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Institute of International Studies

Department of Russian and East European Studies

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**A blip on the radar?
Conceptualising the Czech Republic in the United States
before and after the missile defence shift**

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Abstrakt

Tato studie se zakládá na analýze amerických konceptualizace České republiky a způsobu jak byly prezentovány v dokumentech amerických prezidentů mezi lety 1989-2009 a v amerických médiích. V případě rozboru mediální scény se studie soustředí na období mezi 14.-25. září 2009 před ohlášením zrušení třetího pilíře protiraketové obrany. Studie vychází z výsledků předchozího výzkumu v rámci konstruktivistických interpretací teorií mezinárodních vztahů a též se odvolává na tradici kritické geopolitiky. Studie se snaží odpovědět na otázku v jakém světle a za jakým účelem byla Česká republika prezentována v americkém geopolitickém diskurzu. Prostřednictvím kritické analýzy způsobů prezentace České republiky v dokumentech amerických prezidentů v časovém rozmezí dvanácti let a jak se tak dělo v případě jedné konkrétní události zachycené médiem během období dvou týdnů tato studie identifikuje trendy a míru konzistence v americkém geopolitickém smýšlení o České republice (ve smyslu tzn. *mental maps*). Studie též ukazuje v jakém rozsahu americká média přebíraly při informování o obratu prezidenta Obamy v otázce protiraketové obrany již existující konceptualizace České republiky na základě postojů amerických prezidentů artikulovaných v předchozích dvanácti letech. Výsledky obsahové analýzy jednotlivých sad textů odhalují, že Česká republika má určitou symbolickou a strategickou hodnotu, která se odráží v jistém specifickém chápání americké národní identity s kořeny ve studené válce.

Abstract

This study constitutes an analysis of American conceptualizations of the Czech Republic as presented in presidential materials from 1989 to 2009 and American media reporting the cancellation of the Third Site of ballistic missile defence from 14-25 September 2009. It draws on the previous research offered by constructivist interpretations of international relations and the field of critical geopolitics to explore how, and for what purpose, certain American sources of geopolitical reasoning have portrayed the Czech Republic. By comparing and contrasting the ways in which the Czech Republic has been conceptualised in presidential materials over a period of twenty years and in media sources over a two-week period relative to a particular event, the study identifies trends and thematic (in)consistencies in American “mental maps” of the Czech Republic. It shows the extent to which media reporting on President Obama’s ballistic missile defence policy shift recycled pre-existing conceptualizations of the Czech Republic broadcasted on the presidential level over the twenty years prior to the policy shift. The results of content analyses of each set of texts reveal that the Czech Republic holds specific symbolic and strategic value that ultimately points back to a particular understanding of American national identity with origins in the Cold War.

Klíčová slova

Česká republika, Spojené státy, kritická geopolitika, identita, protiraketová obrana

Keywords

Czech Republic, United States, critical geopolitics, identity, missile defence

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1. This statement is to confirm that this paper is a product of my own work and also to confirm that I used the listed sources in producing it.
2. I agree that the paper can be checked for research and studying purposes.

Prague, 18 May 2012

Megan Ouellette

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INTRODUCTION

blip, *noun*

1. “an unexpected, minor, and typically temporary deviation from a general trend”
(*Oxford Dictionaries Online*, 2012)

On 17 September 2009, President of the United States Barack Obama (2009a) announced a “new missile defense architecture in Europe”, constituting a break with the system envisioned by his predecessor, George W. Bush (Hildreth and Ek, 2009, p. 1). The plan devised under the Bush Administration involved an X-band narrow-beam radar installation at the Brdy Military Training Area in the Czech Republic and the stationing of 10 silo-based interceptor missiles in Poland (Hildreth and Ek, 2009, pp. 1, 8; Hynek and Střítecký, 2010a, p. 179). The Bush plan (known also as the Third Site) was formalised in agreements with the two countries in 2008 (Czech Republic) and 2009 (Poland), though neither of the parliaments of the two countries ratified the agreements prior to Obama’s decision to alter the architecture (Hildreth and Ek, 2009, p. 9).

In addition to the reluctance of the Czech Republic and Poland to ratify the agreements that would ensure the stationing of missile defence components on their soil, there was strong public opposition to the plan in both countries (Bratová, 2008, pp. 12-13; Hildreth and Ek, 2009, p. 16). In spite of these factors influencing the domestic debates in the Czech Republic and Poland, Obama’s decision was met with much consternation. Those critical of the decision denounced it as one that placated Russia to the detriment of two smaller, more vulnerable countries (Hildreth and Ek, 2009, p. 1). The most extreme interpretations read like the plot of a historical

fiction novel – a tale of powerful states bypassing weaker ones in their negotiations over complex and advanced weapons technology. To understand how such storylines are possible, even in the face of staunch domestic opposition to the Third Site, it is necessary to dig deeper into the annals of American geopolitical reasoning (O’Tuathail and Agnew, 1992, p. 190).

Exploring specifically the case of the Czech Republic, the broad purpose of this dissertation is to examine how American “mental maps” (Henrikson, 1980, p. 495) of that country have been constructed in the post-Cold War period. To accomplish this, it takes as its narrow focus an analysis of how the Czech Republic has been conceptualised in various contexts by two powerful sources of “geopolitical visions” (Dijkink, 1996, p. 11): the President of the United States and the American media. Specifically, this study addresses the question: *What do American presidential materials from 1989 to 2009 and media reactions to President Obama's 2009 ballistic missile defence policy shift reveal about post-Cold War American conceptualizations of the Czech Republic?*

This research question is important because it moves beyond surface-level analyses of general post-Cold War US-Czech relations or the implications of a major defence-related political decision. Though such topics are important, a mere identification of major milestones in the countries’ bilateral relations fails to account for the underlying thought patterns, logic, and reasoning that has made them possible. The current analysis joins the existing body of scholarly work recognising that policies are not purely the product of rational decision-making or calculated cost-benefit analysis. On the contrary, this study points to the role that identity formation, emotions, and geographical perceptions play in shaping how a state understands both itself and other states it comes into contact with. While political decision-making

and relations between states are popular subjects of analysis by both scholars and pundits, *how* and *why* particular decisions and relationships are formed is too often a missing factor in the equation.

By analysing the ways in which the Czech Republic has been presented to the American public in various forms, this study makes a contribution to understanding how certain perceptions and thematic representations are projected and recycled by those in a position to influence public opinion. The extent to which a country is willing (or not) to alter its perceptions of other countries has a direct impact on statecraft and the policy-formation process. The cancellation of the Third Site of ballistic missile defence was a significant policy shift that was met with great attention, both positive and negative. It therefore constitutes an ideal opportunity to examine the extent to which pre-existing conceptualizations of the Czech Republic, developed over the twenty years prior to the announcement, endured in the face of excitement and fresh analysis.

As an important forum for both political and public debate, the media's portrayal of the Czech Republic in light of Obama's decision speaks volumes as to just how permeable debates involving the Czech Republic really are. Accordingly, this scholarly inquiry has important implications for understanding American (in)flexibility in updating and altering existing conceptualizations in the face of new circumstances. In its entirety, the study will show the extent to which American media coverage of the cancellation of the Third Site constituted "a blip on the radar", a deviation worthy of special attention; or, whether the media simply took up the torch of mainstream geopolitical logic passed on to it by presidential narratives.

This study answers the research question by drawing on the theoretical framework offered by constructivist theories of international relations and the field of

critical geopolitics, outlined in Section 1. In particular, it utilises the concepts of practical and popular geopolitics (O'Tuathail, 1999, p. 111) while examining how the Czech Republic has been described and thematically presented in presidential materials over a twenty-year period, and in news reports covering the cancellation of the Third Site over a two-week period. The literature converges to explain how states continually reproduce their own identity through discursive practices on the state level and how that identity is frequently reinforced by the messages delivered through the media.

Section 2 outlines the methodology used to conduct the research driving the study. Structurally, the dissertation constitutes an intrinsic case study, or a study that seeks to obtain greater understanding of the particular case without making grand generalisations beyond the bounds of the specific circumstances investigated. In terms of methodology, the findings of this study are the result of detailed qualitative content analysis. Through qualitative content analysis, the researcher was able to identify recurrent trends and thematic consistencies in the way the Czech Republic was described and portrayed in the texts.

The textual units of analysis were obtained and selected through the use of two recognised electronic databases. Presidential materials analysed included speeches, addresses, interview transcripts, and other documents available on the website of *The American Presidency Project*. A search using the keyword "Czech" to search from 1989 to 2009 yielded 319 documents within the desired time period, from which 180 were set aside for detailed question-based analysis. Media sources reporting on Obama's 17 September 2009 announcement about ballistic missile defence were obtained and selected through the LexisNexis UK database. By using the keywords "Czech" and "missile", 315 materials from the period of 14-25

September 2009 were examined for applicability and 221 were set aside for further review. Sections 3 and 4, respectively, present the findings of these content analyses and are organised into sub-sections that discuss each identified conceptualization in detail.

Section 5 compares the conceptualizations identified in Sections 3 and 4 to highlight consistencies and differences between them. The results of the research undertaken reveal that the Czech Republic has been conceptualised in a way that endows the country with certain symbolic value that is strategically used to reinforce a particular interpretation of American identity. Whether by presidents over a period of twenty years or by the media over a period of two weeks, the Czech Republic is simultaneously cast in the role of both loyal ally and historical victim by those staging the production of post-Cold War American identity. Neither conceptualization is done naively or without purpose. As either ally or victim, the Czech Republic is a symbol that reminds the United States of its perceived responsibility as a counter-balance to Russian influence in Central Europe.

In effect, these portrayals remind the American public listening to the words of the president or reading a relevant newspaper article that the United States' clear and unambiguous role as a champion of democracy and freedom during the Cold War continues into the present day. In this way, both the successful transition of the Czech Republic into a steadfast ally in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the country's precarious position between its erstwhile aggressors serve an instrumental purpose to deliver a particular geopolitical message. The message is frequently one that invokes the experience of the Czech Republic to justify certain American actions elsewhere in the world, such as in Iraq. Such uses; however, ultimately draw the listener or reader back to the American experience, thus

rendering the Czech Republic a powerful mirror for American identity. In the end, it is ultimately a mirror that reflects back to the viewer what it wants to see, a vision of itself as endowed with certain responsibilities and guided by pure, infallible motives.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Conceptualising Foreign Policy: Constructivism in International Relations

A thorough analysis of the seemingly dichotomous presence of identity and geopolitics in United States conceptualizations of the Czech Republic necessitates a cogent framework for how foreign policy operates under the umbrella of international relations. The analysis that shapes the present study is guided by a constructivist understanding of international relations, with a particular emphasis on the cyclical relationship between the formation of a state's identity and its understanding of its national interest (Wendt, 1994; Weldes, 1996; Mole, 2007a). As outlined by Alexander Wendt (1994, p. 385), "constructivism is a structural theory of the international system" that seeks to explain the behaviour of states within this system. While still acknowledging states as the central units of analysis, constructivists posit that the state system is intersubjective and that state identities and interests are constructed by social factors (ibid.). The principles of constructivism asserted by Wendt run counter to realist interpretations of the international system by negating the postulate that state identities and interests are given or fixed by forces external to them (ibid.).

In practical terms, adopting a constructivist position has a number of implications for how one understands the way states operate within the international system. By claiming, as above, that state identities and interests are shaped by

social factors, one establishes a pivotal link between behaviour at the individual, human level and behaviour at the state level (Mole, 2007a). With the constructivist understanding that knowledge and reality ultimately stem from human practices comes the acknowledgment that identities and interests are also constructed (Mole, 2007a, pp. 4-5).

Acknowledging that identities and interests, initiating at the individual level, are socially constructed phenomena provides the point of departure from which state behaviour may be properly understood. In accordance with the principles of constructivism, the concept of national interest, a central tenet of international political theories, is inextricably linked to identity formation at the state level (Weldes, 1996). As explained succinctly by Jutta Weldes (1996, p. 277), national interest is the result of the shared meanings that shape a state's understanding of its place in the world. This means that how states perceive themselves and other actors in the international system is fundamental to explaining state action (Kowert, 1998, p. 2). Herein lays the key to theorising interaction among states in the international system; namely, that social interaction leads states to continuously "produce and reproduce" their interests and identities (Wendt, 1995, p. 81).

It is essential to acknowledge that while constructivist arguments emphasise the importance of social influences on state action, they do not refute the presence or importance of concepts like power and coercion (Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein, 1996, p. 40). Constructivism departs from traditional realist explanations of interest formation, particularly its heavy emphasis on material capabilities such as economic and military strength (Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein, 1996, p. 38). In spite of their focus on sociological and cultural influences on policy formation and state action, constructivists do not deny the existence or relevance of material

factors (Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein, 1996, p. 40). Their aim is rather to challenge the assumption that states' use of force and power can be sufficiently explained by purely material aspects, absent discussions of identity and culture (ibid.). In so doing, they argue that power and culture cannot be neatly separated, thereby suggesting that power is rooted in culture and identity (ibid.). Put succinctly, "the issue is what accounts for power, not whether power is present" (Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein, 1996, p. 40).

In recent years, scholars in the fields of international relations, critical geopolitics, security studies, and others have used the conceptual interplay between identity and interest to explain policy formation. The following sections will draw on this scholarship to establish a theoretical framework for how states' policies are shaped by their perceptions of their, and others', identities.

1.2 Identity, Interest, and Policy Formation

In accordance with the constructivist ontology outlined above, the crucial role of identity formation in international politics has been increasingly recognised in recent years (Mole, 2007a, p. 1). In so doing, scholars have sought to ask, and answer, particular questions about state action and interest formation (Weldes, 1996, p. 283). Doty (1993, p. 298) and Weldes (1996, pp. 283-284) importantly highlight the necessity of addressing "how-possible" questions concerning the development of foreign policy. Essentially, the focus should not be on understanding why a certain action was done, but rather how it was made possible by factors that encourage certain interpretations of the national interest and not others (Doty, 1993, pp. 298-299; Weldes, 1996, p. 284). It is, therefore, the task of this section to explain how,

through the embedding of identity in foreign and security policy, states come to certain understandings of their own interest.

In constructing their identities, states use “self” and “other” dichotomies that stem from basic human psychological needs for group identity (Mole, 2007a, p. 9). As work in the field of social psychology has shown, individuals strive for positive distinctiveness and frequently rely upon membership in a particular group to provide them with feelings of inclusion and positive self-esteem (ibid.). Implicit in group identity is the exclusion of others, thus resulting in distinctions between one’s own group, the self, and those outside of one’s group (ibid.). As emphasised by Iver Neumann (1998, p. 11), strangers and marginal groups, by virtue of their mere existence, raise the question “who is self and who is other”. Just as with individuals, the role of the outsider is of vital importance to identity formation at the state and international level, regardless of whether actors are willing to acknowledge it as such (Neumann, 1998).

In essence, a stable identity requires the establishment of boundaries that facilitate the separation of self and other (Chafetz, Spirtas, and Frankel, 1998, p. viii). The content of a given identity will influence how an individual or state perceives its relationship with the outside, external world (Chafetz, Spirtas, and Frankel, 1998, p. ix). This is an important realisation due to its implications for the formation of state interest because states (like individuals) cannot know what they want if they do not first know who they are (Chafetz, Spirtas, and Frankel, 1998, p. xvi).

The aforementioned notwithstanding, to state that identities are socially constructed through the negotiating of boundaries between an internal self and an external other is not to say that once established they are impervious to change. Through social interaction, identities can change even to the extent that former

adversaries may become allies, or vice-versa (Chafetz, Spirtas, and Frankel, 1998, p. x). Important for the context of the present study, this observation is readily seen through the present-day membership in NATO of a number of states, including the Czech Republic, that were once aligned via the Warsaw Pact. As Mary N. Hampton (1998, p. 236) points out, states can come to positively identify with one another and this positive interaction shapes how states perceive their own interest. Indeed, the formation of identity and interest is a continuous process that involves constant (re)negotiation of the boundaries between self and other (Wendt, 1992, p. 407; Campbell, 1992; Mole, 2007a).

In his seminal work, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, David Campbell (1992) skillfully addresses the cyclical production of identity, interest, and policy carried out by states. The central theme throughout Campbell's (1992) book is that states are active participants in the construction of their own interest by virtue of the practices of inclusion and exclusion that shape national identity. Campbell's (1992, p. 68) argument is neatly summarised in his observation that state identity stems from ongoing "exclusionary practices" that solidify the "inside" as a place of security while distancing the "outside" as a place of danger and threats. This argument is of particular conceptual relevance for the present study and will be revisited in the subsequent analytical sections. For the present, it is his reminder that "there can be no declaration about the nature of the self that is totally free of suppositions about the other" that drives the following section linking identity formation to how states assert their internal identity externally via specific policy practices (Campbell, 1992, p. 70).

1.3 Identity, Geopolitics, and Policy: A Relationship in Need of Exploration

Having established and outlined the relationship between identity and interest formation, this section examines how a states' particular understanding of the two concepts is enacted in foreign and security policy. One of the most persistent and influential forces shaping states' foreign and security policies is geopolitics. Gearoid O'Tuathail and John Agnew (1992, p. 190) provide a concise definition of geopolitics as "a discursive practice by which intellectuals of statecraft 'spatialize' international politics and represent it as a 'world' characterized by particular types of places, peoples and dramas". Geopolitics as a discursive practice is intimately connected to a state's external projection of its identity because, as O'Tuathail (1999, p. 108) explains, traditional geopolitics employs opposing binaries like "us/them, inside/outside, domestic/foreign...and East/West" to make sense of the world. This ostensibly simplistic and allegedly objective lure of geopolitics has historically allowed its practitioners to make bold, often overly-simplistic, generalisations about the world and the people living in it (O'Tuathail, 1999).

Intrinsic to traditional geopolitics are interpretations, and often assumptions, about a particular place's history and geography (Sloan and Gray, 1999, p. 3). As Gray (1999, p. 162) emphasises, geography has both a physical and psychological component. To illustrate his point, Gray uses the example of the British Isles and its relation to Europe to explain how the physical and psychological components need not be congruent (*ibid.*). He argues that accepted standards of physical geography place the British Isles within the territory of Europe, but that within the British Isles themselves, Europe is often referred to as a "continental phenomenon 'over there' beyond the moat" (Gray, 1999, p. 162). In addition to highlighting the dissonance between physical and psychological conceptions of geography, his argument links

back to the previous discussion of the prominent role of identity in determining a state's perception of its position in the world.

The relationship between politics, geography, and geopolitics is significant because it explains how states form their views on different places, peoples, governments, and cultures (Kuus, 2007). Claims about geography, physical or psychological, are always geopolitical through their designation of geographical spaces as “types of places to be dealt with in a particular manner” (Kuus, 2007, p. 7). In her book, *Geopolitics Reframed: Security and Identity in Europe's Eastern Enlargement*, Merje Kuus (2007) explains how specific interpretations of the countries of Central Europe have resulted in widely-accepted accounts of the countries' history and security. Kuus (2007, p. 6) notes the frequency with which Central Europe has been described in classical geopolitical terms of “buffer zones, shatterbelts, and balance of power, as well as to historical animosities and essential identities”. She highlights how the use of geopolitical discourse has fuelled the perception of Central Europe as a cohesive unit, each country near the border of Europe and in a perpetual state of insecurity, transition, and geographical limbo (ibid.). Kuus' observations are pivotal to the present study because, as the analysis will demonstrate, the invocation of traditional geopolitical reasoning has made possible, even inevitable, certain conceptualizations of the Czech Republic.

As this section has highlighted, geopolitics has traditionally held a certain rhetorical power due to its ability to present geography and identities as natural and fixed (Kuus, 2007, p. 5). Geopolitics enables its practitioners to make deceptively simple claims and insights about the world from a position of self-declared rationality and objectivity (O'Tuathail, 1999, p. 107, 111). The resulting geographically-driven perceptions constitute what Gertjan Dijkink (1996, p. 11) calls “geopolitical visions”.

According to Dijkink, geopolitical visions are the ideas one has regarding their own place and the places of others, which frequently involve specific feelings and emotions related to foreign policy goals (ibid.). As outlined in the previous sections, geopolitical visions rely upon self/other distinctions as well as emotional feelings towards a certain place (ibid.). Considering the impact of a state's various geopolitical visions on its foreign policy, it is a phenomenon in need of serious investigation and analysis. The following section turns to a discussion of the field of critical geopolitics, which concerns itself with dissecting precisely these guiding geopolitical visions that shape state behaviour.

1.4 Critical Geopolitics: The Guiding Theoretical Framework

In their article, "Geopolitics and discourse: Practical geopolitical reasoning in American foreign policy", O'Tuathail and Agnew (1992, p. 190) call for a thorough overhaul of the concept of geopolitics. As explained by O'Tuathail (1999, p. 107), critical geopolitics questions dominating structures of knowledge and power and aims to unravel stereotypical patterns of conceptualising geography. Critical geopolitics refutes the notion that geopolitics is "innocent and objective" (Kuus, 2007, p. 7) and emphasises the agency of state actors in manufacturing pre-packaged geopolitical (re)actions, responses, and policies. O'Tuathail and Agnew (1992, p. 193) underline the role of the community they refer to as "intellectuals of statecraft" in the formation and endorsement of particular identities, reasoning, and policy choices. They define intellectuals of statecraft as the community of actors working in varied capacities around the world in a position to credibly influence, speak about, and carry out statecraft (O'Tuathail and Agnew, 1992, p. 193). According to this

definition, the umbrella of intellectuals of statecraft covers policy-makers, state officials, commentators, advisors, and others working in relevant capacities (ibid.).

To acknowledge and emphasise the agency of human beings in the formation of policy is to acknowledge the simultaneous impact of their particular understandings and interpretations of both individual and national identity on subsequent state-level actions. The significance therein lies in the power of human cognition to construct (and perhaps more importantly, deconstruct) the casual, banal, sweeping, and problematic views about a specific place and the people who inhabit it. Discourse is a powerful instrument individuals use to convey and disseminate these views to others.

If geopolitics is a practice for the spatialization of politics, then discourse is the vehicle used to drive specific geopolitical messages. Discourse, like geopolitics itself, is an elusive concept whose definition is often applied to fit the requirements of a given situation. To avoid confusion and loose application of the term, this study adopts the definition of discourse used by O'Tuathail and Agnew (1992). The two identify discourse as, "sets of capabilities people have, as sets of socio-cultural resources used by people in the constitution of meaning about their world and their activities" (O'Tuathail and Agnew, 1992, pp. 192-193). Their point that discourse is not simply words in the form of statements and speeches, but rather the rules through which written and spoken dialogue acquire meaning, is particularly important for this study (O'Tuathail and Agnew, 1992, p. 193).

Once particular meanings are established, political action is shaped through processes of legitimisation that endorse certain policies and disavow others (Mole, 2007a, p. 15). Though, as previously noted, discourse is not synonymous with written and verbal forms of communication, words are a powerful tool for discursive

practices such as geopolitics. To illustrate this point, the discussion will draw on a highly-relevant example that has been noted by other authors for its value as an example of geopolitical reasoning related to Central Europe (Hynek and Střítecký, 2010a, p. 185).

In 2009, the Polish publication *Gazeta Wyborcza* published as an article the now (in)famous “An Open Letter to the Obama Administration from Central and Eastern Europe” (Hynek and Střítecký, 2010a, p. 185). In the letter, a number of high-profile current and former leaders of formerly-communist countries in Europe implore the (at that time) new American President Obama to refocus his attention on their region (Adamkus, et al., 2009). The letter is rife with bold geopolitical assessments, similar to those identified and explored by Kuus (2007). The title of the letter itself encourages the reader to think of the countries as a homogenous block of states. The choice of the words “from Central and Eastern Europe” rather than “from *the countries of* Central and Eastern Europe” subsumes the states’ individual identities in the name of greater, supposedly collective, shared concerns (Adamkus, et al., 2009).

Throughout the letter, the authors rely on strong and highly emotional language to impart their message. The authors declare that, “Central and Eastern Europe is at a *political crossroads* and today there is a *growing sense of nervousness* in the region” before cautioning that “*storm clouds* are starting to gather on the foreign policy horizon” (Adamkus, et al., 2009, para. 5, emphasis added). Indeed, the geopolitical overtone of the letter is so strong that it leads the authors, many of them accomplished statesmen, to question their own records of success in the name of increased attention from the American President. In so doing, they

remind him (and the reader) not to take the region's stability and prosperity for granted, or even seriously (Adamkus, et al., 2009).

This strategic intertwining of identity and security, as exemplified in the previous example, relates directly to the work of Felix Ciută (2007a) on narratives of European security. Ciută (2007a, p. 191) explains how particular concepts, like identity or strategy, are frequently interwoven and used as “political instrument[s]” to achieve certain purposes. This is consistent with the observation that statecraft, and the geopolitical activity it incorporates, is not done casually or unintentionally (Kuus, 2007, p. 7). On the contrary, as this study will reveal, identity and strategy are intimately related and are valuable weapons in the arsenal of strategists that may be deployed to paint certain pictures, deliver particular messages, and depict other places in a specific way.

According to scholars from the field of critical geopolitics, geopolitical reasoning takes on a variety of forms and is communicated through diverse channels (O'Tuathail, 1999). There are four recognised streams of geopolitics studied by scholars in the field of critical geopolitics: formal geopolitics, practical geopolitics, popular geopolitics, and structural geopolitics (O'Tuathail, 1999, p. 111). The present study concerns practical and popular geopolitics in particular. O'Tuathail (1999, pp. 111, 114) and Dodds (1993, p. 71) describe practical geopolitics as the routine and casual discourse, often presented as unproblematic and commonsensical, that underpins the conceptualization of places in foreign policy. Within critical geopolitics, the units of study of practical geopolitics are the day-to-day practices of policymaking (O'Tuathail, 1999, p. 111). This kind of thinking deeply influences policy-making on the political level and is frequently transmitted to the public through instruments like

the mass media, which serves as an outlet for popular culture (O'Tuathail, 1999, p. 111, 114).

The study of popular geopolitics is concerned with the formation of particular conceptualizations of people, places, and identity (O'Tuathail, 1999, p. 111). The units of study of popular geopolitics are the media that serve as vehicles for spreading geopolitical reasoning, such as the mass media, newspapers, images, and maps (Sharp, 1993; O'Tuathail, 1999, p. 111; Zeigler, 2002). Studies focusing on popular geopolitics shift the focus away from elite texts and scrutinise the role of media and culture in disseminating certain ideas and conceptualizations (Sharp, 1993, p. 493). By critically engaging both elite texts (presidential materials) and news sources, a secondary task of the current study is to examine the relationship between practical and popular geopolitics in the context of the particular case study.

Navigating the waters of critical geopolitics is greatly aided by the plethora of case studies that analyse geopolitical reasoning in foreign policy, maps, newspapers, presidential speeches, and other outlets of expression. While it is not possible to discuss the findings of each study in detail, this section will reference works that have influenced the researcher in conducting her own critical inquiry. Though not an exhaustive and all-inclusive list, it will recognise the rich and diverse work accomplished through numerous case studies in the field.

Some of the most important and relevant research on practical geopolitics is that of O'Tuathail himself. His studies of the practical geopolitics of the Bush Administration in 1989 at the end of the Cold War (O'Tuathail, 1992) and American geopolitical logic in the Bosnia war (O'Tuathail, 2002) provide pivotal insight into how conceptualizations of both national identity and other places influence American foreign policy. Similarly, the work of Klaus Dodds (1993; 2008) on practical

geopolitical narratives and the logic of the Cold War and the Gulf War provide valuable historical context to understanding the development of American foreign policy. Though not related to the United States, Kuus' (2011) study of European Union (EU) geopolitical discourse related to the European Neighbourhood Policy highlights the role played by individuals working within a bureaucratic establishment in shaping the institution's understanding of itself compared to its eastern neighbours. In this regard, her work is thought-provoking in its analysis of how geopolitical knowledge is created and recycled by the community of people working in the field of international relations (Kuus, 2011). In their own way, each of these studies contributes valuable insight into how national and institutional policies are shaped by underlying geographical conceptualizations and geopolitical logic.

Like the aforementioned work concerned mostly with practical geopolitics, a number of case studies explore the concept of popular geopolitics. One of the most important studies is Joanne Sharp's (1993) analysis of the widely-read American publication *The Reader's Digest*. Through this study, Sharp (1993) shows how the self/other binary between the United States and the Soviet Union ingrained in the magazine's articles ultimately disseminated the same ideas that constituted key tenets of American policy towards the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

Sharp's (2011) study of how one Tanzanian newspaper reported the War on Terror complements and builds upon her earlier work by analysing popular geopolitics in a less-frequently studied, "non-western" country. Like Sharp, Thomas McFarlane and Iain Hay (2003) make an important contribution to the study of popular geopolitics that is highly relevant for the present study. By analysing how the 1999 protests against the World Trade Organisation meeting in Seattle were reported by an Australian newspaper, the authors successfully highlight how the

media legitimises certain interpretations of a single event while marginalising others (McFarlane and Hay, 2003). Similarly, Kuus' (2008) study of Estonian newspaper coverage of the country's accession to NATO provides further insight into how newspapers are a place of what she calls subversive geopolitics, simultaneously embracing and mocking mainstream geopolitical narratives. Finally, Jason Dittmer's (2005) study of media conceptualizations of Central Europe surrounding periods of NATO and EU enlargement is significant both substantively and methodologically for the current study and will be revisited in the analytical sections. By critically examining the role of the media in interpreting places, people, and events, these studies generate further understanding of how geopolitics is distributed to and consumed by the public.

A number of other studies that do not fit neatly into the categories of practical or popular geopolitics make equally valuable contributions to the field that are highly relevant. Chief among them are studies analysing how regions, particularly in Europe, are (de)constructed over time. John Agnew (1999) points to the important conceptual role that regions play in influencing foreign policy, noting that they are not purely innocent, intellectual labels. Bringing the debate to a more localised focus, Alan Dingsdale (1999) questions how best to conceptualise the countries of (former) Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and highlights the need for reconciliation among various historical theoretical interpretations of the area. D.J. Zeigler's (2002) cartographic study of how post-communist countries of Europe strategically used maps to promote themselves as Central European points to how visual images may be manipulated to promote a certain geographic interpretation while marginalising another. Finally, Ciută's (2007b) study of the Black Sea Region shows how regions can even be artificially constructed to suit certain purposes, often intertwining

contradictory logics in the process. Taken together, these studies deliver the strong message that regions, and people's understanding of them, are not fixed geographical entities. Through their research, they emphasise the need to recognise the permeability of regional and local identities and how, and for what purpose, such identities are broadcast to others.

Having outlined the basic tenets of critical geopolitics and recognised a number of relevant studies from the field, the discussion will now shift to what may be considered both a contributing factor to and by-product of geopolitical reasoning. The following section will explore how places and peoples are mapped into the minds of both individuals and states, and the important consequences thereof.

1.5 Mental Maps: Embedding places and people in cognitive space

Given its concern with the delicate interplay between geography, statecraft, and discourse, critical geopolitics is connected to the concept of "mental maps" or "cognitive maps" (Henrikson, 1980, p. 498; O'Loughlin and Grant, 1990, p. 506). For consistency and conceptual clarity, this paper will use the term mental map, a concept stemming from the work of Gestalt psychologists (Henrikson, 1980, p. 497). According to Henrikson (1980, p. 498), a mental map is "an ordered but continually adapting structure of the mind – alternatively conceivable as a process – by reference to which a person acquires, codes, stores, recalls, reorganizes, and applies, in thought or action, information about his or her large-scale geographical environment, in part or in its entirety". An important feature of mental maps is that they have both a temporal and spatial dimension (Henrikson, 1980, p. 505; O'Loughlin and Grant, 1990, p. 506). Any given mental map is influenced by past and present experiences as well as expectations for the future, thus emphasising the

key role played by memories, emotions, and creativity in creating mental maps (ibid.). For this reason, the concept of the mental map has important implications for political decision-making (Henrikson, 1980, p. 497).

As mental maps are ultimately concerned with the formation of perceptions about people and places, they are a crucial force behind any foreign policy. Mental maps help to organise and simplify reality, but often create a misleading picture that differs sharply from reality (O'Loughlin and Grant, 1990, p. 506). In the case of the United States, many are quick to bemoan the “barrenness” of the mental maps of its citizens, but stop short of critically examining how certain conceptualizations, stereotypes, and images are formed (O'Loughlin and Grant, 1990, p. 527). It is precisely this task that the present study undertakes through examining American geopolitical representations of the Czech Republic.

By analysing how the Czech Republic has been conceptualised by intellectuals of statecraft in both politics and media outlets, this study explores how, why, and for what purpose the Czech Republic has been “mapped” to the American public. Recognising that it is impossible to measure whether certain geopolitical projections have actually registered in the minds of American people, analysis of key geopolitical actors (such as the President and the media) nevertheless plays a fundamental role in identifying the messages the public receives from authoritative figures and sources. It is to this crucial task that the present study dedicates itself.

1.6 A Gap in the Literature: Identity and Geopolitics in the United States and the Czech Republic

In addition to the aforementioned goals, this study speaks to a perceived broader gap in the existing literature. This section recognises that while significant scholarly work has been done examining the important role of national identity (particularly in

contrast to an “eastern”, namely Soviet or Russian other) in guiding American foreign policy, there is much to be done in terms of linking this to how it affects geopolitical conceptualizations of *other* places. In addition, while a number of studies previously referred to explore geopolitical conceptualizations of Central Europe, the researcher has yet to come across a study that applies the subject to American conceptualizations of a country from the region independently of the others¹. The researcher is similarly unaware of any study that compares and contrasts long-term geopolitical representations on the formal state level with those emerging in light of a peacetime policy decision² with significant implications for relations between the United States and another country (the Czech Republic or any other). Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the existing literature that explores geopolitical themes in both the United States and the Czech Republic.

As previously noted, authors like Campbell (1992), O’Tuathail (1992), Dodds (1993; 2008), and others have made pivotal contributions to understanding how the continuous (re)scripting of American identity has shaped the country’s foreign and security policy. Their work is particularly relevant for this study, given its focus on the representation of the Soviet Union as the fundamental foil of American identity during the Cold War (Campbell, 1992; O’Tuathail and Agnew, 1992). The aforementioned work of scholars like Sharp (1993) draws attention to the role American media played in distributing, reinforcing, and cementing that message.

¹ One possible exception is O’Tuathail’s previously noted study of U.S. geopolitical reasoning of the war in Bosnia. While he engages the theme of American conceptualization of Bosnia, he is also focused on how the war in general was perceived and rationalised. In addition, as a country of the former Yugoslavia, Bosnia has unique historical and political circumstances that make it distinct from other post-socialist countries of Central Europe, such as the Czech Republic.

² While some studies have analysed American geopolitical reasoning in war-time situations, such as in Bosnia (O’Tuathail, 2002), the Gulf War (Dodds, 1993), or the War on Terror (Bialasiewicz, et al., 2007), the researcher believes it is also important to analyse and better comprehend how this logic shapes peacetime decisions with important ramifications for both domestic and international security.

While this study does not take Czech geopolitical conceptualizations of the United States as its primary focus, it does proceed mindful of the valuable research conducted on Czech political thought. This study cannot be successfully completed without a solid understanding of Czech politics, foreign policy, and perceptions (both political and public) of the Third Site of ballistic missile defence. Rick Fawn (2003) and Petr Drulák (2006) provide important contributions to the study of national identity and geopolitics in Czech foreign policy and politics. Fawn (2003, pp. 204-205, 224) calls attention to the highly ideological and normative nature of Czech foreign policy under Václav Havel, and to a lesser extent under Václav Klaus, that distinguishes it from other post-communist countries. He underscores that in recent years, the Czech Republic has taken on the identity of an “extraordinarily ordinary” country, embracing democracy and the market economy more tightly than other countries (Fawn, 2003, p. 205).

In a similar manner, Petr Drulák’s (2006) study of geopolitical thought in Czech politics reveals how key Czech political figures, including Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and Václav Havel guided the country with a largely anti-geopolitical philosophy, albeit peppered with certain geopolitical undertones. He argues that this anti-geopolitical philosophy has emphasised the importance of morality, freedom, responsibility, and other social values (Drulák, 2006, p. 435). Furthermore, Drulák (2006, p. 432) notes the particular increase in geopolitical reasoning around the time of the split of Czechoslovakia, describing how Czech politicians took advantage of the opportunity to (re)orient the Czech Republic as a western country while distancing itself from Danubian and post-Soviet spaces. Nevertheless, it is important to note that after the 1990s, traditional geopolitical thought in Czech politics has been on the retreat (Drulák, 2006, p. 434). This is an interesting and highly relevant

observation considering the tone and content of some Czech reactions to the cancellation of the Third Site.

In addition to this work exploring broader themes in Czech politics, this study benefited immensely from existing literature on Czech foreign policy, media, and the Czech side of the debate on the Third Site. In his chapter in *Czech Foreign Policy in 2007-2009: Analysis*, Ondřej Ditrych (2010) outlines the factors that shaped Czech policy and public opinion towards the United States generally and the proposed radar component specifically. The aforementioned work of Nik Hynek and Vít Střítecký (2010a; b) is invaluable for its insight into how Czech discourse conceived of the radar base in terms of national interest and how it framed Obama's decision to cancel it. Their critical and insightful scholarship was a major source of information and impetus for this research and is referred to throughout the study.

For the content analysis of American media conceptualizations of the Czech Republic around the time of the cancellation of the Third Site, the work of Vlastimil Nečas and Lenka Vochocová (2010) was an invaluable guide. Their analysis of how Czech media reported the decision not to place the radar base in the Czech Republic serves as a model, both substantively and structurally, for the researcher's own work. In addition to the English-language work of Nečas and Vochocová, Hana Nečasová (2010) conducted a related study in Czech on discursive media representations of ballistic missile defence in select Czech and Russian media sources.

This study acknowledges that, while substantial work has been done to recognise the role of identity and geopolitical thought in American and Czech foreign policy, a gap remains in the literature. In addition to frequently treating the Czech Republic as a member of a homogenous bloc of Central European states, the

existing literature does not address how or why the Czech Republic has been conceived of in a certain way by the United States. The task at hand is therefore to show how, through the intertwining of normative claims about identity and traditional geopolitics, certain conceptualizations of the country have been reused and recycled over time in a variety of circumstances. The following section will outline the methodological framework used to accomplish this task.

2. METHODOLOGY

In his article, “Doing discourse analysis in Critical Geopolitics”, Martin Müller (2010) laments the frequent lack of methodological precision in studies applying critical geopolitics as the theoretical framework. He notes how studies in the field often announce their intent to perform an analysis, but provide only a vague explanation as to the methodological procedures used (Müller, 2010, para. 3). Indeed, the need for cogent methodological procedures is pervasive throughout the social sciences, and critical disciplines are not exempt from the requirement to account for the methods and procedures used to address their subjects of study.

This section will outline the research design and methodology used to conduct the present study. The first parts will explain the particular type of case study research design used and account for the rationale behind examining the chosen cases. The second part will explain how content analysis is used to study relevant texts to identify the concepts analysed. It will also account for the method used to select the texts for analysis. The final sub-section will address potential criticisms and offer final considerations regarding the methodology. In its entirety, the section outlines a comprehensive methodology that could be applied to future studies

interested in critically examining one country's conceptualization of another while still adhering to a stringent and replicable methodology.

2.1 The Intrinsic Case Study: A Conscious Choice for Depth

Pervasive as it is elusive, conducting case study research properly begins by defining key terms and concepts. *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods, Volume 1* defines a case study as “a research approach in which one or a few instances of a phenomenon are studied in depth” (Blatter, 2008, p. 68). Similarly, Robert Stake (1995, p. xi) considers a case study to be research focusing on a given case's complexity and uniqueness, with the aim of understanding it within its proper contextual circumstances. In recognition of the diverse understandings and application of terminology and concepts in case study research, the task at hand is to delineate the units under investigation. The discussion will then shift to the particular type of case study conducted. Relevant for the present analysis is the recognition that cases need not be fixed, bounded units such as individuals, nation-states, etc.; but that a case may also be a decision, program, process, or political phenomena such as deterrence or diplomacy (George and Bennett, 2005, p. 69; Yin, 2009, p. 29). Robert Yin's (2009, pp. 46-50) categories of case studies are particularly useful for explaining cases and their units of analysis.

This study addresses the question: *What do American presidential materials from 1989 to 2009 and media reactions to President Obama's 2009 ballistic missile defence policy shift reveal about post-Cold War American conceptualizations of the Czech Republic?* Structurally, the present study constitutes what Yin (2009, pp. 46, 50) terms an embedded multiple-case design, or a research design that involves more than one case with embedded units of analysis examined within a greater

context. The overarching context of this study is how the Czech Republic has been portrayed in the United States in the post-Cold War era. Within this broad context, two specific cases are studied: 1) conceptualizations of the Czech Republic as presented in presidential textual materials from 1989-2009, and 2) news sources from 14-25 September 2009. Within each case, the embedded units of analysis are texts in the forms of speeches, press releases, interviews, newswires, newspaper articles, and other sources that convey the concepts analysed.

Specifically, these units are analysed to identify the leading concepts guiding American political and media perceptions of the Czech Republic. It is critical to point out that the primary goal of the study is not to simply identify themes that shaped and emerged from the decision, but rather to interpret them. Having established the structural components of the case, the discussion turns to the specific type of case study to be conducted.

Under the general umbrella of case studies, Stake (2005, p. 445) identifies three major types of case studies: intrinsic case study, instrumental case study, and multiple/collective case study. This study constitutes an intrinsic case study, which Stake defines as a study conducted in order to understand that specific case (*ibid.*). Unlike an instrumental case study, which seeks to use a case to generalise or create a broader understanding of an external issue (theory, phenomenon, etc.), the intrinsic case study focuses on the particular case, “in all its particularity *and* ordinariness” and not on abstract generalisation (Stake, 2005, p. 445).

The intrinsic case study outlined by Stake points to one of the greatest strengths of case study methods in general: their ability to delve deeply into an issue without expanding the scope too broadly (Blatter, 2008, p. 69). A simple and yet easily forgotten characteristic of case studies is that they should be conducted to

understand the *particular* case, not other cases (Stake, 1995, p. 4). The goal is “particularization, not generalization” in an effort to explain the phenomenon under scrutiny in its unique contexts (Stake, 1995, p. 8). Adopting the intrinsic case study approach has significant implications for the research and its findings. The primary goal of the research is to examine and understand a single identified case, not to make broader generalisations or apply the findings of the study to other, even similar, cases.

This is not to assert that intrinsic case studies do not have theoretical underpinnings or concern themselves with concepts. On the contrary, as previously outlined, the present study applies a rich theoretical framework to contextualise and understand the case. Nevertheless, it is critical to underscore that the goal is to apply theory to the case and not the case to theory. The aim is not to use the case to credit or discredit a given theory or concept. As such, theory plays a significant but ultimately supporting role in this intrinsic case study. The emphasis is on illuminating the case’s specific contexts and issues and how to interpret them (Stake, 2005, p. 450). Accordingly, commonly-cited rationale for case selection such as “most-likely”, “least-likely”, or “crucial” that seek to generalise findings or facilitate process-tracing are not applicable to this study (George and Bennett, 2005, p. 24). With this in mind, the following sub-section will explain the rationale for selecting this particular case.

2.2 Case Selection: Decoupling Poland and the Czech Republic

A number of factors converge to provide the justification for selecting this particular case as one worthy of study. The 2009 decision not to place the anticipated components of the Third Site in the Czech Republic and Poland is a recent and politically-salient issue that constituted a significant policy shift. In this sense, the

event itself may be considered a recent “crucial break point”, or turning point that is worthy of holistic interpretation (O’Dell, 2001, p. 163). Though the decision and reactions to it involved both the Czech Republic and Poland, there are important reasons for considering the circumstances surrounding the two countries as unique and distinct. As noted by Hynek and Střítecký:

“Whether brief or detailed, any look at the coverage of the issue reveals that *the Czech Republic and Poland have invariably been lumped together as far as the Third Site of BMD is concerned*. Two specimens of the New Europe, as the mainstream narrative goes, decided to prove that they were the lynchpins of the North Atlantic security community in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE).” (Hynek and Střítecký, 2010a, pp. 179-180, emphasis added).

The observation highlights the need for further research that takes into consideration the unique circumstances relating to the Third Site in the Czech Republic and Poland as separate instances.

Paradoxically, even an understanding of how the two countries have become so inextricably linked cannot be achieved without examining them independently of each other. The scholarly rallying-cry provided by Hynek and Střítecký is complemented by the work of Kuus (2007), as previously identified in Section 1. Her observation of the tendency to refer to Central European states as a collective unit with a frequent disregard for nuanced differences among them provides further justification for intrinsic case study (Kuus, 2007). Only by examining specific relationships in detail and in the appropriate historical and political contexts can such scholarship move beyond clichéd interpretations of events that fail to account for particularities and uniqueness.

Hynek and Střítecký (2010a) themselves point out a number of domestic political factors that make the circumstances of the Third Site in the Czech Republic particularly worthy of study. In contrast with Poland, whose politicians have

historically been more enthusiastic and united about pursuing a special relationship with the United States, the situation in the Czech Republic is more complicated (Hynek and Střítecký, 2010a, p. 180). In the Czech Republic, strong pro-American sentiment is only dominant in the more conservative Civic Democratic Party (ibid.). Staunch Atlanticists in other parties only constitute individual voices, not the voice of the party itself (ibid.). This is an observation that should be kept in mind when discussing contemporary developments in relations between the Czech Republic and the United States.

In addition to domestic politics, the two point to differences in size and ambition between Poland and the Czech Republic (Hynek and Střítecký, 2010a, p. 181). Lacking Poland's size in terms of territory and population, the Czech Republic cannot be considered as a prominent or powerful partner for grand strategists (ibid.). Militarily, the Czech Armed Forces consist of 21,751 uniformed personnel compared to Poland's approximately 100,000³ (Ministry of Defence & Armed Forces of the Czech Republic, 2012; Ministry of National Defence – Republic of Poland, n.d.). In addition, the Czech Republic has not presented itself as *the* leading pro-Atlanticist within Europe in the same way that Poland has (Hynek and Střítecký, 2010a, p. 181). In matters of security (such as ballistic missile defence), therefore, it is inaccurate and misleading to present the Czech Republic and Poland as having analogous capabilities and policy goals.

Approaching the issue from another angle, local public opinion in the Czech Republic also provides justification for the selection of the particular case. The results of public opinion surveys taken in the Czech Republic regarding the issue reflect its unpopularity among the public (Bratová, 2008, p. 12). As results of surveys

³ As of January 2011

conducted by various entities between 2006 and 2008 demonstrate, between 53-65% of Czechs were against the establishment of the radar system in the country (ibid.). While the majority of the Polish public was also against the establishment of the Third Site in their country, it is important to keep in mind the previously-mentioned political differences between the two countries in terms of their policy orientation (Hildreth and Ek, 2009, p. 11; Hynek and Střítecký, 2010a, pp.180-181). Given the unique set of geographic, political, and local factors outlined above, the researcher makes a conscious choice to separate the Czech Republic from Poland and focus on the particularities of the Czech-American relationship.

In addition to the aforementioned substantive justifications for the case, the selection of the topic stems from the researcher's general interest in international relations and more specific interest in post-1989 politics and security in Central Europe. The particular case speaks to an interest in how American political and media actors almost instinctively group together the countries of Central Europe as one collective and largely identical group; and the extent to which this (in)accurately reflects the local realities more than twenty years after 1989. An additional factor that contributed to the case selection is that the researcher conducted the study in Prague, Czech Republic. The researcher possesses intermediate Czech language skills which could be used, as required, to identify leading scholars and sources of information on the subject. Having established the case of study, associated embedded units of analysis, and the rationale for selecting the particular case, the following section will explain how content analysis will be used to carry out the research.

2.3 Content Analysis: Detecting Trends and Drawing Inferences

For purposes of conceptual clarity, this study adopts Klaus Krippendorff's (2004, p. 18) definition of content analysis as, "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use". It is a process that involves sorting qualitative data to identify patterns, trends, and relationships between themes (Julien, 2008, p. 120). Content analysis is an appropriate methodological instrument for this study given its roots in geopolitics (Dittmer, 2005, p. 81). The first instances of critically reviewing texts were done by political scientists interested in examining wartime propaganda (ibid.). Content analysis is a tool that helps researchers in a number of disciplines, such as geography, political science, and international relations, to better understand how the world is presented in texts (ibid.).

While this study seeks to critically analyse texts to identify recurrent conceptual representations, the first task is to identify the relevant sources to be studied as objectively as possible. The method of content analysis emphasises that research should be replicable and verifiable (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18; Julien, 2008, p. 121). It also recognises that texts are relative to discourses, contexts, and uses, and cannot be understood in a vacuum (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 24). In this study, concepts and descriptions are the direct units of analysis within the texts analysed. The following section accounts for the selection of sources and the criteria used to analyse them.

2.4 Source Selection and Analytical Criteria

To analyse how the Czech Republic⁴ was conceptually presented on the political level, this study utilises textual materials available through the website of *The American Presidency Project*. Founded in 1999 at the University of California in Santa Barbara, the project's document archive contains 100,843 records spanning from 1789 to 2012 (Woolley and Peters, 2012). The document archive includes speeches, executive orders, press conferences, radio addresses, addresses to various groups and organisations, and other materials (Woolley and Peters, 2012). Using the web-based search tool, the document archive was searched using the keyword "Czech" from 1989 to 2009. The yield from the search was 319 documents spanning from 31 May 1989 to 20 September 2009⁵. One of the benefits of the search tool is that it highlighted the keyword in red to make analysis of the documents easier and more focused, which was particularly important for lengthy documents such as interview transcripts that cover a number of subjects.

The results of the search were reviewed and those deemed relevant for further analysis were set aside, while those deemed irrelevant were not scrutinised further. Reasons for excluding materials from further analysis included: the reference to the Czech Republic (or Czech people) was not descriptive enough to be of analytical value, the document was a declaration issued by multiple heads of state (i.e. not solely an American document), the document was one of a number of

⁴ This study includes references to Czechoslovakia from 1989 to 1993

⁵ The full yield of documents in the search from 1989 to 2009 was 320. As this part of the study focuses primarily on presidential conceptualizations of the Czech Republic prior to the 17 September 2009 announcement, the last material considered was a 20 September 2009 television interview with President Obama; however, this interview was ultimately not set aside for detailed content analysis. Accordingly, Obama's 17 September 2009 announcement about missile defence constitutes the most recent presidential text analysed in this study.

repetitive statements acknowledging that the Czech Republic was invited to join NATO, or the keyword “Czech” appeared in the document in the form of a quotation by someone other than the president himself. Naturally, and as will be discussed in the methodological limitations section, the researcher was required to make subjective value judgements as to the relevance of a particular source. While the aforementioned criteria for exclusion serve as a general guideline, the researcher had to rely on her own judgement to infer a source’s analytical value. In the end, 180 presidential materials were examined as part of the detailed content analysis.

Those documents set aside for further review were analysed with the help of five guiding groups of questions to help make sense of how the Czech Republic was described, conceptualised, and presented to American audiences. The decision to use questions to guide the textual review was influenced by James Paul Glee’s (2005, pp. 110-111) observation that analysis of this nature involves asking questions of the texts. The questions the researcher used to analyse the materials drew inspiration from those posed by Glee (2005, pp.110-113). Table 1 shows the groups of questions and the format used to analyse the documents. Once analysed, the results recorded in the content analysis tables were reviewed to identify key trends, concepts, and patterns in how the Czech Republic was described and framed. Upon completion of this content analysis tracing conceptualizations from 1989-2009, the focus shifted to analysis of media sources covering the 17 September 2009 announcement.

Table 1: Analytical tool used for content analysis of presidential materials	
Name of President, Date	Title of Document/Material
How is the Czech Republic described? What words are used? What emotions are described or involved?	
What historical analogies are used when talking about the Czech Republic?	
Is the Czech Republic compared to, or frequently referenced with, other countries or places?	
Literary devices used (symbolism, metaphors, personification, etc.)	
How are relations between the US and the Czech Republic described?	

The task becomes more difficult when focus shifts from the political to the popular (mass media) level. In this study, the level of subjectivity and subsequent risk of selection bias increases on this level due to the variety of news sources available for analysis (Weninger, 2008, p. 147). It is in this realm that the researcher risks honing in too closely on instances that only support their pre-conceived notions or hypotheses (ibid.). Given the number and diversity of media outlets that covered the case, the researcher had to take every effort to use replicable and verifiable procedures for identifying key themes and trends.

For this particular case study, the method used by Dittmer in “NATO, the EU and Central Europe: Differing Symbolic Shapes in Newspaper Accounts of Enlargement” (2005) served as an excellent model for how to perform content analysis. In addition to Dittmer’s research, the work of Nečas and Vochocová (2010) was a source of inspiration for this content analysis. In their research, the two authors identify a range of specific trends observed in Czech media reporting about the decision not to place the radar component in the Czech Republic (Nečas and Vochocová, 2010, p. 47). The goal of this analysis was ultimately to replicate Nečas and Vochocová’s work for American reporting on the issue.

This study, like Dittmer’s, utilises a LexisNexis electronic database to identify texts suitable for analysis by using the key terms “Czech” and “missile” to retrieve

relevant sources. As this case focuses on reactions and thematic representations that emerged in light of a significant political decision, the relevant time period is significantly smaller than that of the previous content analysis. This analysis includes sources from newswires and news articles released from 14-25 September 2009 – the week of Obama’s 17 September announcement and the week following it. This time period allows for the inclusion of materials produced immediately prior to, during, and in the aftermath of the announcement to allow for a greater variety of sources and the inclusion of a variety of opinions.

The yield of materials within the LexisNexis UK database under the source category of “US News” with the keywords “Czech” and “missile” from 14-25 September 2009 was 315. These sources were reviewed and sorted for relevancy. Those materials that were not included in the final content analysis were excluded for reasons that included: the source was a listing of events in Washington D.C. related to missile defence, the source did not substantively describe the Czech Republic (for example, articles related to other aspects of missile defence, such as Iran or the technical aspects of the new system), the source simply reprinted Obama’s remarks, the text was a repeat of a previous report from the same source on the same day, etc. As with the first case, the sorting process involved inevitable subjectivity and judgement on the part of the researcher. The final number of materials selected for detailed content analysis was 221.

As with the analysis of presidential materials, the media sources were subjected to a structured question and concept-driven qualitative content analysis. In addition to the same group of guiding questions presented in Table 1, the media content analysis was also analysed with the results of the presidential content analysis in mind. While the content analysis focused on how the Czech Republic

itself is presented, the analytical tool included a question examining how missile defence itself is described. Table 2 shows the analytical tool used for the media content analysis.

Table 2: Analytical tool used for media content analysis	
Title of Source	Date
Title of Article	
Authorship and other details	
How is the Czech Republic described? What words are used? What emotions are described or involved?	
What historical analogies are used when talking about the Czech Republic?	
Is the Czech Republic compared to, or frequently referenced with, other countries or places?	
Literary devices used (symbolism, metaphors, personification, etc.)	
How are relations between the US and the Czech Republic described?	
Interweaving US and Czech identity	
Czech Republic as a symbol of democracy and freedom (embodied in the figure of Havel)	
Czech Republic as victim, driven by historical memories	
Czech Republic as a loyal friend, ally, and partner	
Czech Republic as interchangeable with other countries of Central and Eastern Europe	
How is missile defence presented, described, or discussed?	

As demonstrated by Table 2, the content analysis of media sources was not driven purely by an interest in finding the same concepts identified in the study of presidential materials. By subjecting the media sources to the same guiding questions used to analyse presidential materials, the researcher made a conscious effort to avoid falling into the precarious trap of simply finding evidence to support preconceived notions (Weninger, 2008, p. 147). The goal was to strike a balance that would enable the researcher to identify new themes and patterns of

conceptualization should they exist, while mindful of the previously-identified portrayals.

2.5 Methodological Limitations and Final Considerations

Given the aforementioned subjective nature of social science research, even the most methodologically-rigorous work is not without limitations. Both of the individual content analyses carried out for this study have potential criticisms that must be addressed before proceeding. The following paragraphs will address identified methodological limitations and potential criticisms of the research.

One potential limitation is that the content analysis is entirely qualitative, conducted without the quantitative assistance of advanced computer software. It is for precisely this reason that the study does not present statistical figures indicating the percentage of texts that conveyed a certain categorical conceptualization. The emphasis is rather on recurrent trends and patterns readily detectable through structured qualitative analysis. This having been said, the lack of quantitative focus need not constitute a serious weakness due to the complexity inherent in conceptual content analysis. As the following sections will explain, any given text may have portrayed the Czech Republic in a number of ways, often mixing geography and modes of reasoning in a single document. For this reason, it cannot be unequivocally stated that quantitative, statistical analysis of the texts would have led to greater clarity or insight. Furthermore, as a number of sources recycled descriptions and quotes from major newswires like *The Associated Press*, quantitative analysis of word frequencies, etc. might have actually led to a less-balanced and more skewed analysis than that conducted by the researcher herself.

In addition to this general criticism, the quality of the sources used is another element of the research in need of further explanation. In the first instance, one could question the extent to which utilising exclusively presidential materials constitutes an accurate and comprehensive picture of the practical geopolitical level. Indeed, the argument may be made that focusing solely on presidential sources discounts the important role played by other political figures in the United States, such as the Secretaries of State and Defense, in producing certain “geopolitical code[s]” (Flint, et al., 2009, p. 604). The key to addressing this concern lies in calling upon the work of previous studies that rely heavily or exclusively upon presidential texts.

Studies such as those by John O’Loughlin and Richard Grant (1990, p. 507) and Colin Flint, et al. (2009) highlight the important role played by the President of the United States in projecting a certain cognitive map to the country. O’Loughlin and Grant (1990, p. 507) note how presidential speeches are a powerful vehicle through which the public receives cues that shape their “political cognitive maps”. In addition to his domestic power in influencing public perceptions of global spaces, the two authors emphasise the role of the President of the United States as a key figure in international politics (O’Loughlin and Grant, 1990, p. 505). These points are bolstered by recalling that the President’s words are not his work alone; but rather are the product of a team of speechwriters and other individuals that play a critical role in shaping practical geopolitical messages (O’Tuathail and Agnew, 1992, p. 193; Flint, et al., 2009, p. 605). In their own work focusing on State of the Union addresses, Flint, et al. (2009, p. 606) highlight that the speech is an annual event that can be traced over time. This observation is all the more true for the current research, which includes a variety of speeches, addresses, interviews, and other

materials; thereby providing a reliable barometer with which to gauge American conceptualizations of the Czech Republic.

Turning to the second content analysis conducted, one could question the comprehensiveness and inclusiveness of the analysis of American media sources from 14-25 September 2009. The researcher utilised the LexisNexis UK database in an effort to eliminate selection bias to the fullest extent possible while including a broad range of resources reflecting various aspects of the public debate surrounding ballistic missile defence. Like *The American Presidency Project* document archive, LexisNexis databases have been utilised previously in research from the field of critical geopolitics, such as in the work of Dittmer (2005) and O'Tuathail (2002). In spite of its value in reducing selection bias and its previous use in similar research, it is essential to acknowledge a few shortcomings with the LexisNexis database.

For reasons of access, the researcher used the United Kingdom version of LexisNexis, which does not include all American newspapers. The database lacks some of the most widely-circulated American newspapers such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *The Boston Globe*, and others (The Huffington Post, 2011). For this reason, and the obvious fact that it is not possible to analyse every news source in the United States that reported or commented on Obama's announcement, the reader must be mindful of limits to the study's reach and breadth.

Nevertheless, the database does include a number of significant and widely-circulated publications such as *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *San Jose Mercury News*, and others (The Huffington Post, 2011). These major publications were supplemented by regional and local newspapers that are an equally important source of information for much of the American public. In addition,

press releases from sources such as *The Associated Press* add a further dimension of accountability. According to the website of *The Associated Press* (2012), their content is seen by half of the world's population on a daily basis, including via national wires available to all 1,400 American daily newspapers subscribing to *The Associated Press*. Given their wide reach and prominence in both American and global media, such distributors of news constitute an important place where geopolitical visions are (re)produced (Ciută and Klinke, 2010, p. 324).

Finally, as with any piece of qualitative research, there is always the risk that another researcher would analyse the same data and come to different conclusions. Even when methodologically-cautious, social science researchers cannot fully remove themselves from their own subjectivity. An attempt to do so would, ironically, make the researcher guilty of assuming the same self-proclaimed objectivity that critical geopolitics seeks to deconstruct (O'Tuathail, 1999). To mitigate subjective biases, the researcher has attempted to utilise a clear methodology, using reputable databases as well as analytical tools and steps that could be followed by any other researcher interested in replicating the research.

Having acknowledged methodological limitations and potential criticisms, the researcher wishes to remind the reader of the principle of "strength in numbers". In spite of their limitations, the content analyses are strengthened by the sheer quantity of sources surveyed during the research process. With an initial yield of 319 presidential and 315 media materials, and 180 and 221 materials (respectively) brought forward for detailed analysis, the researcher is confident that the number and diversity of sources provide an accurate and cogent base from which to proceed with the study.

3. CONCEPTUALISING THE CZECH REPUBLIC IN PRESIDENTIAL TEXTS FROM 1989-2009

This section presents the findings of the analysis of 180 presidential materials (speeches, interview transcripts, informal exchanges with reporters, etc.) spanning from 1989 to 2009. The time period analysed includes the presidencies of George H.W. Bush (1989-1993), William J. Clinton (1993-2001), George W. Bush (2001-2009), and Barack H. Obama (2009-present). While acknowledging the particularities of each administration, the goal is not to present how each president individually conceptualised the Czech Republic. The principal task is to highlight across all administrations examined the key concepts and trends in how the country has been presented on the formal political level.

The results of the content analysis reveal five main thematic representations of the Czech Republic and Czech people: 1) as interwoven with American national identity, 2) as a symbol of democracy and freedom, embodied in Václav Havel, 3) as a historical victim of oppression and tyranny, 4) as a loyal partner and ally to the United States, and 5) as interchangeable with other countries of Central Europe. Each conceptualization will be outlined in detailed sub-sections, supplemented by in-text references from relevant materials. The final section will present conclusions on how, and for what purpose, the Czech Republic has been conceptualised in American presidential texts.

3.1 Abraham Lincoln, two Ambassadors, and “the small town of Plzen”: Interweaving Czech and American identity

Since the Velvet Revolution of 1989 and the end of communist rule in Czechoslovakia, the United States’ relationship with the Czech Republic has been carefully crafted upon the basis of shared histories and values (George H.W. Bush, 1990a; Obama 2009b). As the task of establishing and framing relations between Czechoslovakia (later the Czech Republic) and the United States fell chiefly to George H.W. Bush and Clinton, this section places particular emphasis on the roles of their administrations. In the immediate aftermath of the Velvet Revolution, George H.W. Bush frequently invoked historical links between the United States and Czechoslovakia to present relations between the two countries as natural and good. Particular emphasis was placed upon tracing links between the two countries back to the founding of the Czechoslovak state in 1918. This was done through frequent reference to relations between Tomáš Masaryk and Woodrow Wilson, as well as the self-proclaimed inspirational role that the United States played in drafting the Czechoslovak Declaration of Independence, which helped to illustrate how the United States was bound to Czechoslovakia by common principles (George H.W. Bush, 1990a; b).

Emphasising the natural and historic relations between the United States and Czechoslovakia was not the only means by which the identities of the two countries became discursively interwoven. In a number of presidential materials, emotionally-charged illustrative references were used to intertwine Czechoslovak and American identities. For example, George H. W. Bush (1990c; d) used the story of how the people of “the small town of Plzen” (1990d) were told for years that they were liberated by Soviet soldiers wearing American uniforms, but when they finally learned

the truth of their liberation by American troops they welcomed visiting American forces with a hero's welcome. Another salient example is one story of President Václav Havel's visit to the White House that was used no less than three times in speeches by George H.W. Bush (1990e; f; g). In one version of the story told at a gubernatorial fundraising reception in South Carolina, the president recounted:

"I wish you could have seen the look on the President of Czechoslovakia's face, Vaclav Havel, the playwright. Bar and I thought it would be nice for him to see the Lincoln Bedroom in the White House, the bedroom in which Lincoln actually signed the Emancipation Proclamation. And the look on his face, as a man who was in jail and dying, or living – whatever -- for freedom, stood out there, hoping against hope for freedom. It just was so moving to see this *marvelous symbol of our identity there.*" (George H.W. Bush, 1990f, emphasis added).

In this version of the story of President Havel's visit to Abraham Lincoln's bedroom, the President has blended American and Czechoslovak identity to the point that it is unclear from his statement whether it is the Lincoln Bedroom or Havel himself that is the "marvelous symbol of our identity" (George H. W. Bush, 1990f). Upon closer reflection; however, one realizes that it is irrelevant which of the two symbolises American identity. The deed is done; the story has already fused Czech and American identity to the point that they are indistinguishable from each other.

The fusing of the two countries' identities is a trend continued by the Clinton administration. By invoking the personal story and background of Madeleine Albright, the interests of the Czech Republic and the United States became embodied in a single personality (Clinton, 1994a; 1995). At the dedication of the National Czech and Slovak Museum in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Clinton proclaimed,

"Our dynamic Ambassador to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright, who is here with me today, was born in Prague. And as I have told President Havel several times, the Czech Republic is the only nation in the world that has two Ambassadors at the United Nations." (Clinton, 1995).

Through such statements, Clinton implies that American and Czech interests are synonymous with each other to the point of being jointly represented by the figure of a single, powerful Czech-American diplomat. In this way, differences are marginalised and sameness is emphasised. American national interest becomes Czech national interest, and vice versa. This discursive practice of capitalising on historical similarities and normative ties has significant implications for American conceptualizations of the Czech Republic, and is a theme that will be revisited throughout this study.

3.2 The Czech Republic as a symbol of democracy and freedom embodied in the figure of Václav Havel

When analysing relations between the United States and the Czech Republic from 1989, it is difficult to overestimate the importance and centrality of the personality of President Václav Havel. Reflecting on his time as Czech Ambassador to the United States between 1997 and 2001, current Czech Minister of Defence Alexandr Vondra recalls, “We had those 20 years of sunshine when our influence in Washington was much greater than our physical strength. The story of the Velvet Revolution, *the image of Václav Havel* played a crucial role” (Richter, 2011, emphasis added). So pervasive is Havel’s story and inherent goodness that he effectively became, for Americans, the very symbol of the country itself.

Throughout the course of his career in politics, Havel has been revered by American presidents for his role in bringing democracy and freedom to Czech and Slovak people, and his symbolic value for all people of the world struggling against dictatorship. Perhaps the most dramatic, but by no means less representative, example is found in the words of Clinton, who in 1998 described his counterpart in the following terms,

“No President, no person, has done better work toward this end [repairing the damage done from wars in Europe] than President Havel... Today there is not a leader on Earth whose words and deeds have meant more to the cause of freedom than your own” (Clinton, 1998a, emphasis added).

Invoking literary symbolism, George W. Bush (2002a) referred to Havel in 2002 as “a man who symbolizes courage and determination”, a description more apt for a Herculean heroic figure than a politician. Later that year, he took a step further in cementing Czech identity in the figure of Havel by describing the country as “the Czech Republic, as embodied in the works and thoughts of Vaclav Havel” (George W. Bush, 2002b). The celebrity-like status of Havel in Washington helped to give the Czech Republic a special status among post-communist countries of Central Europe, even at times when the country was referred to interchangeably with others from the region such as Poland and Hungary (see final sub-section for further explanation).

3.3 “...recent memories of tyranny”: The Czech Republic as a victim, driven by historical memories

Throughout the time period studied, the Czech Republic is consistently referred to in highly emotional terms that call upon historical grievances, tragedies, and traumas (Crawford, 2000, p. 140). Significant historical events such as the Prague Spring of 1968 and the Velvet Revolution of 1989 are routinely invoked to contrast the country’s freedom with long years of communist rule (Clinton, 1997a; 1998b; George W. Bush, 2007a; Obama, 2009b). What is particularly important is that the presidents did not stop at merely mentioning the most dramatic moments of the Czech Republic’s recent history; rather, they strategically used them as a rallying call for others to act in accordance with American policies or actions.

A portrayal heavily used by George H.W. Bush is that of Czechoslovakia as a victim of Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait (George H.W. Bush, 1990h; i; j; k). Klaus Dodds (1993, p. 73) notes how Kuwait was rhetorically transformed into a modern-day Czechoslovakia or Poland. He argues that comparisons between the invasion of Kuwait and World War Two were strategically invoked in an effort to present the Gulf War as moral and justifiable (Dodds, 1993, p. 73). In remarks to allied armed forces in Saudi Arabia on 22 November 1990, the president stated,

“Barbara and I are just back from Czechoslovakia, where the progress of their peaceful revolution has already been damaged by the shock waves from Iraq's aggression. President Havel told me that Saddam's aggression is having a severe effect on his struggling economy. And every day that goes by increases the damage. But when he was asked if our action in the Gulf was taking too much money away from the problems of Eastern Europe, he answered plainly. He said, ‘All the resources that are expended on resisting aggression anywhere in the world are finally turned to the good of all humankind.’ This from that playwright that was jailed not so many months ago by aggression itself. Listen to the words of this man who stands for freedom” (George H. W. Bush, 1990i).

This same story was used by the president again in 1990 in addresses to the Congresses of Brazil and Uruguay when applauding the two countries for sanctioning Iraq (George H.W. Bush, 1990j; k). In so doing, the president effectively transformed the difficult economic situation of Czechoslovakia into a rallying cry for others, like Brazil and Uruguay, to continue their support for the United States in its efforts to confront Saddam Hussein.

In hauntingly similar circumstances during his own presidency, George W. Bush (2006) also used the history of the Czech Republic as an instrument with which to justify controversial policies. At a 2006 commencement ceremony at the United States Merchant Marine Academy in New York, the president stated,

“A free and sovereign Iraq requires the strong support of Europe. And some of the most important support for Iraqis is coming from European democracies with *recent memories of tyranny* [list of countries includes

the Czech Republic]...Others in Europe have had disagreements with our decisions on Iraq” (George W. Bush, 2006, emphasis added).

In 2009, President Obama used the same tactic, albeit it for a different purpose.

Rather than use Czech history to justify actions elsewhere, he called upon memories of historic betrayals at the hands of great powers to distinguish the United States from other forces in Czech history (Obama, 2009b). Speaking in Prague, Obama called to mind the times when external actors made important decisions affecting Czech people without including them in the process, before proclaiming that, “the United States will never turn its back on the people of this nation” (Obama, 2009b).

Through such discursive practices at the highest political level, the United States has constructed a mental map of the Czech Republic as a country that has been one of history’s greatest victims. Through this conceptualization, the Czech Republic is endowed with a special responsibility to use its own experiences to work towards the promotion of democracy and freedom elsewhere, regardless of how different the circumstances in those other places may be. This thematic portrayal also underscores a special bond between the United States and the Czech Republic by contrasting the United States with other historical powers who previously abandoned or betrayed the Czech Republic.

3.4 The Czech Republic as a loyal friend, partner, and ally

While particularly poignant around the time of the 1999 NATO enlargement, this depiction of the Czech Republic has been constant throughout the time period studied. George H.W. Bush (1991a) was the first to highlight the willingness of Czechs (and Slovaks) to support the United States and partner with it on military operations, such as in the Gulf War. This practice was continued by his successor who frequently made reference to the Czech soldiers serving alongside American

ones in Bosnia, as well as the country's readiness to join NATO and contribute to the alliance's capabilities (Clinton 1997a; b; c; 1998a; b; c). In keeping with the tradition of his father and immediate predecessor, George W. Bush (2003a; b; 2008a; b) made repeated references to the Czech Republic as a member of allied coalitions serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. Most recently, Obama (2009b; c) acknowledged the role played by Czech forces in Afghanistan and in coming to the aid of the United States after 11 September 2001, calling the country "one of America's greatest friends" (Obama, 2009c).

Regardless of the specificities of the conflict or president in office, the Czech Republic as a loyal and capable ally and partner has been a dominant theme shaping relations between the two countries. This is particularly important when Cold War animosities are emphasised, as by Clinton (1996a) when referring to Czechs (and others) as "former adversaries who are now our friends". Such statements highlight how the Czech Republic has transcended the self-other barrier by moving from a member of the Warsaw Pact to a member of the group of the United States' preeminent political-military allies (Mole, 2007b, p. 158).

3.5 "...the Czech Republic or wherever": The Czech Republic as interchangeable with other countries of Central Europe

The final conceptual representation is remarkably consistent through the time period analysed. The great paradox of American representations of the Czech Republic is that, in spite of its strategic use by presidents, the Czech Republic and its historical experiences have been consistently rendered indistinguishable from other countries in Central Europe, particularly Poland and Hungary. The blending together of the characteristics and experiences of the formerly-communist countries of Europe has been done in a number of ways. The first, and most obvious method, is collectively

referencing significant historical moments such as the Prague Spring of 1968, the Hungarian Uprising of 1956, and events in the Gdansk Shipyards in 1981 (Clinton, 1997a ; 1999a). While the experiences of the Czech Republic have frequently been treated as interchangeable with those of other post-communist European countries, the practice is particularly salient in the time around the NATO enlargement of 1999 in which the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland joined the organisation (Clinton, 1999a).

In addition to these rather obvious examples, the blurring of the Czech Republic with other countries has also been done in more subtle ways. While discussing the question of visa regulations in a 2005 interview with Slovak State Television, George W. Bush (2005, emphasis added) stressed the need to take into consideration the “new realities of the Slovak Republic[,] or Poland[,] or the Czech Republic[,] *or wherever*”. Similarly, when discussing relations between the United States and Russia in March 2009, Obama stated that Russia must be aware of the United States’ commitment to defending “countries like a Poland or a Czech Republic” (Obama, 2009d). By using *a* instead of the definite article *the*, Obama effectively erases the individual, definable identities of Poland and the Czech Republic and relocates them to an abstract, conceptual level. In this sense, Obama does not speak about the security of the actual countries referenced; rather, he uses the two examples to fuse together all possible countries that might exhibit similar concerns vis-a-vis their relations with Russia. Through such practices, the Czech Republic is no longer a specific place, but a categorical placeholder – one candidate

from a selection pool that presumably includes all formerly-communist countries of Central Europe.⁶

3.6 Final Thoughts: The (Extra)ordinariness of the Czech Republic

The analysis of American presidential materials from 1989 to 2009 reveals that the Czech Republic has been consistently conceptualised in a number of ways in the sphere of American politics. This section has outlined the five major conceptual representations used to describe and characterise the Czech Republic. When examined in their entirety, a paradox emerges from the analysis. In the mental maps of American speech-writers, policy-makers, and presidents, the Czech Republic is constructed as both extraordinary and extremely ordinary – a concept previously acknowledged in the work of Rick Fawn (2003, p. 205). Fawn's (2003, p. 205) observation that the goal of some Czech intellectuals of statecraft has been to make the country "extraordinarily ordinary" also applies to how the country has been conceptually recorded in American state-level mental maps.

The presidential materials studied simultaneously exalt the country as a special symbol of democracy and freedom, personified by Havel, and as a country whose experiences are largely interchangeable with those of its neighbours. This paradoxical representation is accompanied by reference to the country's historical victimisation to justify to domestic audiences, or garner support from international ones, for American policies around the world. The strategic invocation of the Czech Republic is accompanied by descriptions of the natural and historic relations between Americans and Czechs, as well as frequent praise for the Czech Republic

⁶ This observation draws on the work of Felix Ciută in his conference paper "Lily-Pad Geopolitics: Romania in the Global War on Terror" (2010). In this article, he observes how places can take on strategic value for a certain purpose, minimising that place's individuality and maximising its utility in achieving a specific (geo)political objective (Ciută, 2010, pp. 20-21).

as a loyal and reliable ally of the United States. It is with these historic political conceptualizations of the Czech Republic in mind that the present discussion turns to American media depictions of the country in the period surrounding the 2009 shift in ballistic missile defence policy.

4. MEDIA CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER THE BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENCE POLICY ANNOUNCEMENT

This section outlines the findings of the content analysis of 221 media materials from the time period leading up to, during, and after President Obama's announcement. The time period examined spans from 14-25 September 2009 and the materials analysed include both newswire releases and newspaper articles that appeared in the results of the LexisNexis UK database search. Like the previous section explaining the results of the content analysis of presidential materials, this section will present categorised conceptualizations of the Czech Republic that are persistent throughout the period of study and across the various sources analysed. The three conceptualizations explored are: 1) The Czech Republic as in Eastern Europe and bordering Russia, 2) The Czech Republic as a victim of appeasement, betrayal, and domination, and 3) The Czech Republic as a loyal friend, partner, and ally.

In addition to presenting these thematic representations, this section will outline how American media reported the Czech domestic debate regarding the Third Site. While not a conceptualization in and of itself, it provides important insight into how American media presented to their readership Czech opinions, feelings, and perceptions of the radar component. As many media references to the Czech Republic dealt with Czech reactions to the decision, it is an important piece of the puzzle that cannot be neglected. That section will demonstrate that while American

media recognised the domestic unpopularity of the radar and some people's satisfaction with Obama's decision, it emphasised the country's vulnerability and sense of betrayal at the cancellation of the Third Site.

4.1 “...poised at Russia's hemline”: The Czech Republic as Eastern Europe and bordering Russia

Among the most consistent ways in which American media depicted the Czech Republic is as a country in Eastern Europe; and this description frequently places the Czech Republic at Russia's border. This effect was largely accomplished in two ways: 1) by describing the missile defence system itself as East(ern) European, and 2) through the use of brief geographically-descriptive phrases, such as the one appearing in the title of this sub-section. Together, these techniques effectively anchored the Czech Republic in the eastern part of Europe, kilometres east of its actual location on the contemporary map of Europe.

Even without direct mention of the Czech Republic, the country is treated as decidedly eastern because the missile defence system itself is endowed with its own inherently regional identity. The plan proposed by George W. Bush that was to place missile interceptors and a radar component in Poland and the Czech Republic is described by *The Associated Press* (17 September 2009) as a “missile shield for Eastern Europe”, by *The Christian Science Monitor* (LaFranchi, 17 September 2009a) as “a planned missile defense system in Eastern Europe”, and by *The New York Times* (Baker, et al., 18 September 2009) as a “proposed antiballistic missile shield in Eastern Europe”. These descriptions are powerful in their suggestive subtlety. By labelling the components of the Third Site in this way, they inscribe the Czech Republic with an eastern identity without even having to explicitly mention the country by name.

The second technique that contributes to this conceptualization of the Czech Republic as eastern and bordering Russia is the use of brief descriptions infused with geographical significance and inaccuracy. *The Associated Press* (17 September 2009) and later the Vermont-based *Brattleboro Reformer* (17 September 2009) describe the country as “the Czech Republic, poised at Russia’s hemline”. Together with Poland, the country was labelled by the Florida-based *St. Petersburg Times* (19 September 2009) as “the Czech Republic, virtually on Russia’s doorstep”. The Czech Republic and Poland were repeatedly referred to by *The Associated Press* (Gearan and Butler, 17 September 2009a) and *Associated Press Online* (Jakes, et al., 17 September 2009; Gearan and Butler, 17 September 2009b) as “eastern European nations at Russia’s doorstep and once under Soviet sway”. An *Associated Press Online* (17 September 2009a) headline proclaiming “Obama shifting missile defense from Eastern Europe” reveals the same tendency.

Such phrases, often used and recycled by other media outlets, misleadingly bind Poland and the Czech Republic together without considering the differences in location of each of the two countries. Whereas Poland borders Russia via Kaliningrad, the Czech Republic does not (Kratochvil, 2004, p. 5). Indeed, the distance between Prague and the city of Kaliningrad is a sound 869 kilometres (km)⁷ (Worldatlas.com, 2012; Google Maps, 2012). The misrepresentation becomes more egregious when compared to the distances between the Czech capital and other “western” European cities such as Vienna (333 km), Munich (386 km), and Zurich (698 km), all of which are closer than Kaliningrad, the nearest Russian city (Worldatlas.com, 2012; Google Maps, 2012). Further revealing is the fact that a

⁷ Distances in kilometres were calculated according to driving distances and will be rounded up or down to the nearest whole number

number of decidedly western European cities are much closer to Kaliningrad than Prague, such as Berlin (617 km), Copenhagen (742 km), and Stockholm (759 km) (Worldatlas.com; Google Maps, 2012). While all of these cities are closer to Kaliningrad than Prague, they are not typically conceived as being under Russian influence or on the country's doorstep.

This is important because it shows just how misleading and selective the media's geographic conceptualizations of the Czech Republic often were. In spite of this tendency, it is important to note that not all media sources described the country in this way (indeed, there are always exceptions). Nevertheless, what this observation does reveal is that, in the mental maps of American media outlets reporting on the cancellation of the Third Site, the Czech Republic was often mapped in a rather dated way. The result is that the reader is presented with the image of the Czech Republic as a country at Russia's edge, a territory largely indistinguishable from Poland.

4.2 The Czech Republic as a victim of appeasement, betrayal, and domination

A consistent thematic representation of the Czech Republic is that of a country that has been the constant victim of appeasement and domination at the hands of external forces. This portrayal was accomplished by both explicit references to specific events in the country's history and, as done by the office of Texas Representative Pete Sessions through *States News Service* (18 September 2009a), by describing President Obama's decision as a "policy of appeasement", "placating the wishes of Russia". Statements similar to those of Representative Sessions defining President Obama's decision in terms of appeasement to Russia were

prevalent throughout statements released by (mostly) Republican legislators in response to the President's announcement.

Politicians were not the only ones to vocalise their opposition in such emotional terms. An opinion piece appearing in a Massachusetts newspaper did not mince words when it compared President Obama's announcement and his efforts to reset US-Russia relations to Munich 1938:

"The White House decision also damaged relations with the Czech Republic, which had agreed to host an anti-ballistic missile (ABM) radar as part of the defensive system. Recall in 1938 in Munich, the West sold out Czechoslovakia in an attempt to 'reset' diplomacy with Adolf Hitler"
(*The Lowell Sun*, 25 September 2009).

A similarly dramatic portrayal was circulated in *Investor's Business Daily* (18 September 2009), which also criticised the decision via direct comparison to 1938: "Czechs are used to betrayal by their Western allies. It was at Munich in 1938 that British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain sealed their doom in exchange for a piece of paper promising 'peace in our time'". Editorials and articles portraying the Czech Republic and/or Obama's decision in a similar fashion appeared in *Tulsa World* (Greenberg, 25 September 2009), *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* (19 September 2009), and *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* (20 September 2009; 23 September 2009).

Analogies to appeasement and Munich 1938 were complemented by references to the Czech Republic's erstwhile status as a Soviet satellite state. In an article in *The Washington Times*, former US Ambassador to the United Nations John R. Bolton (22 September 2009) describes the sites of the originally-planned Third Site as located in "former Warsaw Pact countries, Russia's now-defunct sphere of influence". Information released by the Heritage Foundation through *States News Service* (22 September 2009) highlighted the bond between the United States and "former Soviet satellites Poland and the Czech Republic in particular". *Providence*

Journal (Kramer, 22 September 2009), reprinted an editorial from *The Washington Post* describing the Czech Republic as one of “two former Warsaw Pact states that Moscow used to control”, further emphasising the Czech Republic’s real or imagined proximity to Russia and the former Soviet Union. These historical references have the power to remind the reader, who may know nothing else about the Czech Republic, of the country’s historical affiliation with the former Soviet Union and geographical proximity to it.

This emphasis on the Czech Republic’s historical victimisation by detractors of the announcement and the media were so strong that allegations of appeasement and betrayal were among the most serious concerns the Obama administration had to address in the aftermath of the announcement. Representatives of the Obama administration, such Press Secretary Robert Gibbs and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, were forced to reiterate that the decision was “not about Russia” (*States News Service*, 17 September 2009a; *States News Service*, 18 September 2009b).

In a similar manner, those who supported the President’s decision showed no less interest in how Russia factored into the equation. A statement released by the Union of Concerned Scientists (*States News Service*, 17 September 2009b) expressed its confidence that the policy shift offered fresh opportunities for renewing cooperation with Russia, while Virginia Senator Jim Webb noted how the old system provoked Russia unnecessarily (*States News Service*, 18 September 2009c). Analysis of media sources reporting the cancellation reveals that the American debate was replete with concerns about Russia. Those supportive of the Bush system and opposed to Obama’s decision quickly pounced upon the opportunity to portray it as appeasement of Russia at the expense of the Czech Republic. Those

opposed to the Bush system and in favour of the new plan pointed to the opportunities for cooperation with Russia as justification.

What this reveals about American mental maps is that when it comes to the Czech Republic, Russia, and missile defence, public discourse is shaped by Cold War era conceptions (Ciută and Klinke, 2010, p. 324). References to the Czech Republic's vulnerable position in relation to historically aggressive neighbours were themselves used like missiles, launched at those on the opposing side of the debate. Ironically, even those who insisted on the importance of cooperating with Russia on missile defence simultaneously reinforced the notion that Americans *should* think about the radar intended for the Czech Republic in terms of Russian (dis)approval. The end result is a cyclical, geographically-driven debate that reinforces preconceived notions of geopolitical tensions involving the United States, the Czech Republic, and Russia.

4.3 The Czech Republic as a loyal friend, partner, and ally

As in the previous section outlining the results of the content analysis of presidential materials, the conceptualization of the Czech Republic as a loyal ally to the United States is also prevalent in media representations of the country. Recognition of the Czech Republic as a close and staunch ally of the United States was done by both critics and supporters of President Obama's decision. *San Jose Mercury News* (17 September 2009) of California printed a letter from one of its readers calling the policy shift and the timing of its announcement a "mortal insult" to "two close allies of ours". *The Associated Press* (Eckel, 18 September 2009) referred to the concerns of "Washington's staunchest allies in the former Soviet bloc" regarding their "massive eastern neighbor". In a similar manner, *The New York Times* (Kulish, et al., 18

September 2009) referred to Poland and the Czech Republic as “staunch Eastern European allies”.

Critics of the decision frequently invoked this particular conceptualization to emphasise its misguided nature in an attempt to shame the administration. A statement from the office of Virginia Representative Eric Cantor released to *States News Service* (17 September 2009c) described the decision not to proceed with missile defence components in the Czech Republic and Poland as “abandoning our commitments to those important European allies”. A similar statement released to *States News Service* (17 September 2009d) by the office of Kentucky Senator Mitch McConnell elaborated further, insisting that the United States not turn its back “on two loyal allies in the War on Terror”. The concept of the Czech Republic as a close ally is one that was also adopted and utilised by the Obama administration to reassure detractors, both domestic and international, of its continued commitment to the country. A fact sheet explaining the new approach to missile defence released by the White House affirms that, “The Czech Republic and Poland, as close, strategic and steadfast Allies of the United States” will continue to play a role in future decisions about ballistic missile defence (*States News Service*, 17 September 2009e).

Once again, the Czech Republic emerges as a valuable symbol that can be utilised by each side of the debate to strengthen and defend its position while weakening that of the other side. By invoking the name of a steadfast and staunch ally, opponents have a powerful instrument that may be used to portray the decision as to the detriment of friends who have consistently supported the United States. Alternatively, by recognizing the Czech Republic as a valuable partner and ally that will be included in the new approach, the Obama administration is able to administer

damage control and counter-balance critics. Given the manner in which this particular conceptualization is often used, one is left to wonder whether the articles and debates reflect a genuine concern for the potential marginalisation of an ally, or whether pundits and politicians alike are simply satisfied with saving face.

4.4 (Mis)representing the Czech debate to American audiences

This final sub-section constitutes an analysis of the overall presentation of the domestic Czech debate in American newswire reports, press releases, and newspaper articles. Overall, the media sources examined acknowledge that there were divisions within Czech society concerning the radar. A number of articles, including *The Washington Post* (Shear and Tyson, 18 September 2009), recognised the fact that the planned radar was unpopular among the Czech public. Others, such as *The Associated Press* (Janicek and Kole, 17 September 2009a) and *Associated Press Online* (Janicek and Kole, 17 September 2009b; c) mentioned that some Czechs feared having the radar on their soil would make the country a target for a terrorist attack.

It was also acknowledged that those politicians who had supported the US plan to place the radar in the Czech Republic had done so at the expense of domestic political support, such as in *Lewiston Morning Tribune* (Gearan, 18 September 2009) and *The New York Times* (Kulish, et al., 18 September 2009). Furthermore, *Associated Press Online* (17 September 2009a; Gearan and Butler, 17 September 2009a; b; Janicek and Kole, 17 September 2009c) acknowledged the fact that some Europeans had been preparing for and/or expecting the decision to cancel the Third Site. These important recognitions aside, the collective picture

painted by all sources examined is one that emphasises certain aspects of the Czech debate somewhat more than others.

Articles in *The Associated Press* (Gera, 18 September 2009a); *The Christian Science Monitor* (Lubold, 19 September 2009), and an editorial in *Herald News* (19 September 2009) were careful to emphasise the fact that Czechs saw the radar component as both a means to keep the United States present in the country and/or a safeguard against Russian aggression. American media like *The Associated Press* (Gera, 18 September 2009a) also highlighted Czech fears of a “resurgent Russia” or “Russian aggression”, as in *The New York Times* (Levy and Baker, 19 September 2009). In addition to highlighting Czech fears and anxieties about Russian aggression, newswires and newspapers were more likely to portray Czechs as betrayed, concerned, or disappointed rather than understanding of or pleased about the decision. This observation is best supported when one examines how American media used quotes by and references to Czech political figures and news.

On the whole, American sources analysed were slightly more likely to incorporate quotations from Czech political figures expressing dissatisfaction with President Obama’s policy shift. As expected, a number of sources referenced Prime Minister Jan Fischer acknowledging that Obama had contacted him about the decision, like *Associated Press Online* (17 September 2009b). Apart from such relatively neutral and informative references, particular favourites were quotations from Mirek Topolánek and Jan Vidím expressing their disappointment with the decision. Topolánek was reported by *Associated Press Online* (Janicek and Kole, 17 September 2009d), *The White House Bulletin* (17 September 2009), and *The Washington Post* (18 September 2009) as saying, “the Americans are not interested in this territory as they were before” and in New York-based *Daily News* as “...it’s

bad news for the Czech Republic” (Bazinet, et al., 18 September 2009). *Associated Press Online* (Janicek and Kole, 17 September 2009e) reported Vidím as saying of the Obama administration, “If the administration approaches us in the future with any request, I would be strongly against it”. The words of Václav Havel expressing concern about how Russia is testing the Czech Republic were used to a similar effect by *The Associated Press* (Gera, 18 September 2009a) and *The Houston Chronicle* (19 September 2009). Some sources also quoted those opposed to the plan and pleased with the new approach, such as politician Jiří Paroubek and activist Jan Tamáš, although they were not normally quoted as frequently as those previously mentioned (*The White House Bulletin*, 17 September 2009; Janicek and Kole, 17 September 2009a).

Of particular interest is the way in which American media utilised headlines and quotations from Czech media. The sources analysed did not make extensive use of references to Czech media; however, those that did only included references to Czech media that described the shift in American policy in negative, highly dramatic terms. *Associated Press Online* (Gera, 18 September 2009b) and *The Associated Press* (Gera, 18 September 2009a) quoted both *Hospodářské noviny* and *Mladá Fronta Dnes*⁸. From *Hospodářské noviny*, an excerpt from an editorial was used that bemoaned, “an ally we rely on has betrayed us, and exchanged us for its own, better relations with Russia, of which we are rightly afraid” (Gera, 18 September 2009a; b). The front-page headline of *Mladá Fronta Dnes*, “No Radar. Russia Won.” was included in the same releases (Gera, 18 September 2009a; b). The same headline from *Mladá Fronta Dnes* was quoted by Ohio Representative

⁸ In terms of content and source of origin, the two press releases are identical; however, as they appeared as separate sources in the LexisNexis database search, they are treated as such.

Michael Turner in his remarks at a ballistic missile defence conference, during which he warned of the “geopolitical consequences” of the President’s decision (*States News Service*, 21 September 2009). Apart from these references, the only other mention of a Czech newspaper was in *The New York Times* (Kulish, et al., 18 September 2009), which used a quote from the website of *Lidové noviny*. The quote featured, once again, the words of Jan Vidím expressing his “great disappointment and disgust over Mr. Obama's cowardice” (Kulish, et al., 18 September 2009).

From all of the sources reviewed, only a single headline and accompanying article portrayed the Czech position in a radically different manner. While the majority of articles either portrayed Czechs as unquestionably upset about the decision or acknowledged both sides of the debate in a balanced way, only one article from *The Washington Times* (Franchineau, 22 September 2009) entitled “Czech leader: Missile deal no problem; Klaus wary of EU regulation” described the Czech perspective as mostly calm and positive about the decision. In addition to quotes from President Václav Klaus describing the decision as largely unsurprising and reassuring the strong ties between the United States and the Czech Republic, the article includes Klaus’ belief that overregulation from the EU poses a greater threat to the Czech Republic than Russia (Franchineau, 22 September 2009). This article stands out as an anomaly in its presentation of Czech reactions to the decision, and particularly in terms of Czech-Russian relations.

This section has presented the three major thematic representations of the Czech Republic emerging from American news outlets covering the ballistic missile defence policy shift. It has shown how the sources analysed portrayed the Czech Republic as belonging to Eastern Europe and bordering Russia. The section has also demonstrated how portrayals of the country as a victim of appeasement,

betrayal, and domination were juxtaposed with simultaneous representations of the country as a strong and staunch ally of the United States. The final sub-section analysed how American media selectively, and at times misleadingly, reflected Czech perceptions, feelings, and rationale regarding the radar intended for their territory. The following section will analyse how these conceptualizations compare to those previously identified in American presidential materials from 1989-2009.

5. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CONCEPTUALIZATIONS IN PRESIDENTIAL MATERIALS AND MEDIA SOURCES

The previous two sections presented the results of two separate content analyses of American presidential textual materials from 1989-2009 and American media sources from 14-25 September 2009. Each section offers a structured presentation of the dominant themes and patterns that emerged from the analyses and groups them into specific conceptualizations. Having outlined and analysed the specified practical and popular geopolitical representations of the Czech Republic separately, the task of this section is to compare and contrast the two together. The primary aim of this section is to answer the research question: *What do American presidential materials from 1989 to 2009 and media reactions to President Obama's 2009 ballistic missile defence policy shift reveal about post-Cold War American conceptualizations of the Czech Republic?* In the process of answering this question, the section outlines the key thematic representations consistent in both the presidential and media sources analysed.

5.1 Locating the presidential in the popular: To what extent do the two sets of conceptualizations intersect?

The final comparative analysis proceeds with an essential cautionary note in mind. While this section compares and contrasts the results of two distinct content analyses, it must be acknowledged that it is not a comparison among equals. This study does not make the claim that a time period of twenty years spanning four presidential administrations is equivalent to a two-week time period examining media reporting on a single event. Certainly, conceptualizations on the formal political level that were nurtured and disseminated over twenty years involving the input of countless speechwriters and policy-makers carry more weight than news media portrayals of the Czech Republic during a period of fourteen days. With this concession in mind, it is important to revisit the specificities of the research question.

The goal of the research is not to equate the two analyses, but rather to examine what each reveals about the conceptualization of the Czech Republic in the post-Cold War era. The decision not to place the radar installation in the Czech Republic gave American media the opportunity to comment on a complicated and sensitive security-related issue concerning bilateral relations between the United States and the Czech Republic. As such, it constituted a crucial moment to reinforce, update, or even revise mental maps of the Czech Republic. By evaluating the extent to which media conceptualizations of the event reflected post-1989 political conceptualizations, the study will show in what ways and for what purpose the existing presidential mental map was legitimised or revised by the media. The answer has important implications for the broader theoretical underpinnings of the research.

Mindful of the acknowledged differences in the nature of the two groups of materials analysed, a number of conclusions may be drawn as to the relationship between them. The first finding is that the media conceptualizations of the Czech Republic related to the cancellation of the radar base reflected to a great extent the conceptualizations identified in the presidential materials. Two consistent thematic representations in particular reveal how the American media took its cues from politics in how it described and presented the Czech Republic to its readership. Like presidential texts, media reports highlighted two interpretations of the Czech Republic in particular: 1) as a loyal and true ally to the United States, and 2) as a victim of appeasement and other injustices at the hands of other countries. Both conceptualizations were identified and described in the respective analyses of presidential materials and media sources.

In addition to these two consistencies in portrayals of the country, the second finding is one noteworthy difference related to how the Czech Republic was framed geographically. Presidential materials exhibit greater cognitive and imaginative flexibility by simultaneously referring to the country as a part of central, eastern, new, and other parts of Europe (often using multiple descriptions in the same text). In contrast, media reporting on the missile defence policy shift were more consistent in their geographic descriptions of the Czech Republic. The newswires and newspaper articles surveyed were rather consistent in presenting the Czech Republic as a country in Eastern Europe. Combining missiles, the United States, Russia, and a “vulnerable” country in Eastern Europe (according to them), their work constitutes a reversion to geopolitical reasoning reminiscent of the Cold War that some, such as Ciută and Klinke (2010, p. 324) call the “new Cold War narrative”.

Having acknowledged two direct parallels between the two sets of conceptualizations and one intriguing difference, there are further similarities between the two groups. The third finding is that the media conceptualizations greatly reflect the presidential tendency to: 1) stylistically refer to the Czech Republic in highly emotional terms and, 2) to strategically use the country to support other, often unrelated, policies or decisions. While these two findings do not constitute conceptualizations as such, they are noteworthy as recurring trends in the research and are therefore worthy of discussion.

The following sub-sections outline in detail the identified consistencies and inconsistencies between the presidential and media texts. Once accomplished, the discussion turns to the stylistic and strategic trends reflected in both sets of sources. Together, each sub-section provides a piece of the answer to the research question by revealing how the Czech Republic has been conceptualised in the post-Cold War period.

5.2 The ally and the victim: Conceptual consistencies

As previously noted, there has been remarkable consistency in framing the Czech Republic simultaneously as a stalwart ally and historical victim. As the results of the two content analyses revealed, these conceptualizations were present in both presidential and media materials and reveal a harmonization between practical and popular geopolitics. This sub-section will discuss each in detail, beginning with the representation of the country as a loyal ally and then proceeding to descriptions of its perpetual victimisation.

The Czech Republic's steadfastness and solidarity with the United States were often highlighted, which was used to various effect depending on the context.

As noted in the analysis of presidential materials, the Czech Republic's accession to NATO had particular symbolic value as an event that signified the country's movement from a former Soviet ally to an ally of the United States. Similarly, the analysis of media materials shows how the concept of the Czech Republic as an ally was strategically used by proponents and opponents of Obama's decision alike. In this context, it was invoked either to accuse the administration of abandoning a loyal friend or to defend the decision by highlighting that the Czech Republic was, is, and always will be a close ally of the United States. In spite of its recurrence, this conceptualization stands in stark contrast to another persistent thematic portrayal. At the same time as the country was lauded for bravery, loyalty, and strength as an American ally, it was paradoxically presented as weak and emotional, history's perpetual victim.

Like depictions of the Czech Republic as a strong ally, there is demonstrated consistency in the emotions surrounding discussions of the country. References by American presidents to the country as "appeasement's lonely victim" (George H.W. Bush, 1990a) or underscoring how "...many times in the 20th century, decisions were made without you [the Czech Republic] at the table..." (Obama, 2009b) are complemented by some media and politicians denouncing Obama's policy shift as an act of appeasement. Though prevalent, appeasement is not the only emotional term applied to discussions of the Czech Republic. Indeed, emotions surround discussions of the country on both the practical and popular geopolitical level, a trend that will be revisited in one of the subsequent sub-sections.

This segment identified and outlined the two conceptualizations initially projected over a twenty-year period by American presidents that are also reflected in popular media conceptualizations. The following portion of the analysis discusses

the principal inconsistency identified between the two sets of materials studied. It will identify how the geography of the Czech Republic is presented as flexible, easily adapted for various circumstances.

5.3 Central, Eastern, or New?: Geographical Discontinuity in the American mental map

Notably absent from the analysis of presidential materials is a consistent conceptual representation of the Czech Republic in terms of its geography. The reason for this absence is because in the period spanning from 1989 to 2009, American presidents (or their speechwriters) located the Czech Republic on the map of Europe in different places. Across the administrations analysed, the Czech Republic⁹ has been interpreted as part of: “the East” (Clinton, 1994b), “Europe’s East” (Clinton 1998d) Eastern Europe, “Europe’s other half” (Clinton, 1994c), East and Central Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, Central Europe, “center of Europe” (Obama, 2009b), the “heart of Europe”, (George W. Bush 2001a; 2007a) “new Europe” (George H.W. Bush, 1991a; Clinton 1999b), and “heartland of the new Europe” (George H.W. Bush, 1990l)¹⁰. Recognising the inconsistency with which the Czech Republic has been referred to on the practical geopolitical level makes an examination of the popular geopolitical level all the more interesting.

As previously identified, media sources analysed for this study repeatedly depicted the Czech Republic as part of Eastern Europe. What makes the realisation more interesting still is when it is examined in the context of other post-Cold War

⁹ This includes descriptions of Czechoslovakia.

¹⁰ Those descriptions without a specific reference signify more general geographic labels routinely applied across the time period studied.

studies of popular geopolitical representations of post-communist European countries, including the Czech Republic.

In his study of post-communist European cartography during the 1990s, Zeigler (2002) established how the formerly-communist countries of Europe used maps to reorient conceptions of their geographic location within Europe. By requesting maps between 1994 and 1999 from the Washington DC-based embassies of the countries of interest, Zeigler (2002, p. 672) was able to investigate how those countries used maps to present themselves in a certain way. Zeigler (2002, p. 681) notes how the Czech Republic provided maps that emphasised its historic central location within Europe. By carefully including select portions of Russia, North Africa, and the North Atlantic and emphasising the continent's extensive network of highways leading to the country, the map presented the Czech Republic as the absolute centre of Europe (Zeigler, 2002, p. 681). Zeigler's (2002) study is significant because it is evidence of an effort by the Czech Republic to simultaneously emphasise its central location within Europe while minimising associations with the eastern part of the continent. This is important because, in spite of the country's best efforts to promote its European centrality to American audiences, the two content analyses show that the country's location remains ambivalent on the mental maps of American presidents while decidedly eastern on that of the media reporting the cancellation of the Third Site.

This cognitive geographical contradiction stands in contrast to the consistency with which materials examined highlighted the country's status as simultaneous ally and victim. Regardless, both geographical representations of the country in terms of its location in Europe (central, eastern, etc.) and thematic representations of the country (ally/friend, victim, etc.) have been constructed through the use of highly

emotional language. While not a firm means of conceptualising the country categorically, the perpetual emotionality of the Czech Republic has been a major force behind how the identified conceptualizations have been established. The following sub-section addresses this discursive practice of describing the country in sentimental terms and its effect.

5.4 The Perpetual Emotionality of the Czech Republic

When asked in 1994 by reporters about the emotional, sentimental, and spiritual highlights of his recent trip to Europe, Clinton responded:

“Well, the sentimental highlight was walking across the bridge in Prague for the first time in 24 years with Havel with this enormous sense of pride I had at the freedom that he had brought to the country and what I remembered from all the young people when I was there in Czechoslovakia 24 years ago, how deeply anti-Communist they were 24 years ago, how desperately they wanted to be free.”
(Clinton, 1994d).

George H.W. Bush (1990b) invoked similarly emotional terms, referring to the “...feeling in my [his] heart” that Czechs and Slovaks, due to their historical experiences, understood better than any other group of people why operations in the Persian Gulf were important. Around the time of the missile defence announcement, American media also capitalised on feelings and emotional sentimentality through statements such as, “Czechs feel betrayed”, appearing in *The Associated Press* (Kole, 14 September 2009). Some American politicians dissatisfied with the President’s decision also framed their discontent in highly emotional terms. One such example is Arizona Senator Jon Kyl, who referred to the decision as a “bitter disappointment” for Eastern Europeans (*States News Service*, 17 September 2009f).

Taken altogether, such language creates the impression of the Czech Republic as an emotional place compared to American strength and leadership. The

sentimental fragility inherent in this representation is a binary opposition to the American self-perception of the country as a “fortress” or “bastion” of democracy encouraged by doctrines of containment (Dodds, 2008, p. 213). The persistence of this emotional undercurrent is also reminiscent of early Cold War representations of Europe as weak-willed, exposed, and easily seduced by the Soviet Union; a “reality” that therefore required a strong and steadfast protector like the United States (O’Tuathail, 1992, p. 445).

This is consistent with Neta Crawford’s (2000, p. 119) observation that, despite protestations to the contrary, emotion plays a crucial role in realist theories and interpretations of international relations, such as those often driving American foreign policy. As Crawford (2000, pp. 140-142) points out, the very invocation of historical analogies, such as appeasement, the Prague Spring, and Velvet Revolution, has deeply emotional underpinnings with an instrumental purpose all its own. Historical analogies linking current events to past traumas are done intentionally to engender certain emotional responses from target audiences, regardless of whether the analogy is accurate or fair (*ibid.*). In the present case, emotionality deployed through descriptive language and historical analogies serve to (re)enforce American identity in the post-Cold War era.

The previous sections have outlined how the Czech Republic was conceptually presented to the American public by presidential messages and the news. The following sub-section provides an interpretation of why and for what purpose this was done. The main premise is that the Czech Republic has played an instrumental discursive role in asserting American national identity in the aftermath of the Cold War.

5.5 Reflecting Identity: the instrumentality of the Czech Republic in anchoring American identity in the post-Cold War era

Whether on the practical or popular level, the Czech Republic became a prominent tool in the expression of American identity. To understand how and why this was done, one must first turn to an examination of how American identity was (re)produced during the Cold War, a subject engaged in Campbell's (1992) classic study of American foreign policy. While Campbell's (1992) book focuses on various iterations of American identity over the course of the country's history (not exclusively the Cold War period), he makes the point that it was an important time for the rescripting of national identity vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. During the Cold War, the communist Soviet Union became the democratic United States' primary other (Campbell, 1992). Communism and the Soviet Union were interpreted as the latest iteration of danger to the American self (Campbell, 1992, pp. 137-138). Given the Cold War's preoccupation with ideological divisions, it emphasised the ethical rather than territorial boundaries of the American state (Campbell, 1992, p, 168).

The American preoccupation with the existential and ethical danger posed by eastern communism to western democratic values continued through the end of the Cold War. O'Tuathail (1992, pp. 446, 449) notes the continued geopolitical underpinning of George H.W. Bush's policy in the face of dramatic changes in Soviet satellite states and noted its self-congratulatory tone based on the perception of Western victory. This observation is not limited to the events of 1989; but rather reaches further into the post-Cold War period and has direct relevance for American conceptualizations of the Czech Republic.

On the practical geopolitical level, statements such as those made by President George W. Bush at the 2007 Democracy and Security Conference in

Prague are particularly revealing of how the logic persists into the post-Cold War era. In his speech, Bush makes a direct link between the Czech Republic and the triumph of American ideals:

“It is fitting that we meet in the Czech Republic, a nation at the heart of Europe and of the *struggle for freedom on this continent*... Through the *long darkness of the Soviet occupation*, the true face of this nation was never in doubt... The Communists had an *imperial ideology* that claimed to know the directions of history... From this experience, a clear lesson has emerged: Freedom can be resisted, and freedom can be delayed, but freedom cannot be denied.”
(George W. Bush, 2007a, emphasis added).

By contrasting the darkness of Soviet communism with the freedom of the post-Cold War period, the president’s statement makes a subtle but important inference. In an era of domestic public uncertainty and disagreement over American involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Czech experience serves as a vital reminder of a time gone by in which the United States and its ideals triumphed over an “imperial ideology” (George W. Bush, 2007a). As demonstrated over the course of this study, intellectuals of statecraft have been keen to capitalise on this symbolic value.

In the period surrounding Obama’s announcement about the shift in missile defence policy, American media (and the politicians who released statements through it) used the Czech Republic to a similar effect. Lest the reader forget about American centrality in Central Europe, an article from *The Christian Science Monitor* (LaFranchi, 17 September 2009b) reminds them that, “The core motivation of countries like Poland and the Czech Republic in considering the missile defense program was never a fear of Iran...but rather cementing a US commitment to their own defense, especially in the context of a resurgent and aggressive Russia”. Much like the aforementioned example from George W. Bush, this statement reinforces to the newspaper’s readership that the United States still has a vital role to play for the Czech Republic as an essential counterpart to a dangerous and menacing Russia.

The overarching message is that, despite of successes or failures in other parts of the world, the United States remains an important protector for the ever-vulnerable Czech Republic.

As a former satellite that successfully orbited out of the sphere of Soviet influence, the Czech Republic represents an “extended self” (Mole, 2007b, p. 158) with important strategic and symbolic value for American geopolitical reasoning. In their respective works, Mole (2007b, p. 158) and Hampton (1998, p. 239) explore how one state can identify with another to the point that it may view it as an extension of itself. Mole (2007b, p. 158) notes how states (the self) try to project an image of themselves as belonging to a particular normative group and that this can increase their sense of protection against a perceived enemy (the other). Similarly, positive identification between states can lead them to move beyond calculated assessments of interest and even view their destinies and interests as linked to each other (Hampton, 1998, p. 239). Mole’s (2007b) work on the Baltic States and Hampton’s (1998) work on Germany, the United States, and NATO are directly relevant to this study.

When portrayed as an ally, the Czech Republic is an extended self by virtue of shared membership in NATO and shared principles exercised through cooperation (Mole, 2007b, p. 155). It is a country that shares the United States’ political-military orientation, bound together by the important guarantees of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. When portrayed as a victim, the Czech Republic is a part of the extended self in need of protection. Calling on Campbell’s (1992, pp. 75-76) analysis of the body metaphor in American foreign policy, the Czech Republic is a body part whose weakness is a threat to the self in its entirety (see also Ringmar, 2007, pp. 121-122).

The final point is that either portrayal of the Czech Republic effectively draws the focus back to the American self. Thematic representations of the country are as much about the United States itself as they are about the Czech Republic. In this way, the Czech Republic serves as a symbolic mirror that reflects American identity, a looking glass to which American audiences need only turn for reassurance about the goodness and purity of their ideals.

CONCLUSION

Banal Consistency: the Czech Republic on the American Mental Map

With the exception of the inconsistent geographic representations of the Czech Republic, the results of the study are consistent with the observation of Ciută and Klinke (2010, pp. 328-329) that in spite of efforts to distinguish between different levels of geopolitics such as practical and popular, there is perhaps only geopolitics. Ciută and Klinke (2010, p. 329) point to the blurring lines between the various levels of geopolitics: practical, popular, and formal, and argue that scholarly distinctions do not necessarily hold firm in practice. While American presidents have not yet reconciled themselves as to where precisely the Czech Republic is located within Europe, they are remarkably consistent in their strategic use of the country's symbolic value.

The final conclusion is that, ultimately, it matters little whether the Czech Republic is presented as a steadfast and loyal ally or a vulnerable victim in need of American strength and protection. Either conceptualization effectively binds the two countries to each other and reinforces their mutual interdependence. By means of example, the assertion that the Czech Republic needs an American presence on its

soil (in the form of a radar or otherwise) to protect against an ominous and ultimately unclear Russian threat is to simultaneously assert that the United States remains the natural counterbalance to Russian hegemony in Europe. Paradoxically, emphasizing the erstwhile Warsaw Pact member's strength as a political-military ally of the United States further promotes the United States and its allies as Russia's foil. With this in mind, the final sections of this study will situate the findings of all three analytical discussions into the context of banal geopolitics (Sidaway, 2001; 2003; Ciută and Klinke, 2010, p. 329).

In their analysis of (geo)politics surrounding the Third Site in Poland and the Czech Republic, Hynek and Střítecký (2010a, p. 184) recall the "panic" in the two countries that set in after Obama's announcement. In particular, they highlight the "emotional pleas in which the darkest visions and traditional geopolitical realism resurfaced" (Hynek and Střítecký, 2010a, p. 184). Given the previously-identified geopolitical conceptualizations projected by the United States' chief executive over the twenty years prior to Obama's decision, this reaction from Czech audiences is hardly a surprise. On the contrary, it may be argued that those in the Czech Republic who interpreted the decision as a capitulation to Russia, betrayal by a great power, or other form of insult took their cues from twenty years of American geopolitical messages. Such reactions, and the reasoning that inspires and underpins them, may be considered "taken-for-granted" or "banal" geopolitics (Sidaway, 2001, pp. 606-607).

Banal geopolitics refers to particular geopolitical storylines that are so frequently recycled and distributed that they become thoroughly predictable and unsurprising (Sidaway, 2001, pp. 606-607; Sidaway, 2003, p. 646; Ciută and Klinke, 2010, p. 329). In light of the previous analyses, American conceptualizations of the

Czech Republic observed on the presidential level and in the media covering the cancellation of the Third Site fall into this category. Rather than take advantage of a fresh opportunity with high visibility to present audiences with an updated mental map, American media (with some exceptions) recycled pre-packaged storylines readily drawn from the annals of presidential geopolitical logic. Indeed, as far as geographical representations are concerned, the media proved itself even more unwilling than presidents to think of the Czech Republic as much other than Eastern European.

This final observation begs the question as to what kind of stories sell American newspapers. The question could be asked whether a story of the Czech Republic as a stable country in Central Europe, firmly integrated into European and trans-Atlantic institutions, kilometres away from Russia and at no risk of invasion (existential, imminent, or otherwise) is a story that would sell to American news readers. Given the geopolitical trends of the past twenty years, the answer is likely in the negative; unless the American mental map of the Czech Republic undergoes a major revision.

Ironically, the words of George W. Bush are a refreshing reminder of the need to do just that. When discussing the Third Site in Prague in 2007, he reasoned, “The cold war is over; it ended. The people of the Czech Republic don't have to choose between being a friend to the United States or a friend with Russia. You can be both” (George W. Bush, 2007b). Indeed, these words are a powerful reminder of the need to move beyond outdated modes of thinking towards truly cooperative policies. In terms of updating their mental maps of the Czech Republic, American leaders, be they in the White House, governmental agencies, or the newsroom, would be wise to take these words to heart, mindful of the axiom, “there is no time like the present”.

Opportunities for Further Research

This study has shown how the Czech Republic has been conceptualised in select texts representing American practical and popular geopolitics. It has shown how the Czech Republic holds symbolic value that is often used strategically to promote a certain message or bolster a particular interpretation of American identity. For reasons of time, lack of familiarity with comprehensive databases containing Czech presidential and media resources, and language limitations, the researcher was not able to incorporate Czech conceptualizations of the United States into this study. As such, this constitutes an intriguing and important opportunity for further research.

By analysing Czech presidential and/or prime ministerial materials from 1989 to 2009 and Czech media reporting the cancellation of the Third Site, the scope of the research would be expanded and deepened. Such an undertaking would allow for comparison between Czech conceptualizations of the United States and American conceptualizations of the Czech Republic. Of particular interest would be the extent to which the Czech Republic also conceptualised the United States in a way that gave the country special symbolic significance that ultimately connected back to Czech conceptions of its own post-1989 national identity. This would allow for the possibility to explore the extent to which countries can have symbiotic relationships, similar to those observed in the natural world. Finally, research of a similar nature may be conducted about any country where substantial resources exist. Such research can provide further insight into understanding the cyclical relationship between a state's understanding of itself and others and its foreign policy trajectory.

SUMMARY

Under the umbrella of a constructivist ontology and drawing on concepts from the field of critical geopolitics, this study answered the question: *What do American presidential materials from 1989 to 2009 and media reactions to President Obama's 2009 ballistic missile defence policy shift reveal about post-Cold War American conceptualizations of the Czech Republic?* To answer the question, the researcher conducted question-based qualitative content analysis of presidential materials from 1989 to 2009 available from the database of *The American Presidency Project* and media reports from 14-25 September 2009 from the LexisNexis UK database.

The results of the content analyses reveal that, in both sets of sources, the Czech Republic has been consistently conceptualised as both a loyal ally of the United States and victim of historical betrayal, abandonment, and appeasement. The results also show that the Czech Republic's location in Europe is portrayed inconsistently and that, depending on the speaker and the circumstances, may be labelled as central, eastern, new, or in other ways. Ultimately, the materials surveyed reveal that the Czech Republic has been conceptualised in a way that endows it with symbolic and strategic value that relates to a certain understanding of American national identity. The historical experiences of the Czech Republic are easily invoked in a way that reaffirms the United States' pivotal role in post-Cold War Europe and reminds domestic audiences of the country's position as the main counterbalance to Russian, perceived or actual, aggression in Central Europe.

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