Reviewer's Report

The Orientation of Czech Foreign Policy: A durable Atlanticist?

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The thesis deals with a relevant issue being discussed both within and outside of the Czech foreign political circles. Until recently both Atlanticism and Europeanism were often understood as rather steady positions represented very much, though not absolutely, by the crucial political parties. However, the author rightly identifies Atlanticism as a dynamic position co-influenced by the processes taking its course in Europe and transatlantic area. It should be stated already here that this notion provides for a promising point of departure for the research.

The thesis builds on a relevant theoretical framework. The author combines the inspiration coming from the FPA literature and IR theories. This may often be a tricky issue potentially leading to elementary misjudgments (f.e. atlanticism as the FP manifestation of realism). However, the author connects both realms in a very analytically bearing way showing foreign political options for a small state in the field of security policy. Additionally, the idea to anchor the research in the concept of security culture is again highly relevant (not to mention that this concept has been developed by some former realists).

The theoretical discussion is of a high quality. The author has gone through many relevant sources. I would especially appreciate his review of the FP small state foreign policy literature that tends to be neglected in the Czech academia.
The empirical part first traces the origins (still being often re-produced as a legitimization basis) of the Czech Atlanticism and follows with the definition of the key terms and the analysis of the positions of the key political parties. The author rightly shows various tendencies in both major parties leading to critical re-evaluations of their general positions.

All three case studies interestingly illustrate both the potential of the Altanticist/Europeanist concepts as well as their limitation when it comes to real political decision-making. The selection of the case studies is apparently suitable and the discussion lacks any empirical problems.

The future prospects of the Czech security policy are rightly analyzed within the frameworks discussed in the thesis. It remains to be seen how far and deep the “europeanization” of the Czech atlanticist community will go or how viable and sustainable it will be. Additionally the author correctly mentions that another question if the reflection of the US FP would change (the Letter to Obama signalizes a misunderstanding of the situation).

Cillian’s thesis offers a theoretically grounded and empirically relevant analysis of the Czech security and foreign policy. Several strengths have been mentioned above. The only critical note might go to the organisation of the thesis. I would suggest connecting the definitions of the key terms and their operationalization with the theoretical framework and then follow with the empirical application. Nevertheless, the thesis is well readable and the argumentation line clear. The thesis shows a potential for the future (PhD) research that is mentioned in the thesis. As the theoretical framework is very promising the future research should focus on the empirical depth and proper analysis of the particularities rightly observed already in this research.

I evaluate the thesis as excellent.