survival of a state is the basis of this theory – to survive, it makes alliances. The Czech Republic is a small power, and according to realism, every

[36] Boháček et al., "Agenda pro českou zahraniční politiku 2019," *The Association for International Affairs* 2019, 46, https://www.amo.cz/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/agenda2019_CZE_oprava.pdf (Accessed March 30, 2022).

[37] Cyril Svoboda, "Interview with Cyril Svoboda," by author, Prague, April 14, 2022.

[38] Martin Palouš, "Interview with Martin Palouš," by author, Prague, April 20, 2022.

[39] Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations*, 9-11.

state puts its interest above everything else. Thus, one can suppose that these interests will drive the Czech foreign policy and that it will use the multilateral organizations as an instrument to further its national interests.[40] Neo-realism, on the other hand, abandoned the emphasis on human nature. According to this theory, the balance of power is the most important in the international system. Meaning the behavior of states is the result of how the system is structured, not by self-interested human nature.[41]

Realists maintain that small states should follow the great powers to seek foreign policy interests. Small states' capabilities and military power are limited, and they do not influence the international system. By allying with great powers, they gain some influence and are more likely to reach their goals. That is why the Czech Republic needs the US as an ally.[42]

1.4 Constructivism in Foreign Policy

Constructivism is another prominent strand of IR theory that can help explain a state's foreign policy. It deals with identities, values, beliefs, and perceptions that influence states' behavior in the international system. It agrees with realists on the significance of the state's role and its interests, but unlike realism, constructivism focuses on the origin of these. The theory maintains that one's identity and capabilities condition interests. Moreover, it considers the international system a social construct defined by individual identities. The construct is how the identity of one state reacts to that of another. People tend to attach meanings to things and people. To understand and explain the behavior of states, we need to look at specific social constructions such as identities and norms. Identities are expressed in reactions to other identities, conditioned by our physical and psychological characteristics, beliefs, and backgrounds. Usually, people are attracted to

[40] Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations*, 16-17.

[41] Vlad, and Coldea, "Symmetry And Asymmetry In International Relations," 102.

[42] Archer, Bailes, and Wivel, *Small States and International Security*, 3-4.

those who look like them, think like them, and have similar preferences. One does not feel close with the "others" who do not share the desired characteristics and values. Based on this, one also tends to have a prejudice against people. Whether in society or the international system, it is "us" versus "them". National identity has a significant impact on foreign policy. This means that states will seek alliances with states of similar values and interests. Those who do not share these could potentially conflict with them.[43]

If identities are shared, conflict is less likely, as Samuel Huntington argued in his essay *The Clash of Civilizations*. According to his theory, states align themselves in terms of nine major civilizations – Western, Islamic, Confucian, Slavic-Orthodox, Hindu, Buddhist, Japanese, African, and Latin American. According to Huntington, this so-called clash of civilizations dominates world politics. Globalization is making the world smaller, and there are major and more visible differences between civilizations. They do not always clash, yet Huntington argued that cultural differences between the civilizations would be the source of most future conflicts.[44]

The EU identity is constructed based on European ideals and norms, which are democracy, freedom, and open trade. The identity is also formed in relation to other parts of the world that do not share these values and are perceived as different. One compares its views of the world to the opinions of others, and one constructs these differences. Thus, it is not surprising that the Trump Administration constituted the "other" for the EU. Its fundamental values contradicted European values, and if there is a difference between ideologies, conflict is more likely.[45] Moreover, one would not expect all US interests to be the same as that of the EU or the Czech Republic. The US is a great power; the Czech Republic, on the other hand, is not. And if a state does not share the

[43] He, "Identity Politics and Foreign Policy," 472-474.

[44] Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?".

[45] Hornát, "Transatlantic "Othering," 30-31.

fundamental values and worldview with some other state, it could potentially threaten one's identity and goals. This trend was visible in transatlantic relations as the US foreign policy contradicted the EU foreign policy during the Trump Administration.[46]

The theory of constructivism explains the origin of Czech alliances and relations in the international system. Czech identity and values resemble those of its allies. The allies value democracy, the rule of law, human rights, equity, and the UN and international legal norms. The Czech foreign policy also gives importance to the thinking of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and the democratic tendencies that occurred during communism.[47] Members of multilateral organizations like the EU and the UN meet those conditions and are Czech allies. All these countries share fundamental values, and they also share security which is the primary goal of NATO. They are interdependent, which is perceived as an advantage, sometimes, domestic politics copy other foreign policies.[48]

1.5 Czech Support for Multilateralism During the Trump Administration

As elaborated above, the Czech Republic is a small state that usually does not have a say in the international system. The great powers set the rules and are leaders in the political scene. Purely and simply because small states do not have the resources and the army to govern the world. Therefore, the Czech Republic needs to be part of multilateral organizations to participate in decision-making. The EU, the UN, and NATO are the base for the Czech foreign policy. Without these organizations, the Czech Republic would be isolated with no influence on international relations whatsoever.[49] The membership in

[46] Hornát, "Transatlantic "Othering," 30.

[47] "Koncepce zahraniční politiky České republiky," 2-3.

[48] "Koncepce zahraniční politiky České republiky," 10.

[49] Tomáš Weiss, and Věra Řiháčková, "Co je to multilateralismus? Konceptualizace pojmu multilateralismus včeské zahraniční politice" in M. Kořan et al., Česká zahraniční politika vzrcadle sociálně-vědního výzkumu (Praha: Institute of International Relations, 2009): 56.

NATO and the EU brings certain advantages to the Czech Republic, like the Presidency of the Council of the EU, where the presiding countries set goals and prepare an agenda for the Council. [50] This way, Czechia directly influences EU affairs. As for membership in NATO, the Czech Republic participates in the North Atlantic Council. There must be unanimity among members of the councils, which makes each member essential to the decision-making process. Moreover, the Czech state prefers multilateralism in terms of security and solving international issues. [51]

Multilateralism is also vital for small states as there are rules and norms by which all states must abide, even the great powers like the US. If a great power accepts these rules, it also agrees to cooperate with small states, which is beneficial for them since small states need the help of bigger states to reach their goals. If these rules bind a great power, it is less likely to take advantage of the other states. On the other hand, these small states give the influential actors the green light to do as they wish and legitimize their actions. Therefore, multilateral organizations are convenient for both sides.[52] "The European Union, being an actor on the international scene, grounds its external action in conceptions of the necessity of multilateralism and in building postmodern (post-Westphalian) notions of state sovereignty."[53] Before Trump, multilateralism and European integration had been respected by the US. It had been a tool how for keeping peace in Europe. President Bill Clinton was in favor of the enlargement of NATO in Eastern Europe, President George H. W. Bush supported the entry of Turkey to the EU, and President Obama disapproved of Brexit. Trump, on the contrary, supported Brexit and criticized the EU.[54]

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[50] "The presidency of the Council of the EU," Official Website of the Council of the EU and the European Council, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/presidency-council-eu/ (Accessed March 30, 2022).

[51] Weiss, and Řiháčková, "Co je to multilateralismus?" 62-63.

[52] Hornát, "Nové pojetí multilateralismu?," 42.

[53] Hornát, "Transatlantic "Othering," 27.

[54] Hornát, "Nové pojetí multilateralismu?" 42.

In conclusion, the goal of the Trump Administration to end multilateralism contradicted the Czech foreign policy. The previous US administrations were keener on traditional diplomacy toward Europe, and although they may have criticized multilateralism, they did not threaten to withdraw from NATO. Thus, it was a significant transition. Furthermore, the US no longer wished to maintain transatlantic relations with the EU. Which meant that Germany and France could increase their influence in the EU, which was a threat to small states like the Czech Republic as an increase in the power of bigger states meant a loss of theirs.[55]

2 Czech Foreign Policy in the Age of Trump

This chapter discusses the Czech foreign policy during the Trump Administration, the significance of the relationship, and its state during the given period. It determines how the behavior of the US on the international scene changed after Trump assumed office and then explains why the change was positive or negative. The second part analyzes specific changes in the US approach toward Central and Eastern Europe after Trump assumed office. An explanation for what it meant to transatlantic relations and how it influenced the Czech Republic is provided. Lastly, it contrasts the positive impacts of the Administration's attention to the region with the adverse effects of US complaints about cyber security and NATO spending requirements and the deterioration of transatlantic trade.

2.1 The US-Czech relations in the age of Trump

To demonstrate what the US-Czech relationship means to the Czechs, one must briefly go through the history of US-Czech relations which goes back to 1918, when Czechoslovakia was established. At that time, among the leading political proponents of the independence of Czechoslovakia was Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, who likened the

[55] Hornát, "Nové pojetí multilateralismu?" 42.

ideals of the would-be independent country to those of the US founding. He thus sought the support of the American President Woodrow Wilson for the acknowledgment of Czechoslovak independence. The two countries shared fundamental values, which resulted in a partnership. At the end of World War II, the US liberated the Western part of Bohemia. By providing symbolic support to dissidents or radio broadcasting during the communist era, the US incrementally supported the independence of Central and Eastern European states and the freedom of their citizens.[56]

After the fall of the Iron Curtain and the Velvet Revolution, President Václav Havel visited Washington D.C. and spoke in Congress. In his speech, he talked about the events of 1989 and acknowledged US support.[57] Today, Václav Havel's bust in the US Capitol building, demonstrating his symbolic importance to the relationship.[58] The Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic then became separate countries on January 1st, 1993. The importance of US-Czech relations culminated in 1999 when the Czech Republic became a member of NATO, which was a crucial milestone for the Czechs as the organization ensures the security of the Czech Republic. The Czech presence in NATO operations then strengthened the partnership with NATO. The contribution of troops is voluntary, but the organization does not have its army, so it is expected that the member states will volunteer and send some manpower, equipment, or resources in case of necessity.[59] The Czech Republic is present at the missions in Kosovo and Iraq.[60]

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[56] John K. murat et al., "Česko-americké vztahy: Jak dál?" 9-10 and "Naše vztahy" Official Site of the US Embassy in the Czech Republic, https://cz.usembassy.gov/cs/our-relationship-cs/ (Accessed March 30, 2022).

[57] "Czechoslovakian President Address," *C-SPAN*, February 21, 1990, https://www.c-span.org/video/?10917-1/czechoslovakian-president-address (Accessed March 10, 2022).

[58] "Politické vztahy," Official Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, https://www.mzv.cz/washington/cz/politicke_vztahy/index.html (Accessed March 10, 2022).

[59] "Troop contributions," Official Website of NATO. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50316.htm (Accessed March 10, 2022).

[60] "Politické vztahy," Official Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic.

Meetings and talks of the US and Czech elected officials have always signaled the strength of the partnership and the potential for improvement. Major political and economic issues have been discussed, and usually, these meetings have had some positive outcomes like agreements or joint statements, or at least symbolic significance. Since the establishment of the Czech independent state in 1993, there have been nineteen visits of Czech presidents and prime ministers with the US presidents.[61] Václav Havel visited the US on five occasions, as already mentioned – he was popular among US politicians. In 1993 he met with President Bill Clinton, and he presented the independent Czech Republic for the first time.[62] Václav Klaus traveled to the US five times as well. Twice as a prime minister and three times as a president. He met with President Clinton during a private visit in 1996, attended the funeral of former President Reagan, and the NATO Summit Meeting in Chicago. Then-Prime Minister Miloš Zeman visited President George Bush in 2001, shortly after 9/11 in the US. They discussed the issue of terrorism and, afterward, a NATO Summit that was hosted in Prague in 2002. Bush also appreciated the Czech Republic for passing on security information and stressed the importance of security cooperation.[63] Prime Ministers Vladimír Špidla and Mirek Topolánek met with President Bush as well. President Barack Obama then invited Prime Minister Petr Nečas, with whom he discussed economic and military cooperation. They both agreed that there was a potential for improvement in the areas. Obama suggested that there could be a NATO military training base for pilots in the Czech Republic, and he negotiated the tender for the nuclear power plant Temelín.[64] Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka was on

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[61] "Visits By Foreign Leaders of Czech Republic," Official Website of the Office of the Historian, US Department of State, https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/visits/czech-republic (Accessed March 10, 2022).

[62] Kristýna Moučková, "Havel odletěl na třídenní návštěvu USA," *České noviny,* April 20 2018, https://www.ceskenoviny.cz/25Cesko/zpravy/-25cesko-20-4-1993-havel-odletel-na-tridenni-navstevu-usa/1611396 (Accessed March 10, 2022).

[63] Jiří Nádoba et al., "Bush přijal v Bílém domě Zemana," *iDNES.cz*, November 10, 2001, https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/zahranicni/bush-prijal-v-bilem-dome-zemana.A011109_000632_zahranicni_nad (Accessed March 10, 2022).

[64] "Česko a USA by mohly spolupracovat na výcviku pilotů vrtulníků," Official Website of the Government of the Czech Republic, October 28, 2011, https://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/aktualne/cesko-a-usa-by-mohly-spolupracovat-na-vycviku-pilotu-vrtulniku--88810/ (Accessed March 10, 2022).

a working visit to the US in 2014. He attended the Nuclear Security Summit in 2016 and met with then-Vice President Biden, who appreciated Czech cooperation in the war against ISIS and the emphasis the Czech Republic puts on human rights. According to the Prime Minister, Biden maintained that the Czech Republic "punched above its weight."[65] The two countries continued to support the alliance over the years, there was an overall understanding of major issues, and good relations were preserved despite differences.

On March 7, 2019, Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babiš visited the White House. The last person whom a US president invited before Babiš was Petr Nečas in 2011. The invitation was thus a great success for the Czechs. During their meeting, Babiš and Trump discussed international trade, energy security, cyber security, immigration, and terrorism. More specifically, a new project for the Czech nuclear power plant, a purchase of a helicopter for the Czech army, and the commitments to NATO. Babiš maintained that there was great potential for the relationship and that the trade was already getting better in terms of cooperation. Trump said that the Czech Republic was doing well economically and that it has always been a very safe country with a strong military and people. He added that US-Czech relations were good, that there was a lot of trade "and a lot of just about everything you could imagine."[66] Babiš told Trump he supported the vision "Make America Great Again" and that he had his plan to make Czechia great again. Babiš commented on the meeting, saying the most significant problem of the US-EU relations

[65] "Sobotka: Viceprezident USA ocenil pomoc Česka v boji proti Islámskému státu," *Aktuálně.cz*, September 29, 2015, https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/zahranici/sobotka-viceprezident-usa-ocenil-pomoc-ceska-v-boji-proti-is/r~2a9d9f6266ed11e5b22d002590604f2e/ (Accessed March 10, 2022).

[66] "Americká cla jako největší problém. Babiš jednal v Bílém domě s prezidentem USA,", *Aktuálně.cz*, March 8, 2019. https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/zahranici/trump-babis/r~7c60ebfc412c11e98a200cc47ab5f122/?fbclid=IwAR38J0cqlRUF1O_bz2L2qEsl6F-uVBT3OD3KbNMhizCVp8WXreB0vzEF2BI (Accessed March 10, 2022).

in 2019 was trade. Trump threatened to raise customs on cars imported to Europe if a trade agreement was not reached.[67]

During the visit, Babiš also met with Vice President Mike Pence, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, National Security Advisor John Bolton, and Secretary of Energy Rick Perry. According to Prime Minister Babiš, this signaled the great importance of the bilateral relations.[68] When a high official meets another high official, it is considered a signal of the strength of a given relationship. The meeting, therefore, positively contributed to the US-Czech relationship. Additionally, the two leaders published a joint statement after the meeting. They emphasized shared democratic values, individual liberty, the rule of law, independent institutions, and shared interests of peace, security, and prosperity on which they pledged to work together. They strengthened the alliance by reaffirming the NATO spending requirements and Article 5. Also, they appreciated the presence of troops of both countries in Afghanistan and maintained that there was potential for cooperation between the US and Central Europe in the area of energy infrastructure development.[69]

This sort of improvement of relations with the US was not rare in Central and Eastern Europe at that time. Some politicians supported President Trump and had similar opinions on multilateralism, globalism, and sovereignty. This may have been partly caused by the wave of migration and the rise of nationalism in Europe. The US President was strict on immigration policies, and also raised the question of state sovereignty, insisting that

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[67] "Babiš: Trumpovi jsem řekl, že Praha je připravená ho přivítat," *Aktuálně.cz*, March 8, 2019. https://video.aktualne.cz/ze-sveta/babis-trumpovi-jsem-rekl-ze-praha-je-pripravena-ho-privitat/r~4e36c538412e11e9b6a9ac1f6b220ee8/ (Accessed March 10, 2022).

[68] "Babiš: Trumpovi jsem řekl, že Praha je připravená ho přivítat," *Aktuálně.cz*.

[69] "Joint Statement by President of the United States Donald J. Trump and Prime Minister of the Czech Republic Andrej Babis," Official Website of the Government of the Czech Republic, March 7, 2019. https://www.vlada.cz/en/media-centrum/aktualne/joint-statement-by-president-of-the-united-states-donald-j--trump-and-prime-minister-of-the-czech-republic-andrej-babis-172308/ (Accessed March 10, 2022).

countries must have the right to decide for themselves and prioritize their own interests.[70] This brought the attention of Viktor Orbán, the Prime Minister of Hungary, who agreed with these two anti-system views.[71] Czech politicians, too, bore a resemblance to Trump's ideology. Babiš had a similar opinion on immigration to Trump. This was apparent when they discussed the Syrian refugee crisis together in 2019.[72] President Zeman congratulated the US President on the 2016 victory in the presidential elections and invited him to the Czech Republic, hoping for improved relations. He said he liked the way Donald Trump expressed himself and how he always decided to speak his mind, even though someone might not like it.[73] President Zeman had anti-immigration beliefs, mainly because he feared the influx of terrorists.[74] He also supported the Slovak proposal that EU members should be able to choose how they will assist in solving the migration crisis.[75] The two Presidents met at a meeting of the UN General Assembly.[76]

2.2 The Czech Republic and NATO

The Czech membership in NATO was influenced by the actions of the Trump Administration, both positively and negatively. The attention the US gave to Central and

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[70] Hornát, "Transatlantic "Othering," 38-39.

[71] Pablo Gorondi, "Hungary's Orban praises Trump's 'end of multilateralism," *AP NEWS*, January 23, 2017, https://apnews.com/article/71de471223cc486cac44f6c70e448133 (Accessed March 10, 2022).

[72] "Americká cla jako největší problém. Babiš jednal v Bílém domě s prezidentem USA,", *Aktuálně.cz.*

[73] "Zeman má radost, pozval Trumpa do Česka. Kritizoval Schapira, média i průzkumy," *Aktuálně.cz*, November 9, 2016, https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/zeman-ma-radost-pozval-trumpa-do-ceska-schapira-oznacil-za-p/r~8bb3d6eaa67a11e6a222002590604f2e/?fbclid=IwAR2BrdmfgTyWCQzewurUeLxQfKSpSJCy3aCdeP85YzA5CpCz_LdIgp9kXdA (Accessed March 10, 2022).

[74] Daniel Anýž, "Prezident Miloš Zeman v OSN: Terorismus a migrace jsou spojeným problémem," *Hospodářské noviny*, September 29, 2017, https://archiv.hn.cz/c1-65886450-prezident-milos-zeman-v-osn-terorismus-a-migrace-jsou-spojenym-problemem (Accessed March 14, 2022).

[75] "Zeman: Migrace je nejdůležitějším problémem EU," *deník.cz*, January 12, 2017, https://www.denik.cz/z_domova/zeman-migrace-je-nejdulezitejsim-problemem-eu-20170112.html (Accessed March 14, 2022).

[76] Tomáš Pavlíček, "Zeman se vyfotil s Trumpem. Jeho proslov v OSN přirovnal ke známkování neposlušných žáků," *iROZHLAS*, September 20, 2017, https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-svet/zeman-se-vyfotil-s-trumpem-jeho-proslov-v-osn-prirovnal-ke-znamkovani_1709201820_ako (Accessed March 14, 2022).

Eastern Europe, especially to Poland, was positive. The Obama Administration did not focus on this region as much as Trump did. However, the attention also meant increased US influence in the area, which was apparent from how the Czech Republic acted in some cases. The Administration had a negative impact when it changed the US approach to defense spending by European NATO member countries. It threatened to withdraw from NATO because the members were not contributing the required 2 % of GDP. President Obama dealt with the issue more subtly and was not considered a challenge to the transatlantic relationship.

2.2.1 Strengthening NATO's Eastern Flank and the US Influence on the Czech Republic

When President Trump announced the US would be withdrawing its forces from Syria, he shocked European countries, especially France and the UK, as their troops were present in Syria. He showed he was serious and that his threats were not just rhetoric. Overall, Trump's approach toward US security commitments and his early sympathies for Vladimir Putin worried the Central and Eastern European countries (CEE countries). They needed US protection against possible Russian aggression after the region's experience with Moscow's approach to Crimea.[77] The untraditional approach of the US toward its allies and the ambiguity in Trump's statements concerned Europe. In general, the American leadership was thought to be in decline. According to a 2020 report created by the Pew Research Center, the world did not approve of Trump's decisions in foreign policy (withdrawal from climate change agreements, immigration policies, an increase of tariffs) and the trust in the US as a world hegemon declined in some of the European allied countries, Germany, and France for example. Despite the decline of support in these Western European countries, the Trump Administration remained popular among CEE countries, 79 % of Poles and 66 % of Hungarians appreciated US decisions.[78]

[77] Murat Ülgül, "An Unwilling Commitment: Trump's Foreign Policy Strategy in Central and Eastern Europe," *Codrul Cosminului* 26, no.1 (July 31, 2020): 231-232. http://atlas.usv.ro/ (Accessed March 20, 2022).

[78] Ülgül, "An Unwilling Commitment: Trump's Foreign Policy," 226-227.

The amount of support of the Trump Administration in the CEE countries was caused by the increasing influence of right-wing politicians and parties, in Poland and Hungary, for example. Their ideology was similar to Donald Trump's because their criticism of the EU was based on nationalist grounds.[79] It was also partly caused by the fact that the CEE countries depend on the US as it ensures their security. But there also may have been another reason for the rates of popularity. Murat Ülgül, an expert on international relations, is convinced that Trump's America First approach alone threatened the security of the CEE countries. However, he maintains that Trump combined his style with a traditional method which brought the US closer to its CEE allies. They appreciated that Trump would not complain about a breach of democracy or human rights. "In fact, Trump may be the ideal president that they would prefer to see in the White House."[80]

The cooperation between the two regions grew when Trump was in office. The US Administration chose Poland as its main strategic ally in the region and decided to increase its military presence there. In 2017, President Trump met with Polish President Andrzej Duda, where the US reaffirmed its commitment to security in CEE countries and the importance of NATO. In 2019, the presidents decided to improve the cooperation between the two states, and so the US military presence in the region grew. As Poland bought US military equipment, Trump was delighted. Poland even proposed an establishment of a US military base on their territory that would bear the name "Fort Trump". The intensity of the communication between US and CEE politicians contributed significantly to improving the relations.[81]

Even though it may not have seemed like it, the Trump Administration always supported Ukraine. Both US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Mike Pompeo were more vocal

[79] Ülgül, "An Unwilling Commitment: Trump's Foreign Policy," 242.

[80] Ülgül, "An Unwilling Commitment: Trump's Foreign Policy," 227-228.

[81] Ülgül, "An Unwilling Commitment: Trump's Foreign Policy," 234-235 and 243.

in their condemnation of Russian aggression and the support of CEE countries than President Trump. According to Murat Ülgül, "This inconsistency between rhetoric and practice can be explained with the balancing forces in the Administration."[82] Most of Trump's cabinet did not wholly support his untraditional strategies, resulting in that type of inconsistency.[83] For instance, President Trump allegedly wanted to withdraw from NATO, but his advisors persuaded him not to, so he changed his mind.[84] Secretaries Tillerson and Pompeo often disagreed with the US president as they preferred the traditional elements of American foreign policy. Tillerson clashed with the President so frequently that he was dismissed. His successor Pompeo visited the CEE region in 2019, reaffirming US security commitments and criticizing Russia. Later the US supported the CEE countries financially and militarily.[85] "For example, in April 2018, the Administration agreed to deliver Javelin anti-tank missiles to the Ukrainian army to resist Russian aggression. The Obama Administration rejected to provide these weapons to Ukraine for a long time with the concern that Russia may have acquired intelligence about the weapon's sensitive technology."[86] Trump's approach toward Eastern Europe differed from that of the previous administrations. According to the media, "Obama's global influence, or lack thereof, also led to a spike in chaos and corruption throughout Eastern Europe, harming American interests."[87] The oligarchs took advantage of the situation and strengthened their influence in the Ukrainian government and over issues like natural gas.[88] In light of Obama's "pivot" to Asia, the US presence in Europe and its leadership

[82] Ülgül, "An Unwilling Commitment: Trump's Foreign Policy," 236-237.

[83] Ülgül, "An Unwilling Commitment: Trump's Foreign Policy," 243.

[84] Alexander Lanoszka and Luis Simón, "A Military Drawdown in Germany? US Force Posture in Europe from Trump to Biden," *The Washington Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (March 23, 2021): 201, https://www-tandfonline-com.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/ (Accessed March 20, 2022).

[85] Ülgül, "An Unwilling Commitment: Trump's Foreign Policy," 239.

[86] Ülgül, "An Unwilling Commitment: Trump's Foreign Policy," 235-236.

[87] J. D. Gordon, "Obama's foreign policy worsened Eastern European chaos," *The Hill*, August 17, 2016. https://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/foreign-policy/291659-obamas-foreign-policy-worsened-eastern-european-chaos (Accessed March 20, 2022).

[88] Gordon, "Obama's foreign policy worsened Eastern European chaos".

decreased. So, Trump may have been a signal of hope as he appeared to give Central and Eastern Europe more attention than his predecessor.

US-Czech relations also seemed to improve during the Trump Administration. Trump said that the Czech people were creative and innovative.[89] Mike Pompeo, the US Secretary of State, traveled across Central Europe in 2019. However, he visited all the states of the Visegrad Group except Czechia, whose Minister of Foreign policy Tomáš Petříček had planned a visit to the US to meet with Pompeo. The European visit had great significance since the US had not paid this much attention to this area in years. Hungary had not had this kind of high-official visit from the US in 8 years, Slovakia in 20 years. The visits were supposed to demonstrate US support for the Visegrad Group and prevent the Chinese and Russian influence on this area from expanding. These visits also intended to express American disagreement with those states that would trade with the Chinese firm Huawei. The US needed the CEE countries to cooperate with them on this issue to thwart the undesired influence. China planned to build a new fifth-generation wireless communications network (5G) that could potentially cause an increase in cyberattacks and intelligence services.[90]

The Czech Republic hosted a 5G Security Conference in May 2019 and September 2020. At the end of the first conference, the Czech Republic released a document named "The Prague Proposals". The Czech government explained the significance of the security of networks for national and economic safety and announced that EU members would work together to ensure cyber security. There were four proposals in the areas of technology, economy, security, privacy, and resilience, which comprised specific steps toward

[89] "Prezident Trump se v Bílém domě sešel s premiérem Babišem," Official Website of the the US Embassy in the Czech Republic, March 8, 2019, https://cz.usembassy.gov/cs/prezident-trump-se-v-bilem-dome-sesel-s-premierem-babisem/ (Accessed March 20, 2022).

[90] David E. Sanger et al., "In 5G Race With China, U.S. Pushes Allies to Fight Huawei," *The New York Times*, January 26, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/26/us/politics/huawei-china-us-5g-technology.html (Accessed March 20, 2022).

network security.[91] Four months before the second conference, the US and the Czech Republic signed a Joint Declaration on 5G Security where they declared cooperation on 5G opportunities saying they determined future prosperity and national security. It also stressed the importance of adhering to the Prague Proposals for a safe approach to network security, including the need for free and fair competition, transparency, and the rule of law. The US and the Czech Republic insisted on the "participation of reliable and trustworthy network hardware and software suppliers in 5G markets," and suggested that CEE countries should be wary of potential security threats, specifically of entities that are subject to undue foreign influence, do not respect intellectual property rights and do not have transparent ownership, partnerships, and corporate governance structures.[92]

In his speech at the Prague 5G Security Conference, Mike Pompeo, the US Secretary of State, said: "The Czech Republic has been a leader when it comes to confronting the threats posed by the Chinese communist party and its technology companies."[93] He went on to say that the Conference hosted in Prague was an important event in the fight against the dangerous Chinese influence.[94] Additionally, Secretary Pompeo visited Prague in August 2020. He celebrated the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II and the liberation of Pilsen by the US army. He met with the Prime Minister and President and

[91] "The Prague Proposals," (The Chairman Statement on cyber security of communication networks in a globally digitalized world, Prague 5G Security Conference, Prague, Czech Republic, May 3, 2019) https://www.vlada.cz/assets/media-centrum/aktualne/PRG_proposals_SP_1.pdf (Accessed March 30, 2022).

[92] "United States – Czech Republic Joint Declaration on 5G Security," (Prague, Czech Republic, May 6, 2020) https://www.vlada.cz/assets/media-centrum/aktualne/deklarace-G5.pdf (Accessed March 30, 2022).

[93] "Secretary Pompeo's video remarks at the "Prague 5G Security Conference," Youtube, U.S. Department of State, September 24, 2020, 0:11, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vg5IjKrizCE (Accessed March 30, 2022).

[94] "Secretary Pompeo's video remarks at the "Prague 5G Security Conference," 0:19-0:26.

spoke in the Senate.[95] He talked about security, 5G networks, and the Chinese and Russian influence:

> Today an even greater threat is the threat posed by the Chinese Communist Party and its campaigns of coercion and control. In your country alone, we see influence campaigns against your politicians and your security forces; the theft of industrial data you have created through your innovation and creativity; we see the use of economic levers to stifle freedom itself. It is not tanks and guns. It's very different from that.[96]

The US strategy was to disadvantage the Russian and Chinese position in the region. So, Central and Eastern Europe became a "contested territory" again as the US urged the Czech Republic not to let Huawei build the 5G Network on its territory.[97]

The Trump Administration certainly influenced the world. For instance, Steve Kashkett, a former senior diplomat at the US Department of State and a teacher of courses in US foreign policy, maintained that the Administration influenced the Czech Republic, along with other Eastern European countries, not to sign the Global Compact on Migration which is a UN migration pact to improve living conditions of migrants mainly by promoting international cooperation and providing policy option.[98]

He maintained:

> The behavior of the Trump Administration certainly had a distinct impact on other governments, as does the behavior of any US administration. In the case of Trump,

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[95] "Pompeo in Prague at start of central Europe visit," *Euractiv*, August 11, 2020, https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/pompeo-in-prague-at-start-of-central-europe-visit/ (Accessed March 30, 2022).

[96] Brian Kenety, "Pompeo warns in Prague of security threats doing business with China poses to Czech society, democracy," *Radio Prague International*, August 13, 2020, https://english.radio.cz/pompeo-warns-prague-security-threats-doing-business-china-poses-czech-society-8689164 (Accessed March 30, 2022).

[97] Kenety, "Pompeo warns in Prague of security threats." and Adam Payne, "Mike Pompeo urges eastern European countries to reject Huawei, warning that China is in 'some ways worse' than their former Soviet Union rulers," *Insider*, August 13, 2020, https://www.businessinsider.com/pompeo-tells-eastern-european-countries-reject-huawei-china-some-ways-worse-than-soviets-2020-8 (Accessed March 30, 2022).

[98] "Global Compact for Migration," *Official Website of the International Organization for Migration, UN Migration*, https://www.iom.int/global-compact-migration (Accessed April 10, 2022).

> US policies opposing multilateral diplomacy – such as the Trump administration's opposition to the Global Compact on Migration – helped influence other governments to adopt similar policies. In November/December 2018, it was well known within the diplomatic community that the Trump administration was encouraging friendly foreign governments to reject the migration accord.[99]

According to him: "It is very likely that the Trump Administration tried to persuade any government that already had reservations about the Global Compact on Migration. It was well-known that Babiš was one of the European leaders hostile to open migration policies."[100] Firstly, the Czech government was in favor of the compact. The topic was then politicized nationally by the opponents of immigration, and the Czech Republic reversed its stance and stopped supporting it in July 2018.[101] Media reports suggest that the countries that decided to withdraw from the Global Compact – such as the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Israel, and Australia – were "emboldened" by Trump's policies.[102] As already mentioned, one of the global interests of Czech foreign policy is human rights. Thus, the withdrawal from the Compact was a breach of the concept of the policy.

2.2.2 US complaints about defense spending by European NATO member countries

In April 2016, Donald Trump had his first national policy speech outlining the US foreign policy. In this speech, he stressed the importance of putting the American people first. He also emphasized his disagreement with the Obama Administration, promising that he would go in a completely different direction and that unlike Obama, and that he would be reliable and have a coherent foreign policy strategy. He maintained that US allies "are not paying their fair share" and that the security burden is all on the US. Trump criticized

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[99] Steve Kashkett, e-mail conversation with author, March 9, 2022.

[100] Kashkett, e-mail conversation with author.

[101] Petr Boháček et al., "Agenda pro českou zahraniční politiku 2018," *The Association for International Affairs* 2018, 75, https://www.amo.cz/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Agenda_2018.pdf (Accessed April 10, 2022).

[102] Rick Noack, "Why so many nations are suddenly following Trump out of the proposed U.N. migration pact," *The Washington Post*, December 4, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2018/12/04/why-so-many-nations-are-suddenly-following-trump-out-un-migration-pact/ (Accessed April 10, 2022).

European countries for not complying with their promise to contribute two percent of GDP for the common defense of NATO. In his point of view, the US had no other choice than to stop their financial and military support if the European countries did not support the common defense and did not increase their spending.[103] This means Trump threatened the principle of Article 5, which is the fundamental mechanism for NATO security. By doing that, he unnerved the European allies. He said: "The nation-state remains the true foundation for happiness and harmony. I am skeptical of international unions that tie us up and bring America down. And under my administration, we will never enter America into any agreement that reduces our ability to control our own affairs."[104]

Only three NATO member countries (The United States, Greece, and the United Kingdom) contributed two percent of their GDP to the common defense in 2014.[105] For this reason, the European members agreed to devote two percent of their GDP by 2024.[106] Throughout American history, all US administrations supported NATO and promoted transatlantic cooperation. With the election of Donald Trump in 2016, the situation changed. He decided not to follow the American tradition of promoting multilateral diplomacy. After World War II, the US played a crucial role in how Western European countries would develop in the future. The UN came into existence. Then in 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was established, followed by the signing of the Warsaw Pact in 1955. During the Cold War, the US exercised the policy of containment toward the Soviet Union and attempted to avoid the spread of communism. It has always been crucial for American administrations to preserve their influence worldwide. And

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[103] "Transcript: Donald Trump's Foreign Policy Speech," *The New York Times*, April 27, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/28/us/politics/transcript-trump-foreign-policy.html (Accessed January 24, 2022).

[104] "Transcript: Donald Trump's Foreign Policy Speech," *The New York Times.*

[105] "Defence Expenditures of NATO Countries (2013-2020)," Official Website of NATO, March 16, 2021, 2-3, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/3/pdf/210316-pr-2020-30-en.pdf (Accessed April 5, 2021).

[106] Michael Mandelbaum, "Pay Up, Europe: What Trump Gets Right About NATO" *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2017): 3, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/europe/2017-08-15/pay-europe (Accessed April 26, 2021).

especially in postwar Europe, Western Europe helped the US stop communism from spreading across the continent.[107]

In comparison, President Barack Obama reaffirmed the US commitment to the common defense of NATO. From his point of view, European security and good transatlantic relations were in the best interests of the US. He was convinced it was essential for Europe to be ready and robust enough to defend itself.[108] That is why President Obama strived for even better relations and cooperation with NATO member countries. Multilateral organizations help promote the free market and capitalism – fundamental American ideals. President Reagan was one of the biggest advocates of NATO. He maintained it was the "greatest alliance in history" and insisted on its importance for transatlantic security. President Reagan was proud of US leadership, and he was very grateful for what the other members had achieved. He understood what an important role the organization played in the world, and what benefits it brought. NATO has always been important for transatlantic relations and security.[109]

Unlike his predecessors, President Trump was not a NATO supporter. He declared that the organization was no longer effective, which scared both Democratic and Republican foreign policy experts. President Trump also criticized the leaders of European governments and called them "cheapskates" and "freeloaders" for not paying enough to the NATO defense budget. He urged them to deliver on their promise to spend two

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[107] David P, Calleo. "The American Role In Nato," *Journal of International Affairs* 43, no. 1 (1989): 21, http://www.jstor.org (Accessed April 26, 2021).

[108] "Press Conference by President Obama after NATO Summit," Official Website of the White House President Barack Obama, July 9, 2016. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/07/09/press-conference-president-obama-after-nato-summit (Accessed May 5, 2021).

[109] Lauren Stauffer, "How President Trump shattered the bond between Republicans and NATO," *The Washington Post*, April 4, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/04/04/how-president-trump-shattered-bond-between-republicans-nato/ (Accessed May 5, 2021).

percent of their GDP.[110] In his speech at the Unveiling of the 9/11 Article 5 Memorial and the Berlin Wall Memorial in May 2017 in Brussels, President Trump emphasized the importance of fulfilling the promise of the 2 %. He maintained it was the minimum needed for increasing the military readiness of the member states.[111] In 2018, he also started a narrative that the member states owe the US money: "And, frankly, many countries owe us a tremendous amount of money for many years back, where they're delinquent, as far as I'm concerned, because the United States has had to pay for them," he said.[112]

Only a month later, after the NATO summit, President Donald Trump delivered remarks to the people of Poland. Since Poland decided to buy an American air and missile defense system, he praised their commitment and investment in defense.[113] Finally, this time in Poland, he recognized Article 5 of the mutual defense commitment. Something he did not do in Brussels. He repeated many times that Europe must do more.[114] The criticisms of inadequate defense spending by European NATO members had their merit. It is a financial obligation of the member states they have committed themselves to. Unfortunately, not all of them are ready to deliver on their promise. In 2020, 11 out of

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[110] Daniel R. DePetris, "It's Trump's Duty to Press the Europeans on Defense Spending," *The American Conservative*, July 6, 2018, 1-2, https://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/its-trumps-duty-to-press-the-europeans-on-defense-spending/ (Accessed April 26, 2021).

[111] "Remarks by President Trump, at Unveiling of the 9/11 and Article 5 Memorial and Berlin Wall Memorial," Official Website of US Embassy in Uruguay, May 25, 2017, https://uy.usembassy.gov/remarks-president-trump-nato-unveiling-article-5-berlin-wall-memorials/ (Accessed April 26, 2021).

[112] "Remarks by President Trump and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at Bilateral Breakfast" July 11, 2018. Trump White House Official Website. https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-nato-secretary-general-jens-stoltenberg-bilateral-breakfast/ (Accessed April 26, 2021).

[113] "Here's the Full Text of Donald Trump's Speech in Poland: President Donald Trump delivered remarks to the people of Poland from Warsaw's Krasiński Square after being introduced by first lady Melania Trump," *NBC News*, July 6, 2017, https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/donald-trump/here-s-full-text-donald-trump-s-speech-poland-n780046 (Accessed April 26, 2021).

[114] "Here's the Full Text of Donald Trump's Speech in Poland".

the 29 members fulfilled their commitment to NATO military spending.[115] However, Europe justified its lower spending by maintaining that the 2 % GDP requirement deadline was still years away. Trump's approach toward this issue utterly differed from previous administrations. In Brussels and Poland, he indicated that the US would stop supporting those who would not comply with the requirements. Suggesting he would not reaffirm the US commitment to the defense of those countries that do not fulfill the commitment. None of these actions or remarks are typical of previous American administrations.[116]

Obama urged the NATO member states to increase spending as well. Nonetheless, he did not claim that the states owed the US money, nor did he question the importance of NATO. After the Annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014, Obama said: "If we've got collective defense, it means that everybody's got to chip in, and I have had some concerns about a diminished level of defense spending among some of our partners in NATO. Not all, but many."[117] NATO member states needed the money, so they could help Ukraine defend itself together, and so they pledged to increase their domestic spending to 2 % by 2024. Ukraine is not a part of NATO, but its security is crucial for the rest of Europe. In 2016, Obama repeated how important spending was by using the example of Greece, which met the requirement.[118]

He said:

> I want to take this opportunity to commend Greece for being one of the five NATO allies that spend 2 percent of GDP on defense, a goal that we have consistently set, but not everybody has met. Greece has done this even during difficult

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[115] "Defence Expenditures of NATO Countries (2013-2020)," 2-3.

[116] Simon Shuster, "Donald Trump's Demands on NATO Defense Spending Are Driving a Wedge Into Europe," *Time*, February 20, 2017, https://time.com/4676097/donald-trump-nato-spending-germany-merkel/ (Accessed April 26, 2021).

[117] Christina Wilkie, "Trump is pushing NATO allies to spend more on defense. But so did Obama and Bush," *CNBC*, July 11, 2018, https://www.cnbc.com/2018/07/11/obama-and-bush-also-pressed-nato-allies-to-spend-more-on-defense.html (Accessed March 26, 2022).

[118] Wilkie, "Trump is pushing NATO allies to spend more on defense".

> economic times. If Greece can meet this NATO commitment, all our allies should be able to do so.[119]

The Obama Administration raised this matter relatively collaboratively with the Europeans. In contrast, Trump used a more threatening, angry tone which made Europe question US commitments toward the region and its role in the international system.

Trump suggested that the US wouldn't support those who did not meet the requirement to spend 2 % of the GDP on defense even though the Czech Republic promised to raise the spending to 1,4 % by 2020, and it also promised that it would work intensively to get close to the required 2 %.[120] If the US were to actually stop supporting those who did not comply with the requirement, the security of the Czech Republic would be threatened because the US is the most powerful member of NATO and is considered the guarantor of European security. The collective defense is based on cooperation between the member states, which means good relations must be maintained.[121] President Trump's approach undermined the functioning of the organization and the fact that he did not reaffirm Article 5 triggered reactions of European politicians. In 2019, French President Emmanuel Macron maintained NATO was experiencing a "brain death" as many thought the organization was obsolete. He thought the US abandoned its traditional role and Europe could not count on them as an ally.[122] Since Germany did not meet the requirement, the US announced in 2020 that they would be withdrawing troops from Germany. The troops constituted 25 % of the US forces in Germany, and they were the largest in Europe. Trump justified his decision by saying: "We don't want to be the suckers anymore," and "We're reducing the force because they're not paying their bills,

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[119] "Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras of Greece in Joint Press Conference" November 15, 2016, Official Website of the White House President Barack Obama. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/11/15/remarks-president-obama-and-prime-minister-alexis-tsipras-greece-joint (Accessed March 26, 2022).

[120] "Koncepce zahraniční politiky České republiky," 4.

[121] "Koncepce zahraniční politiky České republiky," 4.

[122] "Emmanuel Macron warns Europe: NATO is becoming brain-dead," *The Economist*, November 7, 2019, https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/11/07/emmanuel-macron-warns-europe-nato-is-becoming-brain-dead (Accessed March 26, 2022).

it's very simple."[123] Nevertheless, it must be noted that the number of American forces in Europe has been decreasing since the Cold War ended. This trend has occurred regardless of who has been the US President. The US has been urging Europe to become more self-sufficient regarding security. Moreover, the official documents suggest that the US interest has shifted from Europe to different parts of the world, such as Asia. Additionally, Trump preferred the improving bilateral relations over multilateral.[124]

2.3 Transatlantic Trade

Since the Trump Administration criticized multilateralism, there were changes in the approach to trade relations. It abandoned the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations. The US did not support PESCO, which was considered a protectionist tool for the European defense industry, and INSTEX, which was created in light of the adopted sanctions by the US against Iran.[125] The basic premises of America First denied a multilateral approach to trade and emphasized economic nationalism, which does not prioritize free trade and limits imports by imposing tariffs.[126] Hence, the changes did not seem to present new opportunities to improve transatlantic relations. Moreover, they presented a challenge of US-Czech ties because multilateralism (membership in multilateral organizations) and trade liberalization are priorities of Czech foreign policy to ensure prosperity and sustainable development.[127] An alternative to TTIP was needed as the bilateral relations were not enough for the Czech Republic, it needed multilateral organizations to secure economic prosperity, which is one of the national goals.[128]

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[123] "US to withdraw 12,000 troops from Germany in 'strategic' move" *BBC*, July 29, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-53589245 (Accessed March 26, 2022).

[124] Lanoszka and Simón, "A Military Drawdown in Germany?" 199-201.

[125] Hornát, "Nové pojetí multilateralismu?" 45.

[126] Hornát, "Nové pojetí multilateralismu?" 49.

[127] "Koncepce zahraniční politiky České republiky," 6.

[128] Hornát, "Nové pojetí multilateralismu?" 49-50.

President Trump criticized the EU's trade practices, and so he engaged in trade disputes with the EU, similar to the Administration's "trade wars" with China. According to an expert on US and EU foreign, economic, and security policies, Klaus Larresan: "Trump brought transatlantic relations near breaking point."[129] The negative approach of the US to transatlantic relations made EU countries question the importance of these relations. Even though the US views of China were in accordance with the EU views of China (except that the US paid more attention to the trade deficit with China than the EU), the two states did not cooperate. Since Trump criticized multilateralism, he preferred to handle the issues unilaterally. A former Acting Assistant Secretary of State, Susan Thompson, claimed that Trump wanted all the credit for resolving the trade issue to go to him.[130]

Trump waged a "trade war" with China, and he was neither pleased with the trade surpluses the EU had with the US, so he started a rhetorical fight with Germany. The disagreement became evident in 2017 when Trump met with the EU officials in Brussels (where he also complained about NATO spending requirements). Trump went on to say: "The Germans are bad, very bad. See the millions of cars they are selling in the US? Terrible. We will stop this."[131] This type of disagreement between the US and Germany had not occurred since the Iraq war of 2003. The chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the German Parliament, Norbert Roettgen, allegedly said that the US was incapable of leading the Western alliance and that the US was not interested in it.[132] In addition to the deterioration of the US-German trade relations, Donald Trump's top trade

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[129] Klaus Larres, "Trump's trade wars: America, China, Europe, and global disorder," Journal of transatlantic studies 18, no. 1 (February 20, 2020): 103, https://web-s-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/ (Accessed March 26, 2022).

[130] Larres, "Trump's trade wars: America, China, Europe, and global disorder," 103 and 119.

[131] Peter Müller, "'The Germans Are Bad, Very Bad'," *Spiegel International*, May 26, 2017, https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/trump-in-brussels-the-germans-are-bad-very-bad-a-1149330.html (Accessed March 26, 2022).

[132] Larres, "Trump's trade wars: America, China, Europe, and global disorder," 119-120.

advisor Peter Navarro maintained that the dispute with Germany would negatively affect the improvement of transatlantic trade.[133]

In March 2018, the US imposed tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, which the President justified on the grounds of national security. This measure was mainly aimed at China, but it was not the only country affected by it. After May 2018, these tariffs concerned the EU as well. The organization, therefore, reacted by imposing tariffs on US exports of $3.2 billion and signaled to the US that it would take further actions if the situation deteriorated even more. Trump, however, threatened to impose tariffs on EU exports to the automobile industry which would also affect the Czech Republic. "By July 15, 2018, Trump had referred to the EU as well as China and Russia as "foes" of his country".[134]

Expert Klaus Larresan maintained that China took advantage of the conflict and used a "charm offensive" toward the EU. Their aim was to befriend the EU and decrease the US influence it had over the region. But perhaps the change in the US approach to trade forced China and the EU to cooperate more closely. A Beijing-based diplomat said: "Trump [was] pushing China and Europe together."[135] At a China-EU summit that took place on July 16, 2018, in Beijing, the two sides agreed on the support of multilateralism and the rules of the international trading system. The EU and China improved their relations by strengthening cooperation which also may have prompted progress in the transatlantic relations. Shortly after the summit, the EU Commission President Juncker met with President Trump on July 26, 2018, and they decided to "pause" the mutual

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[133] Nick Fletcher, "Trump's trade adviser says Germany uses euro to 'exploit' US and EU," *The Guardian*, January 31, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/business/2017/jan/31/trump-trade-adviser-germany-euro-us-eu-peter-navarro (Accessed March 31, 2022).

[134] Larres, "Trump's trade wars: America, China, Europe, and global disorder," 122.

[135] Robin Emmott, and Ben Blanchard, "Wary of Trump, China launches EU charm offensive: diplomats," *Reuters*, March 28, 2017. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-china-idUSKBN16Z22S (Accessed March 31, 2022).

conflict and work on the improvement of transatlantic relations. Both sides realized how important the connection was. Trump said that he would not impose tariffs on cars imported from the EU and that he would think about lifting the tariffs on steel and aluminum that were in effect (he did not do that in the end).[136]

Considering the improvement of the relations, the EU expressed its interest in buying soybeans and liquefied natural gas from the US, and the two sides discussed the possible US involvement in the Nordstream 2 pipeline. They agreed to reform WTO and further their trade cooperation. The EU realized that at that moment it was best to approach the relations bilaterally, but no mutual agreements were entered in the upcoming years and the TTIP remained on halt.[137]

As for the relations with China, the EU decided to abandon the overly friendly attitude as they came to realize that the US was a significant ally no matter who was the president. "The EU, it seems, stubbornly [insisted] on "sitting out" the Trump administration and waiting for the return of better transatlantic days though this [may have taken] a while."[138]

On the contrary, as soon as 2017 there was an increase in the cooperation between the Czech Republic and the US states, e.g. Florida and Nevada. This brought new opportunities for the Czech and US companies in the bilateral trade. This kind of improvement is crucial for the prosperity of the country.[139] Additionally, the Czech Republic had a slight trade surplus with the US between 2011 and 2016. In 2017, there was an increase in US imports that did not match the slow increase of Czech exports

[136] Larres, "Trump's trade wars: America, China, Europe, and global disorder," 122-123.
[137] Larres, "Trump's trade wars: America, China, Europe, and global disorder," 123-124.
[138] Larres, "Trump's trade wars: America, China, Europe, and global disorder," 125.

[139] Jan Hornát, "The United States in the Czech Foreign Policy: Navigating the Transition Year," in Alica Kizeková (ed.), *Czech Foreign Policy in 2017: Analysis* (Prague: Institute of International Relations, 2018), 157, https://www.dokumenty-iir.cz/CZP/2017_EN/7.pdf (Accessed March 31, 2022).

creating a trade deficit for the Czech Republic.[140] This trade deficit has been increasing until this day.[141]

3 The Impact of the Trump Administration on Czech Foreign Policy

This chapter examines the changes that occurred in the Czech-US relations during the Trump Administration. As demonstrated earlier in this work, the transformation of the American approach from multilateralism to unilateralism contradicted Czech interests. A multilateral approach to diplomacy, security, and trade is the base of the Czech foreign policy, which is generally accepted by the Czech society and the government.[142] It allows the small state to participate in the decision-making so that it can influence international politics. The chapter evaluates how the Trump Administration impacted transatlantic relations and the strength of NATO and the EU. The isolation of Europe from the US had a negative impact on Czech foreign policy. Nevertheless, the domestic politics and the disunified voice of the Czech government and the president also hurt the performance of the foreign policy. Finally, the chapter compares the attention of Obama and Trump Administrations to CEE countries, by which it seeks to enhance some of the arguments.

3.1 Changes in Czech Foreign Policy

According to an expert on International Relations, Edwards Azar, international crisis is:

> (1) a change in type and/or an increase in intensity of disruptive, that is, hostile verbal or physical, interactions between two or more states, with a heightened probability of military hostilities; that, in turn, (2) destabilizes their relationship and challenges the structure of an international system – global, dominant, or subsystem[143]

[140] Hornát, "The United States in the Czech Foreign Policy: Navigating the Transition Year," 159.

[141] "Spojené státy americké," *BusinessInfo.cz*, July 1, 2021, https://www.businessinfo.cz/navody/spojene-staty-americke-souhrnna-teritorialni-informace/2/ (Accessed March 31, 2022).

[142] Hornát, "Nové pojetí multilateralismu?," 41.

[143] Potter, "Methods of Foreign Policy Analysis."

This is what happened after President Trump assumed office. There was an increase in the verbal interactions between the US and the Czech Republic as Trump used threatening rhetoric when criticizing others. This led to the destabilization of transatlantic relations.

When Trump was elected, European politics awaited a challenge because Trump's rhetoric was ambiguous, and the EU was unnerved about what he might do as his behavior was erratic. Diplomat Cyril Svoboda claimed that President Trump abandoned classical foreign policy and did not traditionally approach international relations because he put America first. "The style has definitely changed."[144] From his perspective, President Trump's critical approach to multilateralism posed a threat to Europe. He maintained that Trump was not a supporter of multilateralism because it was difficult to change or withdraw from multilateral treaties. The criticism that the US was being abused in multilateral organizations was secondary, Svoboda argued that the main problem for President Trump was that the US could not be "the one who sets the rules and is one of many who make the decisions."[145] One of the interviewees, Tomáš Petříček, who served as Minister of Foreign Affairs from October 2018 to April 2021 in the government of Prime Minister Babiš and is a member of ČSSD (Czech Social Democratic Party), was convinced (see Appendix B for the full transcript) that Trump's reluctant approach to multilateralism posed a threat to the Czech Republic, stating, "It is not in the Czech interest to reject multilateralism. Nor is it in the interest of all small and medium-sized countries." He added that the current multilateral system was unlikely to be replaced by a system of global governance any time soon and that the Czech Republic, given its size, preferred an international system defined by rules rather than power and force.[146] Rudolf Jindrák, diplomat and the Director of the Foreign Affairs Department of the Office of the President of the Republic, said in the interview (see Appendix D for the full transcript), that: "Trump's foreign policy was characterized above all by the absence of a long-term

[144] Svoboda, "Interview with Cyril Svoboda".

[145] Svoboda, "Interview with Cyril Svoboda".

[146] Tomáš Petříček, "Interview with Tomáš Petříček," by author, Prague, April 19, 2022.

concept, unilateralism and confrontation, personnel changes, and surprise moves. It was also fundamentally different in the means used to communicate on foreign policy issues."[147]

According to AMO, the Trump Administration was the biggest challenge to Czech foreign policy since its establishment in 1993.[148] It was important for the Czech Republic to cooperate with the Trump Administration in order to maintain essential bilateral relations. So, it primarily had to plan how to fulfill the NATO spending requirement. The Czech Republic also had to rethink its orientation toward the East (especially China) to improve its relations with the US. In general, Czech politicians had to maintain a more cooperative approach to the US.[149]

A former leader of the TOP 09 party Karel Schwarzenberg who served as a Minister of Foreign Affairs, maintained that the Czech foreign policy focused on economic diplomacy more than anything else in 2017. He said it was because President Miloš Zeman supported economic diplomacy. Schwarzenberg and Alexandr Vondra, a member of the European Parliament who served as a Minister of Foreign Affairs before Schwarzenberg, said that the Czech Republic was not successful in claiming its influence in the EU. There was a lack of dialogue and a lack of will to lead a conversation with our allies. Both Schwarzenberg and Vondra criticized Lubomír Zaorálek, the then Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs. They believed that the Czech Republic had stopped emphasizing human rights, which is one of the priorities of Czech foreign policy. In addition, Vondra argued that the topics the foreign policy focused on were not interesting

[147] Rudolf Jindrák, "Interview with Rudolf Jindrák," by author, Prague, April 25, 2022.

[148] Jan Blinka et al., "Agenda pro českou zahraniční politiku 2017," *The Association for International Affairs* 2017, 8, https://www.amo.cz/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Agenda-pro-ceskou-zahranicni-politiku-2017.pdf (Accessed April 10, 2022).

[149] Blinka et al., "Agenda pro českou zahraniční politiku 2017," 71.

enough to build a national brand, which is one of the priorities as well.[150] The departure from human rights became evident because of the approach toward Syrian refugees and the relations with China that did not respect human rights.[151]

Czech diplomacy was not strong nor visible, mainly because of the government's domestic political situation, disunity, and interests of President Zeman. Moreover, the policymakers lacked education and more profound knowledge. Although the experts tried to contribute to the goals of Czech foreign policy, Parliament thwarted their attempts. As in the case of the ratification of the Paris Climate Agreement, which was postponed five times in the Chamber of Deputies. The Czech Republic was the last EU country to ratify it.[152] According to Jiří Pehe (Czech political scientist and commentator), there has not ever been a discrepancy in the political scene this big since the establishment of the Czech Republic.[153] The Czech Constitution states that it is the duty of the government to execute foreign policy.[154] It also says that the president represents the Czech Republic outside its borders, and he/she pre-arranges and ratifies international treaties. The pre-arrangement can be passed on to the government if the president wishes so.[155] However, the Constitution does not specify the role of the president in foreign policy. It does not define how the two institutions are to coordinate foreign visits, which are the duty of the president, who must represent the Czech Republic abroad. The unclarity may be one of

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[150] "Česká diplomacie byla na vrcholu za Havla, shodli se politici," *Lidovky*, October 4, 2017, https://www.lidovky.cz/domov/ceska-diplomacie-byla-na-vrcholu-za-havla-shodli-se-politici.A171004_190446_ln_domov_ele? (Accessed April 10, 2022).

[151] Blinka et al., "Agenda pro českou zahraniční politiku 2017," 11.

[152] Blinka et al., "Agenda pro českou zahraniční politiku 2017," 12. and "Pařížská dohoda o klimatu už má i souhlas sněmovny. Zbývá podpis prezidenta," *Česká televize*, September 5, 2017, https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/autori-ct24 (Accessed April 10, 2022).

[153] Jiří Pehe, "Česká zahraniční politika – improvizace s přídechem sabotáže našich spojeneckých svazků, v níž si politici vzájemně mydlí schody," *Deník N*, December 5, 2019, https://denikn.cz/247215/ceska-zahranicni-politika-improvizace-s-pridechem-sabotaze-nasich-spojeneckych-svazku-v-niz-si-politici-vzajemne-mydli-schody/?fbclid=IwAR0i4ENz4l58hlCCTKn-uK8YjmTuXY2mUrivl8BOHRtcmRNNXTNDh_ZUV-g (Accessed April 10, 2022).

[154] Czech Const. chapter II – Legislative Power, art. 43-53.

[155] Czech Const. chapter III – Executive Power, the President of the Republic, art. 63.

the reasons why the government has one policy and the president another. There are no control mechanisms that would allow the government to influence the president and vice versa. This makes it hard to coordinate foreign policy. The president can veto bills and use his right to appoint government candidates, making things difficult for the government. On the other hand, the government can block presidential travel abroad. In Pehe's opinion, President Zeman likes to pursue his foreign policy interests regardless of the government's official policy. For example, when he unexpectedly stated during his visit to Israel that he wanted to move the Czech Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, he tried to follow Trump's steps. Same as when he said he wanted to unrecognize Kosovo.[156]

The unfavorable domestic situation and the differentiation of US and European ideologies led to a deterioration of the relations between the two regions. The US increased its military presence in Europe, but the insistence on the 2 % of spending persisted. Therefore, in 2017, PESCO was launched to strengthen European security. Almost every EU country joined this project, and security cooperation developed as they had to become more independent considering the uncertainty around US support. The Czech Republic knew it would not be able to fulfill its plan of the increased budget of 1,4 % of GDP in 2020, and the prospects of future spending were not positive either. Plans for increased defense spending and contracts on military equipment were thus moved to coming years. There was no significant change in the Czech-US relations in 2017.[157]

The following year there was some uncertainty about who would be the new Minister of Foreign Affairs in the second government of Prime Minister Babiš. The government and President Zeman were unable to find a suitable candidate for this post they would agree on, but then Tomáš Petříček was appointed in October 2018. Even though the situation

[156] Pehe, "Česká zahraniční politika – improvizace s přídechem sabotáže našich spojeneckých svazků".

[157] Petr Boháček et al, "Agenda pro českou zahraniční politiku 2018." *The Association for International Affairs* 2018, 49, https://www.amo.cz/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Agenda_2018.pdf (Accessed April 10, 2022).

stabilized, the disunity between the Minister, Prime Minister, and President continued to hurt Czech foreign policy and its influence on the international system. Therefore, domestic politics made it impossible for the Minister to make some notable progress or a breakthrough in foreign policy in 2018.[158] Diplomat Jindrák criticized the lack of a long-term strategy in Czech foreign policy.[159]

The topics for the political debate of 2018 were the Russian aggression and Chinese influence, especially the economic and cyber security. The crisis of transatlantic relations persisted as the Czech Republic could not catch President Trump's attention. More importantly, it was not even close to fulfilling the 2 % of defense spending. That year, Minister Petříček became a target of criticism for not going in the promised direction when he did not let the Czech Republic enter the Global Compact for Migration. According to AMO, this decision was not based on factual arguments but rather on a certain carefulness around the politicized topic of migration. Moreover, in 2018, the Czech Republic failed to push through its policies in the EU and fulfill its commitment to NATO.[160]

Even though the behavior of President Trump in 2018 was no longer as erratic as in the first year of his presidency, his approach toward transatlantic relations remained confrontational, and his unilateral diplomacy still threatened the fundamental ideals of the EU. This was confirmed at the NATO summit in Brussels, where Trump criticized the members for under-investing in defense and Germany for building the Nord Stream pipeline. On the other hand, the increased Russian and Chinese influence in the CEE countries prompted President Trump to give more attention to the region. Prime Minister

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[158] Michaela Endrštová, "Zeman jmenoval na Pražském hradě Petříčka novým ministrem zahraničí," *iDNES.cz*, October 16, 2018, https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/jmenovani-tomas-peticek-ministr-zahranici-milos-zeman.A181015_154127_domaci_nub (Accessed April 10, 2022).

[159] Jindrák, "Interview with Rudolf Jindrák".

[160] Boháček et al., "Agenda pro českou zahraniční politiku 2019," 11-13.

Babiš was invited to the White House, which was a highlight of the bilateral relations. Afterward, the two sides increased their security and defense cooperation. The 5G issue and the Huawei case dominated the political debate in 2018, and the Czech decision to take the side of the US brought the two countries closer together.[161]

In 2019 and 2020, there was no significant improvement in transatlantic relations. President Trump still presented a menace to multilateralism and hurt Europe by threatening to impose tariffs on their products. However, the US remained a great European ally since it still ensured their security and economic prosperity. The negative impact of different opinions among the Czech politicians that influenced Czech foreign policy was still troubling.[162] Defense spending became pressing because of the enduring uncertainty in transatlantic relations and the disunity in the EU and NATO, and the rise in cyberattacks. In 2019, French President Emmanuel Macron criticized NATO and said it was experiencing a "brain death." Nevertheless, the Czech Republic was still far from spending 2 % of its GDP on defense. On the contrary, it increased its presence on the NATO and EU missions. Moreover, there was a positive impact on the cooperation between the US and the Czech Republic in cyber security and the communication of secret services. The Czech Republic was a leader in the 5G dialogue and worked closely with the US to solve the problem of Chinese influence.[163]

Diplomat Svoboda maintained that nothing had changed under the Trump Administration and that bilateral relations remained friendly. "But overall, Europe has realized that it needs to be more independent. Trump's trade approach to foreign policy and his push for a 2% spending requirement is understandable. Those who regularly shop in the US will

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[161] Boháček et al., "Agenda pro českou zahraniční politiku 2019," 147.

[162] Alžběta Bajerová et al., "Agenda pro českou zahraniční politiku 2020," *The Association for International Affairs* 2020, 11-13, https://www.amo.cz/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/agenda2020_CS.pdf (Accessed April 10, 2022).

[163] Bajerová et al., "Agenda pro českou zahraniční politiku 2020," 49-51.

be supported more than those who don't spend that much money, there is logic in that."[164] He argued that the US has positively affected Europe because it has made it more independent. He said that, unlike President Biden, Trump could make decisions and was a strong leader. The diplomat believed that the US had resigned to the role of hegemon in world politics, but it was not the Trump Administration's fault only, in his opinion. There has been a downward trend in US dominance since the end of the Cold War as the world has become multipolar. But Svoboda insisted that the US was still the leader of the democratic world and was convinced that Europe could rely on its help despite President Trump's threatening rhetoric.[165]

Comparing the Obama and Trump administrations former Minister Petříček argued that the most significant change was in the approach to foreign policy toward key allies. The deterioration of the relations between the US and Western European countries (especially Germany) has brought the Trump administration closer to CEE countries, including the Czech Republic. The Czech Republic took advantage of the situation, adapted to the changes, and sought a new agenda, for example, in cyber security. Moreover, it had the opportunity to find new allies in multilateral relations, those who shared the Czech view on issues such as the human rights agenda, climate diplomacy, or support for international justice. He believed that although the Trump Administration had been intensively engaged in the Central European area, it was not always motivated by a desire to improve bilateral relations. "But it has also helped create more space in bilateral relations, for example, through the cyber agenda. The assertive US approach to meeting its NATO commitments also led to the first major acquisition projects at the bilateral level."[166] The politician did not believe that Czech-US relations would significantly deteriorate or improve during Trump's presidency. Cooperation in shared values and security has a long tradition, so he also recalled the importance of the non-traditional emergence of a new

[164] Svoboda, "Interview with Cyril Svoboda".

[165] Svoboda, "Interview with Cyril Svoboda".

[166] Petříček, "Interview with Tomáš Petříček".

agenda and the opportunities that have arisen. He argued that this shift could have a positive long-term impact on Czech foreign policy.[167]

Matin Palouš, one of the first signatories of Charter 77, former Czech Ambassador to the USA from 2001 to 2005 and then Ambassador to the UN in New York from 2006 to 2011, argued (see Appendix C for full transcript) that all US presidents seek continuity in foreign policy and are forced to follow their predecessors. If they did not do so, it would be impossible to achieve the given goals. He believed that President Trump's insistence on increasing defense spending in NATO was justified. In his view, the Czech Republic must adapt to changes in the US approach, and the importance of the alliance should always be placed above all else. He maintained that it is essential to judge the President's performance based on his actions and that Trump's threats had fortunately not been turned into action. Hence, they had not significantly affected or damaged bilateral relations. His strategy was to behave erratically because he thought it would trigger desired reactions. "When Trump was in office, things were handled differently, that's true. But I would say that the Czech Republic, given the asymmetry in relations, has to think creatively to maintain those relations,"[168] he said. He was convinced that the US knew it was risking peace if it withdrew from the European region. He further said that President Trump's foreign policy was not an anomaly, there is a history of isolationist tendencies in the US. Finally, he argued that there was no evidence that Czech-US relations had significantly improved or deteriorated.[169]

Roman Joch, a politician and a political commentator who served as an advisor to Prime Minister Petr Nečas in foreign affairs and human rights from 2010 to 2012 and who is currently a lecturer at the CEVRO Institute noted (see Appendix E for the full transcript)

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[167] Petříček, "Interview with Tomáš Petříček".

[168] Palouš, "Interview with Martin Palouš".

[169] Palouš, "Interview with Martin Palouš".

that the Czech Republic has always strived for good relations with the US. It did not matter whether the Democrats or Republicans were in power. These efforts were special as countries like Hungary or Germany did not behave the same way. He said that for the Czech Republic: "The US is an ally regardless of the particular administration."[170] In Joch's point of view, the relationship between the US and the Czech Republic was transactional. That is why the Czechs tried to increase the defense spending and why the government of Prime Minister Babiš negotiated the purchase of the US helicopters. If the Czech Republic bought US military equipment, it would be supported by the Trump Administration. If it did not, it would not be supported by him. He maintained that the most significant impact of the Administration was that the Czech Republic started to take the NATO spending commitments seriously. If it did not, the US could have stopped being an ally, putting the country in a bad situation. "So, Trump was something of a wake-up call or a cold shower,"[171] he said. He did not think that the Trump Administration posed a threat to the Czech Republic. He argued that "Everybody (except Trump) advocates multilateralism, but nobody really believes in it."[172] Besides, President Trump's approach to the issue of defense spending contributed to the achievement of Czech priorities. Moreover, the US maintained good relations with Israel, which was in accordance with Czech foreign policy. The expert did not think the relations improved or worsened, he claimed they remained stable.[173]

Diplomat Jindrák maintained that the change of approach influenced Czech foreign policy more than the Obama Administration. It forced the Czech Republic to adjust and create a new agenda which had a positive impact. According to him, "Trump's diplomacy has not been a failure at all."[174] He mentioned the example of the Trump Administration's

[170] Roman Joch, "Interview with Roman Joch," by author, Prague, April 7, 2022.

[171] Joch, "Interview with Roman Joch".

[172] Joch, "Interview with Roman Joch".

[173] Joch, "Interview with Roman Joch".

[174] Jindrák, "Interview with Rudolf Jindrák".

decision to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, which strengthened the Czech diplomatic presence in the region. This decision was also in accordance with President Zeman's belief that cooperation with Israel is in the Czech interest. Additionally, he mentioned the case of the NATO spending requirements, which had a positive impact on the Czech Republic as it made the Czechs focus on their security more, which is one of the main priorities. He also reminded the fact that President Trump was not the only US president who urged NATO member countries to meet the spending requirements. Moreover, President Zeman agreed with President Trump on the issue of terrorism, which contributed to Czech priorities as well. On the other hand, he acknowledged that some of Trump's decisions harmed the interests of the Czech Republic. For instance, the deterioration of relations with China. He said: "The restriction of free foreign trade, which has also affected the EU/us, and the loosening of its rules are clearly against the interests of the Czech Republic. Even the President of the Republic sees this as a very problematic policy."[175] This suggests that the impact of the Trump Administration cannot be evaluated generally but instead based on specific policy decisions individually. Diplomat Jindrák did not think that Trump's reluctant approach was necessarily wrong. He said: "In short, I think that sometimes it is good to make a dent in multilateralism. Which Trump has undoubtedly succeeded in doing."[176] Thus, the withdrawal from many multilateral organizations challenged the status quo, which was a good thing from his point of view. Moreover, he maintained that the Czech-US relations were positively impacted mainly by the US ambassador in Prague, Stephen King. He emphasized economic cooperation and also military and security issues. His relationship with President Zeman was exceptional, which improved the bilateral relations, especially in terms of economic cooperation tied to the security cooperation. Furthermore, the contact between Czech and US officials increased during the era, and "High-level contacts are at the heart of diplomacy."[177] Overall, he spoke from his personal experience

[175] Jindrák, "Interview with Rudolf Jindrák".

[176] Jindrák, "Interview with Rudolf Jindrák".

[177] Jindrák, "Interview with Rudolf Jindrák".

when he maintained that the atmosphere at the meetings has always been friendly. In conclusion, diplomat Jindrák, unlike all the other interviewees who believed the relations did not change, maintained that Czech-US relations have improved during the Trump Administration.[178]

3.2 Comparison with the Obama Administration

To evaluate how much attention the Trump Administration paid to the CEE countries, one must compare it with the previous administration. Obama attended a US-EU summit held by the Czech Republic in Prague in 2009. In 2010, President Obama revisited Prague. This time to sign a New START treaty.[179] Trump, on the other hand, did not visit the Czech Republic during his presidency. But one must acknowledge the fact that he had only four years as a President, whereas Obama had eight, and there is not enough time for any extensive traveling during presidency.[180]

US presidential travels abroad have a positive impact on international relations. They are an example of face-to-face diplomacy and power to negotiate, which is essential for a state's foreign policy and goals.[181] Furthermore, it is a norm for the US presidents to be where their allies need them, so they can be supportive. The presence of US politicians in other countries is affected by world affairs, the international commitments the US has, and domestic matters.[182] It is therefore hard to determine which President was more attentive to the region as each Administration ruled under different circumstances. The

[178] Jindrák, "Interview with Rudolf Jindrák".

[179] "Politické vztahy," Official Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic.

[180] "Donald J. Trump," Official Website of the Office of the Historian, US Department of State, https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/president/trump-donald-j (Accessed March 10, 2022).

[181] Ian Ostrander, and Toby J Rider, "Presidents Abroad: The Politics of Personal Diplomacy," *Political research quarterly* 72, no. 4 (December 1, 2019): 835, https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/ (Accessed April 10, 2022).

[182] Ostrander, and Rider, "Presidents Abroad: The Politics of Personal Diplomacy," 838-839.

attention of Obama Administration to the CEE countries was influenced by the Ukrainian crisis, and the Trump Administration by the Chinese and Russian influence.

Furthermore, diplomat Cyril Svoboda claimed that high official visits are conditional on personal contacts of the two sides. Of the Bush Administration, he said: "The US ambassador to the Czech Republic was Craig Stapleton at that time. He married the cousin of G. W. Bush and led his campaign. There would not have been so many visits if it was not for him. We traveled so much because Stapleton was so close with Bush."[183] According to him, the Obama Administration paid more attention to the CEE countries. But he maintained that it was the credit of Madeleine Albright (an American diplomat born in the Czech Republic) who had an enormous impact, for she had an incline toward the Czech Republic and was very close to Obama.[184]

In his book *A Promised Land*, Obama portrayed Václav Havel as his role model, whom he admired for the 1989 events. The ideals he fought for were the ones Obama identified with. President Obama had personal interests in visiting Prague, he closely watched the Velvet Revolution and the Czech fight for democratic freedom as a student, and he admired Havel.[185] But President Trump must have had a personal interest to visit the Czech Republic too. His first wife, Ivana Trump, is Czech, and three of his children are Czech-American. Moreover, Hillary Clinton, Obama's US Secretary of State, visited Prague on four occasions, twice she accompanied Obama, whereas Trump's Secretary Mike Pompeo visited the Czech Republic once.[186]

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[183] "George W. Bush," Official Website of the Office of the Historian, US Department of State, https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/president/bush-george-w (Accessed April 10, 2022).

[184] Svoboda, "Interview with Cyril Svoboda".

[185] "Obama vzpomíná na Havla jako svůj vzor, Klause srovnává s Erdoganem," *iDNES.cz*, November 17, 2020, https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/zahranicni/barack-obama-vaclav-havel-usa-prezident-sametova-revoluce.A201117_163650_zahranicni_indr (Accessed April 20, 2022).

[186] "Czech Republic," Official Website of the Office of the Historian https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/secretary/czech-republic (Accessed April 20, 2022).

In contrast, diplomat Martin Palouš said that President Obama did not have an interest in visiting the Czech Republic and that he held a distant approach to CEE countries and focused on Hawaii and Asia. President Trump, on the other hand, has family relatives in Moravia, and he visited the Czech Republic many times in his life. But that does not mean that his personal attachment to the region had an influence on his presidential outlook on the world. Also, according to Palouš, Obama did not travel to Prague because he wanted to improve bilateral relations with the Czech Republic or because he had personal aspirations to visit it, he traveled to Prague because of broader strategic reasons. Additionally, there was a strong influence of Hilary Clinton that was friends with Madeleine Albright.[187]

In conclusion, opinions differ on who has paid more attention to the CCE countries. If the attention is measured quantitatively by the number of visits to the region, one could say that the Obama Administration paid more attention to the region. However, one should not base the conclusions on quantitative data alone. One needs to further examine the circumstances under which the Administrations have governed. And thus, some experts maintain that President Trump has been more attentive because he has family relatives in the Czech Republic and has allowed the Czechs to lead the negotiations on 5G.

[187] Palouš, "Interview with Martin Palouš".

Conclusion

The main goal of this thesis was to determine the impact of the Trump Administration on Czech foreign policy. The aim was to analyze the changes that have taken place and explain what they have meant for relations and how they have affected Czech foreign policy. To achieve these objectives, the thesis used the method of foreign policy analysis.

The thesis was divided into three chapters. In the first part, the priorities and interests of Czech foreign policy were presented. This chapter also introduced the theoretical concepts related to states' foreign policy and specifically the Czech Republic. The theory of small states and asymmetric relations and the international relations theories. These concepts have helped to understand how Czech foreign policy was formed and what its interests and goals are. The second part of the thesis focused on the importance of Czech-US relations. Also, it included case studies of changes in Czech foreign policy caused by the actions of the Trump Administration. This involved the issues of NATO membership. Specifically, the strengthening of the US presence in Central and Eastern Europe, the problem of American complaints about insufficient defense spending, and transatlantic trade. In this part, theoretical concepts were connected to actual Czech opposition or cooperation events. The third chapter then explored what these changes meant for the Czech Republic and whether they made relations worse or better. This section also included five interviews with foreign policy experts who commented on the topic and brought in their perspectives, influenced by the experts' personal experiences.

President Trump's approach to Europe has challenged traditional norms, and there has been a visible change in foreign policy style. He promised the American people that he would correct the mistakes of his predecessors, thus, he rejected multilateralism and withdrew from a number of multilateral organizations. He argued that they were hurting US interests. He was very outspoken, and his style was often aggressive and threatening, although, in transatlantic relations, his threats did not translate into action, they certainly did not have a positive impact. The action taken by President Trump that has significantly damaged transatlantic relations, including Czech-US relations, was the imposing of tariffs

on steel and aluminum. Furthermore, the withdrawal from the TPP and TTIP, which was against Czech interests. The prosperity of transatlantic relations is crucial for the Czechs.

In general, these actions have damaged free trade, which is one of the main priorities of Czech foreign policy. Although it should be noted that economic cooperation at the bilateral level has improved as trade between Czech and American companies has increased. Ambassador King has also contributed to the improvement. Trump's emphasis on transactional diplomacy influenced the change in the Czech approach. His theory that a strong US economy would help US allies has thus partially come true.

Trump has been quite critical of the EU, which has significantly impacted Czech foreign policy. His vision of America First was at odds with Czech interests, as multilateralism and transatlantic cooperation are the two main pillars of Czech foreign policy. The EU, of which the Czech Republic is a part, believes that multilateralism, international cooperation, and diplomacy are the basis of prosperity.

On the other hand, President Trump has called on European countries to comply with their promise to contribute two percent of GDP to NATO's common defense. He has threatened to refuse to confirm Article 5 of NATO in those countries that did not comply with the pledge. The Czech Republic considers the US to be the guarantor of security in Europe, so the Trump Administration's threats were a menace to Czech security. In reality, however, nothing happened, and one can say that the Czech Republic was forced to focus more on defense spending, which was very important for two main reasons - it made the country less dependent on the help of others and increased defense spending strengthens national security, which is essential for the Czech Republic.

President Trump's actions have triggered a shift of American attention from Western European countries to Central and Eastern European countries. Some of them, such as Hungary, had a similar worldview to the American President's. The Trump Administration has increased its influence in the region mainly because of the growing

influence of Russia and China. This attention has culminated in the opportunity for the Czech Republic to become a leader in 5G negotiations.

Bilateral relations between the Czech Republic and the US have improved slightly, mainly due to increased economic cooperation and Czech leadership in the 5G talks. However, multilateral relations, characterized by the Czech membership in the EU and NATO, which are crucial for the Czech Republic, have not improved but instead deteriorated. This happened due to the rejection of multilateralism by the US, which has damaged transatlantic trade and security cooperation.

The relationship between the US and the Czech Republic is undoubtedly asymmetrical. The US is a great power, while the Czech Republic is a small power with a lack of influence and resources needed for influence campaigns. The asymmetry was found in all the cases analyzed in this thesis. The Czech Republic has to adapt to any change in the US approach and has therefore cooperated with the Trump Administration on specific issues such as agreeing to increase the defense budget, taking a leading position in the 5G negotiations, or refusing to sign the Global Compact on Migration.

However, on the issue of rejecting multilateralism and free trade, the country has maintained its position because these two concepts are important for the three main global interests of Czech foreign policy (security, prosperity, and sustainable development). Moreover, adapting to change has had a positive impact on foreign policy in terms of creating a new agenda, including the issue of cyber security.

All interviewees agreed that the style of US foreign policy has changed after Trump's accession, but the US is a great ally of the country regardless of who is the US president. All of the experts claimed that the Administration had positively impacted the Czech Republic by making it more independent in terms of security. According to them, the rejection of multilateralism and free trade hurt the Czech Republic, but it did not seriously damage relations. The Trump Administration has brought new areas of cooperation that

could help improve the relations in the future. They argued that the relations have not significantly deteriorated or improved but have remained stable. The only expert who claimed that US relations with the Czech Republic had improved under Trump was the Director of the Foreign Affairs Division of the Office of the President. He, however, criticized the absence of a longer-term foreign policy strategy.

No existing literature explicitly addresses the impact of the Trump Administration on Czech foreign policy positions, and therefore, this paper brings important new insights to the academic sphere. At the same time, it also opens up space for future research that could help Czech foreign policy to shape its new strategy.

Summary

President Trump was very outspoken, and his style was often aggressive and threatening. Although his threats did not translate into action in transatlantic relations, they certainly did not have a positive impact. The tariffs imposed on steel and aluminum and the withdrawal from the TPP and TTIP were in contradiction with Czech interests. They posed a threat to the prosperity of the transatlantic relationship, which is crucial to the Czechs. However, economic cooperation at the bilateral level improved as trade between Czech and US companies increased.

In addition, President Trump called on European countries to keep their promise to contribute two percent of GDP to NATO's common defense. The Czech Republic has thus been forced to focus more on defense spending, which has had a positive effect, as national security is crucial for the country. The Trump Administration also increased its influence in Central and Eastern Europe because of the growing influence of Russia and China. This attention has culminated in an opportunity for the Czech Republic to become a leader in 5G negotiations.

Bilateral relations between the Czech Republic and the US have improved slightly, mainly due to the increased economic cooperation and the Czech Republic's leadership

in the 5G negotiations. However, multilateral relations, characterized by the Czech Republic's membership of the EU and NATO, which are essential for the Czech Republic, have not improved but instead deteriorated. This was a direct result of the US rejecting multilateralism, which has damaged transatlantic trade and security cooperation. Relations between the US and the Czech Republic are undoubtedly asymmetrical. The US is a great power, while the Czech Republic is a small power with a lack of influence and the resources needed for influence campaigns. The Czech Republic has to adapt to any change in the US approach, which has also had a positive impact on foreign policy in terms of creating a new agenda, including the issue of cyber security. In light of the thesis findings, the relations have not significantly deteriorated or improved but have remained stable.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Interview with Cyril Svoboda

RB: From 2002 to 2006 you were the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, one of the Prime Ministers then was Vladimír Špidla, could you tell me more about his visit to the US?

CS: I was with him on that trip, and I visited the White House three times.

RB: What is the significance of these high-level meetings for bilateral relations? Is it more symbolic?

CS: It is important to remember one fact. The US ambassador to the Czech Republic at that time was Craig Stapleton. He married G. Bush's cousin and was running his campaign. If it weren't for him, there would not have been so many visits. We traveled so much because Stapleton was very close to Bush. The visits are primarily symbolic. US President Bush never discussed bilateral relations, where we met with him twice. He

always talked about global issues and the course of the US and the free world. I think that people who think that there is a basic agenda going on are mistaken, the president has already decided, this is called summit diplomacy, which means that everything is agreed upon, and then there is a summit where it is confirmed.

RB: Does that mean that when Prime Minister Babiš was in the White House and said that he had tried to convince President Trump not to impose tariffs on European cars, he didn't have a chance to change his mind?

CS: I wasn't there, so I don't know what happened. But I don't think it was discussed, maybe it was talked about, but nothing was negotiated. But that's just my guess, I wasn't there.

RB: There seems to be a trend of asymmetry in Czech-American relations, is that true?

CS: And why would not there be? Colin Powell visited the American embassy in Prague just because of my relations with him. It was the first time since the establishment of Czechoslovakia that a high-ranking politician visited the embassy. He was one of the nicest people I have ever met, and he did it for me. We are a country of 10 million people and I honestly think that some American presidents don't even know where the Czech Republic is, we are not Germany, Brazil, or India.

RB: How would you compare the Obama and Trump Administrations in terms of their influence on Czech foreign policy?

CS: Neither of them had any influence. They were diametrically opposed, Obama represented a classical foreign policy, first, an analysis is made, then expert meetings are held, and ministers agree, when everything is set, the president comes in and he decides. Trump tried negotiating with Kim Jong-un and understood that it wasn't going to work. Trump put America first, the international system played little role in his policy. The style definitely changed.

RB: What effect did President Trump's different approach to major policy issues have on achieving the Czech foreign policy goals, did his approach to multilateralism pose a threat to the Czech Republic?

CS: I would not say to the Czech Republic, rather to Europe. But you are right, of course. Trump's policy was not based on multilateral relations, simply because you cannot

change multilateral treaties and you can hardly withdraw from them. Bilateral ones, on the other hand, you can change whenever you want, just by saying that the other party is not fulfilling its obligations. He was not the only one who did not like multilateralism. Even though Trump said that other countries in multilateral organizations were taking advantage of the US and it was harming their interests, the main criticism of multilateralism was still that the US can't be the one who makes the rules and one of many who make the decisions.

RB: Have Czech-US relations improved or deteriorated during the Trump Administration?

CS: Nothing has changed. Bilateral relations are still friendly, we are allies, but a superpower and a country of 10 million citizens in Central Europe that nobody knows where it is. But overall, Europe has realized that it needs to be more independent. Trump's trade approach to foreign policy and his push for the 2% spending requirement are understandable. Those who will buy regularly from the US will be supported more than those who do not spend so much money, there is logic in that.

RB: And theoretically, all this has had a positive impact on Europe because it has made us less dependent?

CS: Of course.

RB: Trump has maintained good relations with Poland, is that right?

CS: It has always been Poland, which is traditionally anti-German and anti-Russian. That satisfied Trump, the US president did not have good relations with Angela Merkel. Poland benefits from these relations.

RB: Who paid more attention to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, President Obama, or Trump?

CS: I think that the Obama administration paid more attention, there was still a connection through the Clintons with Madeleine Albright. She had a huge influence and was sympathetic to the Czech Republic, and was very close to Obama. Of course, there was an affection for the Czech Republic, but I think that's Albright's credit. Havel had influence, and played a big role in our foreign policy.

RB: Has Trump's behavior damaged transatlantic relations?

CS: He was of course outspoken, he was expressive in saying things, which his voters liked, but he changed his opinions, at first he praised Putin, but then he condemned him when he realized he had made a wrong move, he is typically short-sighted even in his conceptual policy, but compared to Biden he is able to at least make a decision, Even though it may not be right, his actions were strong actions.

RB: Has the Trump Administration resigned to the role of world hegemon that has been traditional for the US?

CS: Yes, it has indeed done that. But it was only during the Cold War that the US played that role. The world was divided in two, which made the US the hegemon of the free world. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the world became multipolar, so they are no longer such a hegemon. However, this does not change the fact that the US is the leader of the democratic world. I am sure that if Europe is as sick as it was during the First or Second World War, the US will help us, just as it did before.

RB: Trump had reservations about Article 5 because of the 2%.

CS: Yes, and although he was arrogant and threatening, I understand him. They contribute 3.5 % and the NATO military is respected precisely because the US is omnipresent, that's why it commands respect. He is right and I think we could rely on them if things got really bad, they would help even if we did not contribute.

Appendix B – Interview with Tomáš Petříček

RB: How would you compare the Obama and Trump Administration and their impact on the Czech Republic and its foreign policy?

TP: It was mainly about the very different foreign policy styles of the presidential administrations concerned, especially the relationship with key allies. In particular, the cooling of the relationship between the US on the one hand and Germany and to a large extent other major Western European countries during the Trump administration has raised some interest in the development of bilateral relations with Central European countries, including the Czech Republic.

The different approach of the two administrations to the European Union and its role as a partner, on the level of purely bilateral relations, has also led to perhaps more visible

differences in the positions of proponents of the dominantly transatlantic orientation of Czech foreign policy and representatives of the Europeanization of Czech foreign and security policy. In some cases, this may have caused a certain dichotomy in foreign policy thinking in the Czech Republic.

A significant shift then was in the parallel reassessment of relations with China, which was not, however, only a matter of the Trump Administration, but also occurred simultaneously in the European Union and at the level of individual member states.

In principle, Czech foreign policy had the opportunity to take advantage of the continuous elements in US foreign policy in many respects, adapt to the significantly different styles of the two administrations, and seek opportunities to create a new agenda, for example in areas such as cyber security. Conversely, in a number of areas, to seek other partners, for example in many areas of multilateral relations, in matters such as the human rights agenda, climate diplomacy, support for international justice, etc.

RB: What impact had President Trump's different approach to major political issues on the achievement of Czech foreign policy goals?

TP: In the case of the Trump Administration, one can speak of a greater focus on the Central European area, which was not necessarily motivated by a positive agenda. However, it has also helped to create more space in bilateral relations, for example through the development of the cyber agenda. The assertive US approach to meeting NATO commitments also led to the first major acquisition projects at the bilateral level.

The Trump administration has also led to a much more sensitive balancing act between two of the country's main long-term priorities - developing pragmatic European cooperation in areas where it adds value on the one hand and strong transatlantic relations on the other.

RB: Did Trump's negative approach to multilateralism endanger Czech interests or did it present any threat?

TP: Yes. It is not in the Czech interest to reject multilateralism. It is not in the interests of all small and medium-sized countries. Although the multilateral system has not, is not, and will not in the near future be able to replace the non-existent system of global governance, there is no better alternative at the moment for the Czech Republic and

similarly sized countries to regulate the international system through rules, not through power and force.

RB: Would you say that the Czech-US relations rather improved or worsened during the Trump Administration? Could you explain why and say what the atmosphere behind the closed doors was like?

TP: They have neither fundamentally worsened nor significantly improved. But during the four-year period of D. Trump's four years of presidency, a new agenda has arisen on which to build in the longer term. After years of building primarily on cooperation in the area of shared values and traditional security cooperation, new issues such as EDTs or hybrid threats are emerging.

Appendix C – Interview with Martin Palouš

RB: What do visits by high-level officials signify in bilateral relations?

MP: I organized the visits of Václav Havel, Miloš Zeman and Václav Klaus to the USA.

RB: And how would you compare the Obama and Trump administrations and their influence on the Czech Republic and its foreign policy?

MP: Both eras are different in their own way. There was continuity in all US administrations from Jimmy Carter to George W. Bush. President Obama was the first one who had a more distant approach to our region. But then he visited Prague, so you can't say that the rudder has completely turned. President Trump represented a discontinuity that was due to his personality. The important thing is to describe both situations, I'm not taking sides. In the end, all US presidents are forced to seek continuity in US foreign policy. Because continuity must exist. If there was not, it would be counterproductive. If I was to evaluate Trump's foreign policy, he raised the issue of NATO spending and said that all members must contribute more to defense so that it is not just an unpaid US service to Europe. I think that argument is valid. And it's also true in the case of the Obama Administration.

RB: So, you could say that all US administrations have had the same influence on the Czech Republic because they represent a great ally, so the relationship doesn't change. And that the Czech-American relationship is asymmetric?

MP: Yes, the fact that the relationship is asymmetric is a bare fact and cannot be changed. The main goal is to deal with the relationship regardless of who is president. The Czech nation does not choose the American president, the American people do. And the Czech Republic must come to terms with that and adapt, the constant of the relationship is unchanging and is more important than any change of approach.

RB: Has the different style of dealing with fundamental political issues thwarted Czech plans to achieve foreign policy goals, specifically Trump's negative approach to multilateralism, has it posed any threat?

MP: I wouldn't say it had no effect. To answer the question of whether it did or did not threaten the Czech Republic. Optimistically, I would say that the threat did not reach a critical level where it posed a real threat. Things were handled differently when Trump was in office, that is true. But I would say that the Czech Republic has to think creatively, given the asymmetry in relations, to maintain those relations.

RB: Has this damaged transatlantic relations in any way?

MP: I don't think these things have gone so far as to change the political scene.

RB: Could we have relied on the US to help if something happened, and we didn't contribute the 2 percent?

MP: I feel like that was Trump's style, it all started with his reality show, saying things in a way that might not lead to actual action. He said things because he wanted to see how others would react. Every American president must have known that if the Americans actually decided to leave Europe, they would put it in a difficult situation. That is what we are seeing now. It is clear that he did not understand and did not want to understand some things. So, he flattered himself with his narcissism and the fact that people had to take him seriously. I doubt the threat of the US pulling out of NATO will come to fruition given the current situation.

RB: Do you think the US has resigned to the role of a hegemon during the Trump Administration?

MP: To answer that question, I encourage those who ask themselves this question to look at the broader historical context. Isolationism is not Trump's invention. Isolationist tendencies existed before. Trump didn't come up with something new, he just updated it.

I don't think he's that exceptional in that sense. He preferred transactional politics to other things. It's a question of how far Trump would go. But let's evaluate him based on things that have happened, not things that could have happened.

RB: If you are evaluating him based on things that have happened, would you say that Czech-US relations have gotten better or worse under Trump?

MP: I can't say. I wouldn't say they've gotten better, but if you're asking if they've gotten worse, I wouldn't be so sure. I think in many ways they have stayed the same, in terms of Czech foreign policy and our region, I don't think they have gotten significantly worse, we don't have evidence.

RB: Some experts say that the Trump Administration has paid more attention to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, do you think so?

MP: I would say that Obama had a relationship with Hawaii and Asia and fate took him there. He hadn't come into contact with Central Europe before he became president. Trump used to visit Moravia, he has relatives there and he ended up marrying a second wife from Slovenia. So, he knew about the region on a personal level, so he could hardly have remained neutral about the region, then the question is what role it played in his geopolitical image. Every president has to consider that. The question of politics is one thing, but a kind of personal closeness with Trump was given. Obama was coming from a different world.

RB: Despite the proximity, Trump did not visit Prague, unlike Obama.

MP: That's right, the closeness probably didn't motivate him to visit Prague. But I don't know what the reason was why he didn't visit. And maybe Trump didn't want to visit because of his ex-wife, I don't know, maybe he's avoiding her, but I wouldn't know that. But Obama was in Prague for broader strategic reasons, not for bilateral relations. And also, Havel was seen as an iconic figure of that great transition. So that iconic reason was there. Also, Hilary Clinton was a friend of Madeleine Albright, and she had a Democratic-leaning relationship, so the connection was based on personal interests. And that personal communication is very important.

Appendix D – Interview with Rudolf Jindrák

RB: How would you compare the Obama and Trump administrations in terms of their impact on the Czech Republic and its foreign policy?

RJ: It should be remembered that Obama is a Democrat, whereas Trump is a Republican. The thematic emphases of the parties, or factions within them, were necessarily reflected in their foreign policies. Compared to Obama, Trump's foreign policy was characterized above all by the absence of a long-term concept, unilateralism and confrontation, personnel changes, and surprise moves. It was also fundamentally different in the means used to communicate on foreign policy issues. All of these differences were, of course, reflected in the influence on Czech foreign policy.

Speaking about the degree of influence, I think that Trump's foreign policy has perhaps paradoxically influenced Czech foreign policy more strongly than Obama's diplomacy, precisely because of the above-mentioned characteristics and differences between the two administrations.

Of course, some specific actions of the Obama Administration have influenced Czech foreign policy in a fundamental way - such as the unilateral decision not to build a US radar base in the Czech Republic - but overall it can be said that Czech diplomacy, as well as the diplomacy of the EU and other countries, has been more strongly influenced in the long term under Trump precisely because of the need to constantly adapt to Trump's foreign policy style and agenda. The EU-US relationship has undoubtedly suffered because of some of Trump's actions. But at the same time, Trump's vigour has also motivated us positively.

However, I would like to emphasize one thing: Trump's diplomacy is often spoken of in negative terms, and, in his case, form is more frequently than ever confused with substance. I think this is a mistake and it is short-sighted. Obama's slick and rhetorically refined style was certainly more sympathetic in terms of form than the way in which Trump presented and promoted his foreign policy objectives. But the task of any analyst and diplomat is primarily to assess specific actions and their impact. Diplomacy, too, is supposed to be primarily about results. And here, in my opinion, Trump's diplomacy has not been a failure at all.

RB: What impact has President Trump's different approach to major political issues had on the achievement of Czech foreign policy goals?

RJ: When answering questions like this, it always depends very much on who is answering. As the Director of the Foreign Affairs Department of the Office of the President of the Republic, I can say that some of President Trump's foreign policy actions have definitely contributed positively to the pursuit of some specific fundamental objectives of Czech foreign policy.

One example is cooperation with Israel. The unilateral and, for many, surprising or controversial decision by D. Trump's decision to move the US embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem resulted, among other things, in strengthening our diplomatic presence in Jerusalem. It has served as an inspiration for a number of other countries, including the Czech Republic, which opened a so-called Czech House in Jerusalem and subsequently opened an office for our embassy. This was and still remains one of the priorities of the President of the Republic and the Czech Republic as such. Deepening cooperation with Israel is crucial for us, the Czech Republic has long been one of Israel's main supporters, including within the EU, and President Trump's different approach, or US pressure, has helped us in this regard.

Another specific case relates to collective security and, more specifically, to increasing defense spending and, in general, strengthening the level of attention to ensuring our own security. Effective and adequate cooperation in NATO is another of the long-term interests of Czech foreign policy. The fight against international terrorism is also a priority issue for President Zeman, which the Trump Administration has approached with great emphasis. Here, too, it can be argued that Trump has assisted our foreign policy objectives.

However, Trump's relationship with China, for example, or the introduction of unprecedented economic restrictions between China and the US (there has even been talked of "trade wars"), is a completely different story. The restriction of free foreign trade, which has also affected the EU/us, and the loosening of its rules are clearly against the interests of the Czech Republic. Even the President of the Republic sees this as a very problematic policy.

From these few examples alone, it can be seen that one cannot speak in general terms about the impact of President Trump's approach to major policy issues on the objectives of the Czech Republic, but it always depends on what specific "major policy issues" are being discussed.

RB: Did President Trump's rejection of multilateralism threaten Czech interests or pose any danger?

RJ: This is also a very complicated and complex question. In short, I think that sometimes it is good to make a dent in multilateralism. Which Trump has undoubtedly succeeded in doing.

For example, Trump has fundamentally pushed NATO member states to take more care of their security, that is, to invest more in their own defense in the first place. The call for increased defense spending predates Trump's ascendancy, of course, and every US administration in recent times has urged allies to do so. Trump, however, has taken this on with an entirely different, self-serving vigour, and as a result, has drastically cleaned up this NATO agenda. He has literally pushed allies, through his personal assertiveness, into credible commitments to increase defense spending relative to GDP, which I see as a definite positive. In this context, the war in Ukraine is only proof of the necessity of this policy. The increase in spending has been accelerated by the current situation, but the path has been set largely thanks to Trump.

Other specific actions by the Trump Administration towards multilateral organizations, such as the withdrawal of the US from the UN Human Rights Council, the termination of the Intermediate and Short-Range Missile (INF) Treaty with Russia, the termination of the trade agreement with Asian countries known as the Transpacific Partnership, etc., are more controversial because they were unilateral and contrary to the international consensus, but in my opinion, they have also brought some clarity to the status quo, which has often lasted for years and decades. Whether the new multilateral practice will be more effective is still mostly a question. Some things have begun to move, however, but at the cost of weakening the international law system.

A very specific area is the Trump Administration's decision to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement and the Republican Administration's overall attitude to climate change. President Biden soon revised Trump's decision, but I am afraid that the tension

between climate commitments on the one hand and the essentially selfish "America First" policy, or, more generally, the matter of the competitiveness of Western economies in relation to climate change measures, are themes that have not just disappeared from the US with Trump's departure.

However, in my opinion, the aforementioned restrictive measures in the area of foreign trade have had a decidedly negative impact on multilateralism. These have also affected the EU - Trump has imposed tariffs on imports of goods from the European Union or threatened sanctions over Russia's Nord Stream 2 pipeline. American actions have led to a weakening of international standards and rules in the area of trade, which is simply wrong, and not just from the Czech Republic's point of view. However, I must also point out here that this is a practice that has certainly not ended with Trump, and we will have to come to terms with the confrontational course and tensions between the US and other major global players, not only in the economic sphere, as well as with the stronger promotion of the US's "splendid isolation" under the Biden administration.

RB: Would you say that Czech-US relations have gotten better or worse under Trump, could you explain why? What was the atmosphere behind closed doors?

RJ: I don't want to exaggerate the role of the individual, but I would still dare to say that the good quality of Czech-US relations during the Trump administration has been positively influenced in particular by the person of the US ambassador in Prague, Stephen King. He came to the Czech Republic as a "political appointee" of Donald Trump, to whom he had relatively good direct access. At the same time, he himself had an interesting personal and family history, which was reflected in his ambassadorial work in the Czech Republic - King was an experienced and successful businessman who made economic cooperation a priority of his work. In addition, his son is a professional soldier, which gave Stephen a special understanding of military and security issues. These have also become a pillar of Czech-US cooperation for him.

In addition, King's pragmatic approach and life experience have also made him personally get along with President Zeman, which is also very important in diplomacy. They met regularly, which is not at all common - the President of the Republic typically receives ambassadors rather rarely. Even this positive personal contact, which was very different from King's predecessors, helped improve Czech-US relations.

Thus, during the Trump era, bilateral relations have primarily been about economic and trade cooperation. Several interesting economic diplomacy projects were implemented, including the Czech-US Investment Forum at Prague Castle. Czech companies have also become more active in the USA, and some of them are very successful. More intensive economic cooperation has also been reflected in the security sector, for example, when the Czech Republic purchased helicopters of US origin, or in the academic sphere, for instance, in the form of a joint project between the US company General Electric (GE) and the Czech Technical University.

As far as the security agenda is concerned, the US highly appreciated the Czech involvement in Afghanistan and other foreign military operations, as well as the fact that the Czech Republic serves as a so-called "protective power" in Syria (i.e. it represents the US interests, including the consular agenda). Thanks to these activities, the Czech Republic is perceived as a good and responsible ally in the US, and security cooperation is the basis on which our relations are built, alongside the economy.

Czech-US contacts at the highest level have also intensified during the Trump era. Prime Minister Babiš has been received at the White House, the Speaker of the House of Representatives has been in the Czech Republic, and mutual visits have been made by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defense, Industry and Energy and other senior constitutional officials. High-level contacts are at the heart of diplomacy.

All in all, I believe that Czech-US relations have improved during the Trump Administration. My only criticism is that I believe that the Czech-US agenda lacks a longer-term strategic concept that goes beyond pragmatic day-to-day politics, so to speak. This coherent concept has certainly not come from Trump either. But this is not necessarily just a problem of the Trump Administration, it is also a problem of our own.

The atmosphere of the specific meetings, even the private ones, was also positive: I have already mentioned the warm relationship between the President and the US Ambassador, but I have personally been present at other high-level meetings (with Ministers Pompeo and Perry, among others), or have mediated them, and I can say that the mood and atmosphere were always positive, substantive and friendly.

Appendix E – Interview with Roman Joch

RJ: First, I would like to start by saying that the Czech Republic has always wanted to have good relations with every American government, Democratic and Republican. So far, we have been successful, but in this, we are very different from Hungary or Germany: the Orbán government had terrible relations with the Obama government and was delighted by Trump. With Angela Merkel, it was precisely the opposite: good relations with the Obama government but terrible relations with the Trump government. We (the Czech Republic) have avoided these excesses, and I think that is right. The US is an ally regardless of the particular administration.

RB: How would you compare the Obama and Trump administrations in terms of their impact on the Czech Republic and its foreign policy?

RJ: The Czech Republic - and all of Central and Eastern Europe - enjoyed above-average American support after November 1989. There was the Republican Administration of G. H. W. Bush (1989-93), the Democratic Administration of Bill Clinton (1993-2001), and the Republican administration of G. W. Bush (2001-2009). We had more influence than we deserved. Then Obama (2009) came along and didn't consider us all that important, he considered the "Reset with Russia" much more important. Czech diplomacy considered him (Obama) naive. This was proven by the Russian attack on Ukraine in 2014 (Donetsk, Luhansk, Crimea). So Czech foreign policy considered Obama naive, although he was still an ally with whom it is important to have good relations.

Trump was a "Realpolitiker" who didn't care about the ideals of freedom and democracy. That's why the Czechs tried to increase the defense budget (with aspirations of 2 % GDP) and opted to buy US helicopters. This was negotiated by the Babiš government (2018-2022). It was a transactional-type relationship: if we buy US weapons, and spend enough on defense, Trump will "like" us, if not, he won't.

RB: What impact has President Trump's different approach to major policy issues had on the achievement of Czech foreign policy goals?

RJ: We took - we started to take - seriously our commitment to give 2 % of GDP to defense. Otherwise, America under Trump could have stopped being our ally, and we

would have been in big trouble. So, Trump was something of a wake-up call or a cold shower.

RB: Did President Trump's rejection of multilateralism threaten Czech interests or pose any danger?

RJ: For us, for the Czech Republic, no. Everybody (except Trump) advocates multilateralism, but nobody really believes in it. What was important for us was that Trump pushed all European NATO countries to increase defense spending to 2 % of GDP, that he imposed sanctions on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, that he supplied Ukraine with Javelin anti-tank missiles, and that under him sanctions on Russia were tightened. Trump was also very pro-Israel, and so is Czech foreign policy.

RB: Would you say that Czech-US relations have gotten better or worse under Trump, could you explain why? What was the atmosphere behind closed doors?

RJ: I don't think they have gotten better or worse, they have remained stable. Behind closed doors? Fear of Trump, what is he going to do? Will he (the US) pull out of NATO? That would be a disaster for us (the Czech Republic). So, deal with him transactionally, strengthen our defenses and buy American weapons.

ZÁVĚREČNÉ TEZE MAGISTERSKÉ PRÁCE NMTS

Závěrečné teze student odevzdává ke konci Diplomního semináře III jako součást magisterské práce a tyto teze jsou spolu s odevzdáním magisterské práce do SIS předpokladem udělení zápočtu za tento seminář.

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Specializace (uveďte zkratkou)*:

SAS

Semestr a školní rok zahájení práce:

letní 2021

Semestr a školní rok ukončení práce:

letní 2022

Vedoucí diplomového semináře:

Lucie Kýrová, M.A., Ph.D.

Vedoucí práce:
PhDr. Jan Hornát, Ph.D.

Název práce:

The Trump Administration and its Impact on Czech Foreign Policy

Charakteristika tématu práce (max 10 řádek):

In 2017, President Trump took office. In his campaign, he criticized multilateralism and emphasized what he considered to be an unfavorable position of the US in transatlantic relations. As president, he withdrew from a number of multilateral organizations and imposed tariffs on European imports to the US. Among other things, he used an aggressive style when

calling on NATO members to honor their commitment to contribute two percent of GDP to the common defense. The transition from the Obama to the Trump administration marked a significant change. President Trump's approach to Europe posed a challenge and the transatlantic relationship seemed to be on the brink of crisis. I, therefore, decided to dig deeper and find out what impact this administration had on Czech foreign policy.

Vývoj tématu od zadání projektu do odevzdání práce (max. 10 řádek):

After submitting my thesis project, I decided to use the method of foreign policy analysis and focus on the changes that have occurred under the Trump Administration. I decided to analyze them and explain their significance and impact on Czech foreign policy. Above all, I narrowed and conceptualized the topic.

Struktura práce (hlavní kapitoly obsahu):

Introduction

1. The Czech Republic in Foreign Affairs

2. Czech Foreign Policy in the Age of Trump

3. The Impact of the Trump Administration on Czech Foreign Policy

Conclusion

Hlavní výsledky práce (max. 10 řádek):

President Trump's foreign policy style was very different from the previous administration. His decision to withdraw from a number of multilateral organizations and to impose tariffs on European imports to the US contradicted the main goals of Czech foreign policy. The relations between the two countries are asymmetric, and the Czech Republic must therefore adapt to changes in US foreign policy. The Czech Republic will always strive for the best possible relations with the US, as it is the guarantor of its security. Moreover, the Trump Administration strengthen US presence in Central and Eastern Europe. This attention resulted in the Czech Republic taking a leading role in the 5G talks. At the same time, space has opened up for the creation of a new Czech foreign policy agenda. Relations between the US and the Czech Republic have neither significantly deteriorated nor improved during this period.

Prameny a literatura (výběr nejpodstatnějších):

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Etika výzkumu:**

I strived for honesty and objectivity when dealing with sensitive data and conducting interviews. I respected the intellectual property of others.		
Jazyk práce: **English**		
Podpis studenta a datum		
Schváleno	**Datum**	**Podpis**
Vedoucí práce		
Vedoucí diplomového semináře		
Vedoucí specializace		
Garant programu		

* BAS – Balkánská a středoevropská studia; ES – Evropská studia; NRS – Německá a rakouská studia; RES – Ruská a eurasijská studia; SAS – Severoamerická studia; ZES – Západoevropská studia.

** Pokud je to relevantní, tj. vyžaduje to charakter výzkumu (nebo jeho zadavatel), data, s nimiž pracujete, nebo osobní bezpečnost vaše či dalších účastníků výzkumu, vysvětlete, jak zajistíte dodržení, resp. splnění těchto etických aspektů výzkumu: 1) informovaný souhlas s účastí na výzkumu, 2) dobrovolná účast na výzkumu, 3) důvěrnost a anonymita zdrojů, 4) bezpečný výzkum (nikomu nevznikne újma).