

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 talk 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.