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Old Master, New Neighbour
Putin's Russia in the Czech Foreign Policy Discourse

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Abstract

The return to democracy in Central-Eastern Europe (CEE) and the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 did not mean that CEE-Russian relations could start anew. This dissertation uses post-structuralist discourse analysis and takes the case of the Czech Republic to examine the development of the Czech official foreign policy discourse towards Russia between 2001 and 2009. Looking at the history of opinions on Russia in the Czech lands and analyzing five events or periods of the 2000s, the present works tracks the evolution of the Russia's identity as constructed by the official Czech discourse. On the official level, the influence of Russia's image on the construction of the Czech identity is also analyzed. The results showed a worsening of relations after 2006 and suggest that the image of the 'Russian threat' has not disappeared from the political discourse in the Czech Republic. Moreover, the Czech official foreign policy discourse constructed the image of the Czech Republic as anchored in its Euroatlantic and European orientation.

Keywords: Czech Republic, Foreign Policy, Russia, Czech-Russian Relations, Putin

25,641 words

Abstrakt

Návrat demokracie ve střední a východní Evropě a rozpad Sovětského svazu v roce 1991 neznamenaly, že dojde k obnovení vztahů mezi střední a východní Evropou a Ruskem. Diplomová práce zkoumá vývoj oficiálního českého zahraničně-politického diskurzu vůči Rusku v období let 2001-2009 pomocí poststrukturální diskurzivní analýzy. Práce předkládá stručný přehled českých postojů vůči Rusku a podrobněji se zabývá analýzou několika vybraných údalostí z počátku 21. století. Pojednává tedy o vývoji identity Ruska, již oficiální český diskurz utváří. Dále analyzuje obraz Ruska vytvořený vládou a jeho vliv na utvaření české identity. Výsledky této analýzy ukazují, že po roce 2006 došlo k zhoršení vzájemných vztahů a že obraz 'ruské hrozby' z politického diskurzu v České Republice nezmizel. Navíc oficiální český zahraničně-politický diskurz vytvářel obraz České Republiky jakožto státu zakořeněného ve svých euroatlantických a evropských postojích.

Klíčová slova: Česká Republika, zahraniční politika, Rusko, česko-ruské vztahy

25 641 slov

Declaration of Authorship

1. The author hereby declares that he compiled this thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature.

2. The author hereby declares that all the sources and literature used have been properly cited.

3. The author hereby declares that the thesis has not been used to obtain a different or the same degree.

Prague May 17, 2013 Adrien Beauduin

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1 Identity, Self & Other and Discourse

In the last years, the EU has been trying to become a stronger international actor, yet it often fails in defining a common foreign policy and acting as one beyond its borders. On many occasions the European public witnessed how countries took different stands on matters such as anti-missile shield and the Georgian-Russian war. On those two issues, a profound East-West rift could be observed.

Indeed, when it comes to relations with Russia or the Eastern Partnership, former communist countries of Central Eastern Europe are very active and often profoundly disagree with Western member states. For more than forty years, CEE lived within a single political and economical space with their socialist neighbours and the republics of the Soviet Union; the Baltic countries themselves are former Soviet republics. Up to now, Belarus, the Ukraine and Russia are important economical partners and CEE is heavily dependent on Russian energy resources. Relations with the eastern neighbours are thus a key foreign policy issue.

When it comes to Russia, history left deep scars. With the revival of the Russian foreign policy under President Vladimir Putin, the Kremlin's foreign policy raises concern among some CEE political elites and citizens. The experience of Soviet tanks rolling in and decades of occupation are still vivid. This makes relations with Russia more than a strictly economic or political issue.

As a country where the memory of the Soviet-style totalitarian regime and the

1968 invasion is still very vivid, the Czech Republic is a place where one can sense how present the past is. In politics like in society, sensibility for the past can be felt. This has been shown by the debate around the anti-missile defence shield, for example, as the government widely used anti-Russian rhetoric and references to the past. This example reflected common fears in CEE that the EU cannot do enough to check Russia's influence in the region and that the United States, or NATO, are the only rampart.

Although the present work focuses exclusively on the Czech Republic, I believe it will cast a light on the situation in other countries of CEE, and perhaps in other post-communist countries as well. Understanding CEE's position towards Russia is key in analyzing how the East-West gap can be bridged and how the EU can reach a common foreign policy towards Russia and the broader Eastern neighbourhood.

The approach used in this work focuses on the Czech Republic's foreign policy towards Russia in the 2000s. More precisely, it puts under the microscope the Czech official foreign policy discourse and policies. Using poststructuralist analysis, the way the Czech 'Self' discursively constructed, and was being constructed by, the Russian 'Other' is scrutinized. Taking different periods and events, changes in those discursive constructions are looked at, and the different policies accompanying those discourses are exposed.

The question of identity is central to the post-structuralist discourse analysis of foreign policy. "As particular constructions of identity underpin and legitimize policies, the broader political and ethical ambition is to show how these constructions impose particular constraints on which subjects can gain a legitimate if circumscribed presence

and which foreign policies might in turn be meaningfully proscribed." [1] The concept of identity went through numerous changes though, and it is important to look at its developments to understand the way poststructuralism sees it.

The same can be said of the Self/Other concept, which is widely used to explain how identity is formed. Although the idea of an Other shaping the Self has been circulating in different fields of research a long time before poststructuralism came about, the way post-structuralists deal with the Self/Other nexus draws on a long development best described by Iver B. Neumann and summarized here below. A summary of the introduction of this nexus to the field of international relations is provided.

Afterwards, an overview of the ontological and epistemological positions of poststructuralism is provided and the importance of discourse is highlighted. Since the present work is drawing its inspiration from the work of the Copenhagen school, the latter's ideas are introduced and some contentious parts of its approach are discussed. A particular emphasis is put on Lene Hansen's research and methodology. This work's methodology and research model will then be exposed.

Finally, the main body of this thesis begins with a history of Czech opinions on Russia, the so-called conceptual histories before turning to contemporary relations. The study of the Czech official foreign policy discourse and positions is divided in five chronological parts from 2001 to 2009 and changes in words and acts are analyzed in each of them.

1 Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice. Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*. London: Routledge, 2006, 37

1.1 Identity

Although the term 'identity' became widely used only in the 1960s, it became so fashionable, all-encompassing, and came to mean so many different things, that scholars Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper proposed to replace it.[2] Originally, 'Identity', and especially 'identity crisis', were popularized in the 1950s-1960s by psychologist Erik Erikson. He saw identity as "an interaction between the interior development of the individual personality understood in terms derived from the Freudian id-ego-superego model, and the growth of a sense of selfhood that arises from participating in society, internalizing its cultural norms, acquiring different statuses, and playing different roles." [3]

At the beginning of its development as a psychological concept, different theories of identity were formulated. There were basically two different visions of identity: a primordialist and an interactionist one. Primordialists believed that identity is continuous and internal whereas interactionists saw it as evanescent and external.[4] As identity became gradually used in social sciences to denote feelings of belonging to groups such as class, race, nation or gender, theories were elaborated and research fields opened up.

In the 1970s-1980s, social identity theories were developed to explain the "classic social psychology problem of the relationship of the individual to the group and the emergence of collective phenomena from individual cognitions." [5] The two main theories which are still in use today are Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory (SIT). They both turned away from prior understandings depicting identity as a given and

2 Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, Beyond 'Identity'."*Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 9
3 Philip Gleason, "Identifying Identity: A Semantic History" *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 69, No. 4 (1983): 914
4 Philip Gleason, "Identifying Identity: A Semantic History", 920
5 Rupert Brown, "Social Identity Theory: past achievements, current problems and future challenges." *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 30 (2000): 746

argued "that the fixed subject of liberal humanistic thinking is an anachronism that should be replaced by a more flexible individual whose identity is fluid, contingent, and socially constructed." [6]

The interest of Social Identity Theory lies in its focus on the importance of one or many out-groups in the definition of sameness. SIT is interested in group processes and intergroup relations and posits three things: social identity is derived from group membership; people strive to achieve or maintain a positive social identity; a positive social identity derives largely from favourable comparisons between the in-group and out-group(s).[7] The importance of the Other is to be highlighted here since it is of particular interest when applying SIT ideas to the field of international relations.

1.2 Self & Other

It must be stressed that the ideas of in-group/out-group, or self/other, are not inventions we owe to SIT. Iver B. Neumann traces back the use the conceptual pair of self/other for the question of identity formation to the German philosopher Georg W.F. Hegel. The latter's idea was that "by knowing the other, the self has the power to give or withhold recognition, so as to be constituted as self at the same time." [8]

In his review of the history of the social theorizing of collective identity, Neumann stresses the almost strictly dialectical reading of identity formation that was picked up by Marx's reformulation of Hegelian dialectics.[9] He adds that this dialectical vision was then

6 Leonie Huddy, "From Social to Political Identity: A Critical Examination of Social Identity Theory" *Political Psychology* Vol.22, No.1 (2001): 127
7 Rupert Brown, "Social Identity Theory: past achievements, current problems and future challenges" , 747
8 Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the Other : The "East" in European Identity Formation*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999, 141
9 Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the Other : The "East" in European Identity Formation*, 141

to be found in most twentieth-century Western philosophy.[10] Neumann looks at four 'paths' that were taken in the theorizing of the Other: the ethnographic, psychological, Continental philosophical and the 'Eastern excursion'.[11]

Neumann sees the ethnographic path trodden by sociologists and social anthropologists such as Durkheim and Barth as having achieved a "break with psychological conjecture"[12]. They rather insisted on identity formation as a result of social interaction. Durkheim's idea of in-groups and out-groups as well as Barth's study of technic groups and their constitution of boundaries to other groups are mentioned as breakthroughs.[13] The consequent application of those ideas to the study of nationalisms was another step forward in the understanding of the self/other nexus.[14]

Under "the psychological path", Neumann highlights the contribution of social psychology to the idea of "self-categorization as an explanation of how individuals are turned into groups."[15] Not only do we categorize ourselves, but this identity formation is also an "attempt to overcome a lack, as a process of desire for the power of the other, that produces an image of the self."[16] Neumann also identifies what he calls Lacanian psychoanalysis, and the work of Anne Norton in particular, as being behind studies interested in the ambiguity of self/other and 'liminar' groups where self and other overlap.[17]

The third path, coined by Neumann as "the Continental Philosophical path", is

10 Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the Other : The "East" in European Identity Formation*, 141
11 Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the Other : The "East" in European Identity Formation*, 141.
12 *Ibid*, 142.
13 *Idem*
14 *Ibid,* 143.
15 *Ibid,* 144.
16 *Ibid,* 145.
17 *Idem*

the one "paved with Marxist dialectics"[18] as mentioned earlier. As he puts it himself: "the dialectically framed self and other are [...] unsuspecting victims of the march of reason and progress [...] abstracted from power and indeed from the multiplicities of social bonds other than that of reasoned discourse. It is probably because of this lack of social placement that the most striking thing about the theorizing which has followed this path is its seeming inability to offer new insights about collective identity formation."[19]

Finally, Neumann credits the fourth path, "the Eastern Excursion", for the break with a dialectical understanding of the self/other nexus. He singles out philosophers Simmel, Schmitt, Nietzsche and Bakhtin as having played a major role in taking this path.[20] He considers Mikhail Bakhtin as offering an alternative to dialectism in the form of dialogism.[21]

> "Bakhtinian dialogism identifies writing as both subjectivity and communication, or better, as intertextuality. Confronted with this dialogism, the notion of a 'person-subject of writing' becomes blurred yielding to that of 'ambivalence of writing' [...] Dialogism replaces [dialectical] concepts by absorbing them within the concept of relation. It does not strive towards transcendence but rather towards harmony, all the while implying an idea of rupture (of opposition and analogy) as a modality of transformation."[22]

18 *Ibid,* 146.
19 Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the Other : The "East" in European Identity Formation*, 146.
20 *Ibid*, 147
21 *Ibid*, 148
22 Julia Kristeva, "Word, Discourse, and Novel." In *The Kristeva Reader*, by Julia Kristeva, edited by Toril Moi, 34-61. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991, 38

He sees the decisiveness of the 'Eastern excursion' in "the force with which Bakhtinian and, to an even greater degree, Nietzschean insights grew into a path in their own right and curved back to offer an alternative to the Continental philosophical path." [23]

The succession of 'paths' mapped here is seen by Neumann as the tortuous way which finally led to the development of poststructuralism in the late 1960s and 1970s. This new theoretical approach was applied throughout the realm of social sciences and the field of International Relations (IR) was not spared. New frames of analysis in which the Self/Other nexus was applied to states were developed; the focus was thereafter directed on narrative structures and discourses.

1.3 Self & Other in International Relations

Neumann sees the arrival of the self/other nexus in IR as happening in a series of steps. As he underlines, one of the first efforts to bring the ideas aforementioned closer to the field of IR came from an outsider. Tzvetan Todorov, a literary critic who wrote a book on the question of the Other in the context of the Conquest of America by the Spaniards, is seen by Neumann as "the first fully-fledged application of the self/other problematique to a historical discursive sequence." [24]

Whereas Todorov focused on the self/other nexus in a case that could be described as 'political', he did not per se enter the sphere of IR as we know it nowadays. IR are still very much about the interaction of states and thus James Der Derian is identified by Neumann as being a precursor in taking states as the selves and others and focusing on

23 Neumann, *Uses of the Other : The "East" in European Identity Formation*, 149.
24 *Ibid,* 155

an analysis of their mediation of enstrangement.[25]

Michael J. Shapiro is also considered a pioneer for remarking that "foreign policy generally is about making an other."[26] Shapiro insisted that "Self/other relations have to be understood in their historicity, they are aspects of historically contingent ideas of self, which again are rooted in historically contingent ideas about time and space."[27]

Although Shapiro furthered the theoretical development of the ideas of Self/Other in IR, an important scholar in applying these ideas to practical research was David Campbell. He analyzed the United States' foreign policy over history as a narrative structure. He focused especially on the use of 'Others' to define foreign policy. "The state, holds David Campbell, needs to articulate threats and radical Others to construct its identity, and hence there is a drive within the ontology of national identity for turning constructions of difference into Otherness."[28]

Although this 'drive' is important, it does not mean that each foreign policy needs radical Otherness, as Campbell himself highlights. Thus some identities are characterized by the weak salience of Otherness, as the 'Nordic identity' of the Scandinavian countries; and the Other can sometimes be an older Self, as in the 'old warmongering Europe' vs. 'modern peaceful European Union' nexus.[29]

One of the major flaws of Campbell's research, as identified by Neumann and Hansen, is his neglect of dissent and marginal discourses. Although it is perfectly understandable considering the scope of the period he studied (America since its discovery by Europeans), it nevertheless gives the false impression that discourse is harmonious,

25 *Idem*
26 Neumann, *Uses of the Other : The "East" in European Identity Formation*, 156.
27 *Ibid,* 156.
28 Hansen, *Security as Practice. Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 38.
29 *Ibid*, 39.

united and unchallenged. Thus we only see a series of discourses which follow one another in time in a more or less harmonious succession. Based on this critique, other scholars subsequently turned their attention to the unstable nature of discourse, and the centrality of contradiction will be underlined by other scholars.

1.4 Post-structuralism and Discourse

Post-structuralism and discourse theory developed in the 1960s as part of the linguistic turn in social sciences. Looking at the world from an anti-essentialist point of view, poststructuralist thinkers started to analyze social phenomena as discursive forms. The concepts of text or discourse are not restricted to a piece of paper or a speech, they rather refer to a much broader understanding. According to Jacob Torfing, "discourse is defined as a relational ensemble of signifying sequences that provides the conditions of emergence of any meaningful object. This does not deny the existence of real objects outside discourse, but simply asserts that the construction of such objects as meaningful always take place within discourse." [30] Psychologist Ian Parker offers a similar definition of discourse: "a system of statements which construct an object." [31]

Although there exist differences in post-structuralist and discourse theories that were elaborated in the last decades, their cornerstone is an "*anti-essentialist ontology*, which is opposed to the idea of a self-determining centre that structures society and defines identity while itself escaping the process of structuration." [32] This dialogical way

30 Jacob Torfing, "post-structuralist Discourse Theory: Foucault, Laclau, Mouffe, and Žižek," in *The Handbook of Political Sociology: States, Civil Societies, and Globalization*, by Thomas Janoski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 161

31 Ian Parker, *Discourse Dynamics: Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology*, London and New York: Routledge, 1992: 5

32 Jacob Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Zizek.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1999, 2

of seeing identity is the reason why post-structuralists believe that the focus of research should be to analyze the way "identity is constructed in and through a multiplicity of overlapping language games." [33]

The analysis of identity as a discursive construction is precisely what a leading group of scholars known as the Copenhagen school of IR is interested in. The works of Ole Waever, for example, showed how states and political actors 'securitized' or 'de-securitized' issues through discourse and what impact it had on foreign policy. The Copenhagen school "focuses on identity formation and self/other relations in terms of the clash of different discursive practices." [34] Although the scholars involved within this school of thought have their disagreements over epistemological questions, they heavily draw from post-structuralism to analyze self/other relations in the field of international politics.

33 Jacob Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse*, 2.
34 Neumann, *Uses of the Other : The "East" in European Identity Formation*, 162

2 Theory and Methodology

2.1 Theoretical Approach

The basis for the present work will be post-structuralist discourse analysis. As Lene Hansen, one of its leading academics, wrote, I believe such a theory "can be drawn upon to show not only that identities matter for foreign policy, but also how they can be studied systematically through the adoption of a theory of discourse. In doing so it pursues a particular set of research questions, centred on the constitutive significance of representations of identity for formulating and debating foreign policies." [35]

In short, the present work supports the idea of identity as discursive, political, relational and social. Discursive because it only 'exists' through its articulation in discourses and has no real existence outside the discursive realm. As soon as it ceases to be repeated and rearticulated through discourse, it ceases to 'exist'. Moreover, this process is political since identity is "politically constructed through acts of inclusion of exclusion, or, in other words, by the exercise of power." [36] This brings us to the relational conception of identity, which implies that identity is always built in comparison, and more often contradiction, with other identities. Finally, the social conception of identity underlines its collective nature, as a "set of collectively articulated codes, not as a private property of the individual" [37].

To critiques pointing at the irrelevance of post-structuralist IR research, Hansen

35 Hansen, *Security as Practice. Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 5
36 Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Zizek,* 4.
37 Hansen, *Security as Practice. Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 6

answers by pointing out that post-structuralist analysis has indeed an agenda that directly addresses the conduct of foreign affairs, so-called 'real world problems'. She underlines that "policies are dependent upon representations of the threat, country, security problem, or crisis they seek to address. Foreign policies need to ascribe meaning to the situation and to construct the objects within it, and in doing so they articulate and draw upon specific identities of other states, regions, peoples, and institutions as well as on the identity of a national, regional, or institutional Self." [38]

Another 'weak side' of post-structuralist IR research according to positivists, and even constructivists, is the lack of a causal epistemology. One of the leading constructivist IR scholars, Alexander Wendt, thus claimed that "constitutive theories 'imply hypotheses about the world that can and should be tested.'" [39] As for post-structuralists, they reject causal epistemology because "knowledge is historically and politically situated" [40] and thus causal epistemology is just another discourse of knowledge. Hansen rather claims that "representations of identity and policy are linked through discourse, but [...] they do not stand in a causal relationship with one another as representations of identity are simultaneously the precondition for and (re)produced through articulations of policy." [41]

2.2 Methodology

As the previous text hopefully made clear, the question of identity is central to post-structuralist discourse analysis. Thus it was important for the first parts of this work to trace back the history of central concepts that are its pillars: identity per se, the

38 Hansen, *Security as Practice. Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 5
39 *Ibid,* 9
40 *Ibid,* 10
41 *Idem*

Self/Other nexus and discourse. Now let us turn to the methodology which logically derives from the theoretical bases aforementioned. How can we analyze foreign policy as a discursive construction? What are the pitfalls of this kind of analysis? How reliable is it?

My research will be based on the works of the Copenhagen school, and more particularly on the work of Lene Hansen. Her book on the Western debate during the Bosnian War is a source of inspiration for IR research conducted in the post-structuralist vein. Indeed she manages to explain the ideological basis of this intellectual current and shape a corresponding research model applicable to modern IR problems. Moreover, she proves the validity of this research model by applying it to the question of the West and the Bosnian War.

Prior to exposing her research model, the present work will present an overview of the analytical approach adopted. Hansen's work pinpoints four analytical steps to look into the complexity of identity. She insists on the variability of the degrees of Otherness; the complexity of the Self/Other nexus as a process of linking and differentiation; the spatial, temporal and ethical aspects of identity construction; and finally the organization of discourses within a field of debate.

2.3 Analytical Approach

This work's main analytical approach is to search for the spatial, temporal and ethical constructions of identity. Hansen sees them as "analytical lenses that bring out the important political substance of identity construction, not explicitly articulated signs." [42] She explains their importance by arguing that "the overriding goal of foreign

42 Hansen, *Security as Practice. Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 46

policy discourse is to articulate the three elements in such a manner that they draw upon and reinforce each other" [43]. Moreover, Hansen insists that "spatiality, temporality, and ethicality have equal theoretical and ontological status; there is not one dimension which is more fundamental than the others or which can be said to determine the other two. Particular texts might be more explicitly concerned with one of the three dimensions." [44]

The spatial construction involves the delimitation of subjects within certain limits, often within the physical boundaries of the state in international relations; the temporal construction refers to a certain location of the subject in time, whether progressing, stagnating, regressing, being immovable, or other; the ethical construction is based on the notion of responsibility, which is often centred on the own national community in international relations, but can sometimes be extended to other nations that have to be civilized, protected or saved.

For example, Hansen's work on the Bosnian War analyzes the construction of a 'Balkan' identity in which a territory has been branded as 'Balkan' (spatial construction), whose people is seen as constantly killing each other (temporal) and whose leaders, and perhaps the whole population, are responsible for the situation on the ground (ethical). The harmonious articulation of these three elements accompanied a Western policy of non-intervention.

The efficiency of such an approach is in its capacity to better understand which parts of identity are changing or are being contested, how identities are changing and how policy accompanies those changes. The analytical steps exposed before provide "a lens through which discursive differences, similarities, and changes can be studied, thus

43 Hansen, *Security as Practice. Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 47.
44 *Ibid,* 46-47

ultimately furthering theoretical understanding of the links between identity and policy." [45]

As it has been mentioned previously, the term 'identity' is a disputed one and the present work shares the criticism exposed by Brubaker and Cooper. They propose the alternative 'identification': "As a processual, active term, derived from a verb, "identification" lacks the reifying connotations of "identity." It invites us to specify the agents that do the identifying. And it does not presuppose that such identifying (even by powerful agents, such as the state) will necessarily result in the internal sameness, the distinctiveness, the bounded groupness that political entrepreneurs may seek to achieve." [46] Hopefully it will be clear in the following parts of the present work that the term 'identity' is kept and used in the sense of 'identification', and that it is very much an active process in which agents are involved. Moreover, the unstable nature of identity has already been underlined previously.

Another important analytical method used in the present work is the resort to ideal-types. Since there are a great number of texts and statements on important issues, how can we practically treat discourses? We could argue that each text is in itself an independent discourse, but then that would render all analysis unfeasible. This is why Hansen advocates the use of basic discourses as "an analytical distinction of an ideal-type kind." [47] According to her, "basic discourses point to the main points of contestation within a debate and facilitate a structured account of the relationship between discourses, their points of convergence and confrontations; how discourses develop over time in

45 Hansen, *Security as Practice. Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 51
46 Brubaker and Cooper. "Beyond 'Identity'", 14.
47 Hansen, *Security as Practice. Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 52

response to events, facts and criticism; and how discursive variations evolve." [48]

The best analysis of identity construction in foreign policy discourse should be based on the largest selection of readings possible, but unfortunately there are practical limitations to the present work which make some choices essential. Of the three intertextual models identified by Lene Hansen, the first, and most narrow model focusing on official foreign policy discourse will be used. The main object of analysis will thus be official texts, and statements by government officials, and the goal of the analysis will be to see how official discourse is stabilized and how official discourse responds to criticism. A more ambitious study of opposition discourse, media and the wider cultural background would have been impossible to realize within the time and space limitations of a master thesis.

Thus the analytical focus will be on official discourse as expressed by the government and the state administration. It must also be underlined that the role of the president has been voluntarily ignored because the Czech Republic is a parliamentary system and the president is not in charge of defining policy. The president, just like the opposition, is still indirectly present though, because the government often reacted to his criticism and divergent opinions.

2.4 Research Model

The research model developed by Hansen involves a series of choices. One of the choices was the aforementioned focus on official discourse. The other three choices regard the selection of one or many 'Selves', the concentration on a moment or a historical

48 Hansen, *Security as Practice. Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 52.

development and finally the focus on one or multiple events.

The question of 'Self' or 'Selves' is quite simple in the present work's case. As it was highlighted in the introductory part, the analysis of Self and Other in international relations is mostly a study of the relations of states between themselves. The Czech Republic is an international actor and its presence on the world scene and, arguably, its identity, has been stable since its birth in 1993. Moreover, the focus on a short period of time and the relative stability of the Czech foreign policy further support the choice of a single Self: the Czech Republic.

The temporal perspective chosen in this dissertation's research model was dictated first and foremost by the material available. Indeed, Russian-Czech relations were practically non-existent before the 2000s and very little was said on the topic. The arrival of Vladimir Putin 1999 marked a revival of Russian foreign policy and the return of a more assertive approach to Central Europe. Moreover, the Czech Republic's post-1989 foreign policy goals of joining NATO and the EU were reached in 1999 and 2004, and the Czech foreign policy also started to look back towards the East. Finally, international events resulted in 'Russia' being a political topic in the Czech Republic once again. September 11 2001 and the fall of the Czech government in March 2009 are the two limits of the present study because both events marked the beginning and the end of a more intensive, and tumultuous Czech-Russian relationship in the 2000s.

The period chosen is subdivided in five periods, or events. They were selected according to the echo they provoked on the Czech political scene. The selection of many periods, or events, allows us to make comparisons and see whether discourse and policy change, and whether the spatial, temporal and ethical constructions of the Self and the

Other evolve. As Hansen writes: "the analytical advantage of multiple events studies is that a comparison across time allows for an identification of patterns of transformations and reproduction" [49].

49 Hansen, *Security as Practice. Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 80

3 Conceptual Histories

The first stage of my research is to look into the history of ideas on Russia in the Czech lands. Present opinions cannot be separated from past ones and an overview of what the Czech discourse on Russia looked like previously is essential to understand current political discourses. What Line Hansen calls 'conceptual histories' is not solely used to compare current discourses with past discourses, but rather to look for the roots of today's ideas. She links that to Foucault's endeavour to "conduct a genealogical reading which traces the constitution of the present concept back in history to understand when and how it was formed as well as how it succeeded in marginalizing other representations." [50]

The present part will thus focus on the Czech relationship, or rather relationships, with Russia and the resulting conceptual histories of Russia in the Czech imagination. Typical historical discourses play a role in shaping modern political thinking. The conceptual histories will help understand the origin of post-communist discourses on Russia and thus further the analysis of whether recent developments have had an impact on the Czech official discourse.

Conceptual histories, very much like the discourses that will be identified in the next part, are ideal-types, that is they take the shape of united, stable constructions although the texts they are based on will not always perfectly concord with them. As mentioned before, the choice of ideal-types is essential for analytical work because of

50 Hansen, *Security as Practice. Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 53

practical reasons.

The development of a Czech foreign policy, or rather a Czech *Weltanschauung*, antedates the apparition of the Czechoslovak state in 1918.[51] Indeed, already in the nineteenth century, prominent thinkers such as František Palacký or Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk expressed their ideas on the geopolitical place of the Czech lands in Europe. Especially the latter, as first and only president of Czechoslovakia until 1935, left a lasting mark on Czechoslovak politics. It must be underlined that, being active on the political scene over decades, their views tended to change with time. Moreover, Palacký and Masaryk can be seen as quite 'realist' in the sense that they were trying to balance out great power interests. Other prominent politicians such as Karel Kramář and Eduard Beneš also played an important role on the foreign political orientation of the country in the first half of the twentieth century.

The Soviet-style regime in power from 1948 until 1989 was marked by a clear pro-Moscow orientation and the lack of political freedom and internal debates about foreign policy makes that period rather difficult to analyze. The events of 1968, when the Warsaw Pact troops invaded the country to suppress the reformist efforts of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, had a deep impact, but could not be discussed in political terms at the time. Finally, the fall of the regime in 1989 and the transformation of the country was accompanied by ideas of a 'return to Europe'. There was also a return of open debates on the geopolitical orientation of Czechoslovakia, and from 1993 on, the Czech Republic.

51 The history of the Czech lands, one that is marked by many geographical and political changes, renders the use of the terms 'Czech' or 'Czechoslovak' contentious. Often, the term 'Czech' will be used although 'Czechoslovak' would have been technically more correct and vice-versa. We kindly ask the reader to overlook those details.

Over roughly 150 years, various ideas about Russia were expressed in the Czech lands and some general features can be discerned. Even if the present work focuses on political discourse, it is inevitable to look at important intellectual trends which fed on, and fed, political debates. Moreover, because of the lack of sovereignty under the Habsburg monarchy and the lack of freedom under the Soviet-style regime, Czech geopolitical debates were sometimes moved to the less conspicuous domains of literature and history; sometimes the sole place where they could be expressed was in exile.

3.1 Russia as a Threat

In the nineteenth century, Russia's image as a threat was motivated by its increasing influence in Europe since the Napoleonic wars. Geographically, Russia had been spreading continuously and its influence in Central Europe and the Balkans was mounting. It was called to the rescue to suppress the Hungarian uprising of the 1848-1849 and despite its relative backwardness, exposed by its defeat in Crimean War, the Russian Empire was a superpower Europe had to deal with. In Central Europe, the intelligentsia of the Slavic peoples had different, and often changing and contradictory opinions on their Eastern neighbour.

One of the visions of Russia was one of a threatening imperialist power who was thriving for more conquests. Palacký's geopolitical ideas were first expressed in his 'A Letter to Frankfurt' in 1848 and reflected this fear. Indeed, he wrote that the further expansion of Russia could lead to the creation of an universal monarchy.[52] He specified that he had no problem with it being Russian, but rather with its universal character. It

52 Oskar Krejčí, *Český národní zájem a geopolitika*, Praha: Universe, 1993, 48

was one of the first expression of this fear of the Czech lands' conquest by the Russian Empire. Palacký's views were dictated by the rise of pangermanism and the growing power of Russia. He concluded that the Austrian Empire was a better safeguard against German and Russian ambitions than a myriad of little republics would be.

Western intellectuals had been asking the same question for centuries already, as to whether Russia should be considered as a European country. One of the cornerstones of the 'Russian threat'-discourse is the negation of Russia's Europeanness and its location in Eurasia, or Asia, or else. Palacký himself felt a link of kinship with Slavic Russia but he nevertheless did stay critical toward the Tsarist system, which he characterizes in other articles as "an amalgam of Mongolian and German political principles." [53]

The perception of the Soviet Union was also key in understanding post-communist ideas on Russia. The 'Russian threat'-discourse often refused (and refuses) to see any difference between Tsarist Russia, Soviet Russia and the Russian Federation. Instead it deals with 'eternal Russia' as the Other. As the Czech writer living in exile Milan Kundera wrote: "Russia is not just as one more European power but as a singular civilization, an other civilization.... totalitarian Russia civilization is the radical negation of the modern West" [54].

A movement in Czech historiography, centred around historian Milan Švankmajer and the so-called Prague group of historian-russologues, theorized the aforementioned ideas in their work. They both insisted on the continuity of Russian history and its Otherness from Europe. The Tatar influence, the messianic mission of Russia, the lack of contact with Europe over centuries, etc. are the different factors mentioned by these

53 Krejci, *Český národní zájem a geopolitika,* 53
54 Neumann, 151

historians to explain that "the USSR was the Russian empire of the twentieth century" [55], "Russia is simply other" [56] and "those who, in this generation's lifetime, expect Russia to take the road which is considered in Europe as the only possible and rightful one were and are wrong." [57]

If we use Lene Hansen's model of analysis, the image of Russia created by this conceptual history of the 'Russian threat' puts Russia away from Europe, and even in Asia, (spatial identity); it also insists on the continuity of Russian imperialism throughout regimes (temporal identity); and it stresses Russia's expansionist ambitions, and even messianic mission (ethical identity).

3.2 Russia as a partner

There was always another vision of Russia coexisting with the fear described hereabove. It saw Russia either as a friend or a partner. On the one hand, the 'National Revival' of the eighteenth and most especially nineteenth century, not only of the Czech people but also of all the other Slavic nations living within bigger empires, led to a wider network of panslavic ties similar to the ideas of pangermanism. Small Slavic peoples of Central and South-Eastern Europe hoped the rising Russian power would free them from Ottoman, Austrian or German rule. On the other hand, Czech thinkers were mostly realists and Russia's place in Czech geopolitical thinking was always dictated first and foremost by the actual balance of power in Central Europe.

55 Jiří Franěk, et al.. "Kontinuita ruských dějin (Teze pražské skupiny historiků-rusistů)", *Slovanský Přehled Review for Central and Southeastern European History*, r.LXXXV, č.4: 539.
56 Jiří Franěk, , et al.. "Kontinuita ruských dějin (Teze pražské skupiny historiků-rusistů)", 540.
57 Milan Švankmajer, "Lidé a doba: Rusko a Evropa, Evropa a Rusko." *Slovanský Přehled Review for Central and Southeastern European History*, r.LXXXII, č.3-4 (1996): 356.

As realist politicians, Palacký, Masaryk and Beneš drew closer to Russia, or the Soviet Union, whenever they felt the circumstances demanded it. This was even more true as Germans were felt like the biggest danger to the Czech state and identity, and Russia was seen as a powerful counter-balance. Russia's place in their foreign policy depended on the degree of involvement of the Eastern neighbour in European affairs.[58] It thus reached a peak during World War I and then World War II, as Russia, and subsequently the Soviet Union, was a key player for the Czechs.

As mentioned before, Palacký was wary of the Tsarist system, but he still saw himself as a Slav sharing common features with Russia. A different vision of Russia is thus available in Palacký's 'Ideas of the Austrian state' published in 1865. By then he had become somewhat disenchanted with Austria-Hungary and the possibility of Slavs to get their fair share of power in it.[59] His panslavist ideas were thus more openly expressed there as he played down the danger of a Russian universal monarchy and underlined the closeness of the Czech and Russian identities. Furthermore, he believed that Russia would "soon succumb to the influence of the Slavic, and hence liberal-minded, principles."[60] Although Palacký had started looking at Russia in a panslavic light, he was still a realist and thus an alliance with Russia was first and foremost a way to protect the Czechs against German imperialism rather than the fulfillment of a civilizational, or rather ethnic, project.

The most prominent pro-Russian Czech politician at the turn of the century was Karel Kramář. He was the chairman of the National Liberal Party and originally

58 Krejci, *Český národní zájem a geopolitika,* 162
59 *Ibid*, 53
60 *Idem*

defended the idea of a federation of the Austria-Hungarian empire. The Slavic people would have the majority and he believed that it would lead to a natural rapprochement with Russia. Later, on the even of World War I, he went further and advocated the creation of a Slavonic Empire headed by the Russian emperor.[61] Kramář did not support incorporation within the Russian empire solely out of practical reasons, but also because of his inclination toward the Russian civilization. Consequently he rejected the Bolshevik revolution, which he saw as a negation of traditional Russia.

The architect of the Czechoslovak State, Tomáš Masaryk, saw himself more as a Westerner and considered Russia as a potential powerful ally.[62] His views were thus not dictated by a feeling of kinship with the Russian people, but rather by realpolitik. As World War I dragged on and the idea of an independent Czech or Czechoslovak state ripened, Masaryk saw Russia as a protector of Central European Slavic states against the German *Drang nach Osten*.[63] Masaryk's plans involved a common border with Russia in the East and he even advocated a long-term occupation of the Czech and Slovak lands by Russian troops to safeguard the independence of the Czech kingdom. In his words: "We have to wish for Russia to be strong, and everyone of us has to work in that direction, so that Germany and Austria will be weaker."[64]

The Bolshevik revolution, the Russian Civil war and the failure of communist uprisings in Central Europe marked a relative retreat of Russia from Europe. The rise of revanchist Nazi Germany and fear of a renewal of hostilities in Europe forced Czechoslovakia to seek new allies. Once more, realism was the reason why a tripartite

61 Ladislav Cabada, *Czechoslovakia and Czech Republic in world politics*, Plzeň: Vydavatelství a nakladatelství Aleš Čeněk, 2006, 11
62 *Ibid*, 15
63 Krejčí, *Český národní zájem a geopolitika,* 64
64 *Ibid*, 65

agreement with France and the Soviet Union was signed in 1935. Despite ideological differences with Stalin's USSR, Czechoslovak politicians stayed faithful to the priority of guaranteeing their territorial integrity against the ambitions of a rising German power.

The only party strongly advocating a rapprochement with Soviet Russia in interwar Czechoslovakia was the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSČ). The bases of this friendship were very different though. The main difference with previous "pro-Russian" views was the focus on socialist ideas of internationalism and proletariat brotherhood instead of the panslavist racial and cultural affinities. The working people of Czechoslovakia, regardless of their ethnicity, were thus the brothers of the working people of the Soviet Union, according to the official party line. Therefore it would be more correct to stamp this policy as 'pro-Soviet' than pro-Russian.

Similar thoughts were behind the Czechoslovak government in exile's orientation toward the Soviet Union during the war. The leader of the government in exile and former president Edvard Beneš understood that the West was ceding Central Europe to Stalin and that the Soviet Union would be the main actor in the region after the war.[65] Thus Beneš signed a friendship treaty with the Soviet Union in 1943, valid for 20 years and promising mutual assistance in case of a German attack.[66] This policy was justified by a vision of Soviet Russia that broke with the Tsarist past, when Russia was trying to submit other nations to its yoke.[67] The notion of an equal partnership and the respect of sovereignty was highlighted both in the treaty and in the official discourse. Moreover, Beneš saw signs of democratization in the USSR during the war and thought that it

65 Václav Kotyk, *Jan Masaryk, diplomat krizových let*. Jinočany: H&H, 1993, 53
66 Cabada, *Czechoslovakia and Czech Republic in world politics*, 58
67 Kotyk, *Jan Masaryk, diplomat krizových let*, 55

would lead to a "rebirth of liberal-bourgeois democracy in a new stage of socializing democracy." [68] As post-war events showed, the partner became the master however. The official policy of brotherhood with the Soviet Union and the Soviet people was implemented and was kept in force until the fall of the regime in 1989.

If, once again, we resort to Lene Hansen's work, we can attempt to draw an ideal-type of the 'Russian partner'. It is harder though, as there was a greater deal of different argumentations accompanying policies of rapprochement with Russia, from enthusiasm emphasizing brotherhood to cold, practical political calculations. A broad generalization would stress Russia's status as a great power (spatial identity); its break with imperial Russia, or process of changing, (temporal identity); and its willingness to protect, assist and respect Slavic, or rather Central European, nations (ethical identity).

68 Kotyk, *Jan Masaryk, diplomat krizových let*, 55

4 The Czech Republic and Russia: 2001 to 2009

As mentioned before, the beginning of the century is a turning point for Russia and the Czech Republic and marked the beginning of new relations between both countries. On the one hand, the Russian presidency was taken over by a newcomer, Vladimir Putin, who quickly asserted himself as a strongman both on the national and international scene. On the other hand, the Czech Republic joined NATO, further approached EU membership, and the right-wing government was replaced by the social-democrats (ČSSD) in 1998.

Both Russia and the Czech Republic were thus in the process of redefining their foreign policy and the goal of the present work is to see how the official Czech discourse perceived Russia throughout this period and up to recent times. As written in the section concerning methodology, events which provoked official comments and reactions about Russia by Czech government officials were singled out and the discourse, or discourses, were analyzed. A quick overview of those events is provided here to offer the readers a clearer context. Moreover, the period 2003-2006 was added to keep a chronological unity, even if there was no single extraordinary event during those years. Since the goal of this work is not to analyze the events per say but rather the discourses and accompanying policies, the so-called factual description will be kept to a minimum.

It is important to stress the fact that those events are not the causes of changes in the discourse. They are the context in which discourse started to address a situation and was developed along with policy. As it has been highlighted before, "the concern should

instead be with the combinations of identity and policy delineated within a foreign policy debate and on the ability of these combinations to incorporate discursively constituted 'facts' and 'events'." [69]

The reaction to the September 11 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States and in the world had an impact on world politics, and Czech-Russian relations were influenced as well. All of a sudden, the West perceived itself as being in the same boat as Russia, which was struggling with Islamist terrorism from the North Caucasus. The Czech Republic, which was a vocal critic of Russia's war in Chechnya, toned down its protests. Differences were bridged as the West allied in the new common global war on terrorism. A certain rapprochement in words and acts could be observed between NATO and Russia, and at the same time the Czech official discourse and policy changed.

The Czech Prime Minister Jiří Paroubek's visit to Moscow in May 2005 as well as Vladimir Putin's first visit to Prague in March 2006 marked an intensification of Czech-Russian relations. In light of later developments, it can be said that this period was the pinnacle of bilateral relations. It followed years of efforts by left-wing governments to reorient foreign policy from a strictly Western-oriented strategy to involvement in all directions.

At the end of 2006 and the beginning of 2007, relations worsened in the wake of the so-called 'radar affair'. The new right-wing government was willing to pursue previously sketched plans to participate in the United States' project of an anti-missile shield with bases in Poland and the Czech Republic. Russia expressed its discontent and Vladimir Putin's strongly-worded Munich speech in February 2007 marked the cooling

69 Hansen, *Security as Practice. Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 10.

down of West-East relations. The planned American radar base in the Czech Republic was in the centre of Czech-Russian relations for the years to come.

The August 2008 Russian-Georgian conflict was followed by a strong reaction of European states, most of whom condemned Russia. The Czech government of Mirek Topolánek was among the fiercest critics of Russia's intervention during the conflict and in the aftermath. The Czech Republic was one of the strongest voices to call for EU action in support of Georgia.

In January 2009, the Czech Republic took up the EU presidency from France and was confronted with a gas conflict between Russia and the Ukraine. Moreover, the issues of the radar and Russia's behaviour in Georgia were still actual. Finally, in March 2009, the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Parliament issued a vote of non-confidence to the Topolánek government. The present work's scope does not go further.

4.1 September 11, 2001

The world's general expression of solidarity with the United States following September 11, 2001 and the subsequent declaration of war to terrorism was accompanied by a certain rapprochement between the West and Russia. The Russian Federation had been fighting with secessionism and terrorism in the North Caucasus and its methods had been criticized by Western countries, including the Czech Republic. After September 11, Russian atrocities in the Caucasus seemed to be forgotten and the Kremlin's help in the global fight against terrorism was sought.

This idea of a new geopolitical situation was emphasized by the Czech government and bilateral relations warmed up after a decade of weak intensity marked by Russia's

disengagement from Central Europe, the region's ongoing adhesion to NATO, and its pursue of European Union membership. The new image of Russia given by the Czech official discourse was one of a changed country in a changed world. The emphasis placed on the break with the past was thus obvious. At times, the fact that Russia belonged to Europe, or the West, was also stressed. In the year following September 11, accents of friendship could be heard in Czech-Russian relations and the idea of partnership and collaboration was presented as logical.

The emphasis on 'novelty' concerned both the international geopolitical situation and the situation in Russia. In October 2001, the Czech Prime Minister Miloš Zeman for the first time mentioned the possibility of Russia joining NATO and justified it by mentioning that he does not "see NATO as an organisation built against Russia in the present time [but rather] as an organisation built against terrorism." [70] In the same month, Zeman published a text in *Pražské Slovo* in which he reiterated the idea of Russia in NATO and stressed that "the world is changing and so are we along with it." [71] The discourse on change was accompanied by declarations that the past was left behind, as Zeman's declaration that NATO was not aimed against Russia betrayed. Indeed, a lot of the 'novelty discourse' was stressing the break with the past. It was also noticeable when looking at the emphasis put on NATO's new role. As Zeman declared in an interview to the Russian newspaper *Izvestia* while on visit in Russia: "after the attacks of September 11, everything changed in the world. The Cold War does not exist anymore. There is a common struggle against terrorism. This is the main goal of NATO and, as I hope, it is

70 Articles 2001-2002; 1
71 Articles 2001-2002; 2

also the main goal of the Russian foreign policy." [72] In this declaration, Zeman highlighted both the changes in the geopolitical situation and the break with the recent Cold War, as well as expressing his hope that NATO and Russia were now sharing the same objectives. In November 2002, both the Czech minister of foreign affairs Cyril Svoboda and the minister of defence Jaroslav Tvrdík stressed the fact that Russia is not considered as an enemy anymore.[73] [74] All those statements went hand in hand with the policy of rapprochement between NATO and Russia.

Along with the ideas of a new situation in a new world, there was an emphasis on the transformation of Russia. The image of Russia was presented under a new light. One of the most enthusiastic voices presenting the 'new Russia' was that of the Czech ambassador to Russia Jaroslav Bašta in an interview for the newspaper *Právo* in January 2002. He said that today's Russia is "a country which is introducing economic, social and other reforms at a monstrous rhythm. Not only in the economy, but also in other regards it is steering towards Europe more strongly than ever before in its history." [75] Just as the discourse on the new world was developed alongside a discourse on the break with the Cold War past, this discourse on the 'new Russia' was accompanied by declarations that modern Russia is not Soviet Russia anymore. Once again, just as NATO-Russia (or rather West-Russia) relations were said to have overcome the past, Czech-Russian relations had allegedly recovered from the burden of history. As Zeman said: "Still ten year ago nobody could have imagined that after the experience of the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 and the following 20 years of

72 Articles 2001-2002; 3
73 Articles 2001-2002; 4
74 Articles 2001-2002; 5
75 Articles 2001-2002; 7

normalisation, we would be able to look at Russia as a befriended country." [76] In this statement, Zeman contrasted the new situation with the state of Czech(oslovak)-Russian relations after the events of 1968 and later, thus highlighting the fact that history remained behind and that the latest events had brought up a new kind of friendship still unbelievable ten years before. The new policy of rapprochement with Russia and support for Russia-NATO collaboration was directly supported by a discourse sketching the image of a new Russia different from Soviet Russia. "My cabinet completely supports the rapprochement between NATO and Russia. For two reasons. First, contemporary Russia is not the Russia of Leonid Brezhnev, who seized Czechoslovakia in 1968. It is a fully democratic state with parliamentary elections, the competition of various political parties and a market economy," [77] said Zeman. We can observe that Zeman's rhetoric was based on this break between past and new Russia. On the other hand, Zeman also saw this 'new Russia' as tying up with the old, pre-Soviet Russia. He thus said that Russia is a European country and "is not the country of Dzhugashvili 〔Stalin〕 and Brezhnev, but rather Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. And also of many contemporary politicians, including your 〔NB.: talking to a Russian reporter〕 actual president." [78] The Czech minister of foreign affairs Jan Kavan also mentioned Putin as a positive factor of change. He linked changes in bilateral relations with the election of Putin at the head of the country. As he explained in an interview to *Izvestia*: "After Vladimir Putin became president, we noticed that Russia was clearly striving to better its relations with the countries of Central Europe, among others with the Czech Republic." [79]

76 Articles 2001-2002; 2
77 Articles 2001-2002; 3
78 Articles 2001-2002; 3
79 Articles 2001-2002; 8

As the two previous citations show, the Czech official discourse accompanied its policy of rapprochement with a stress on the Europeanness and the democratic character of Russia, be it a novelty or not. As Zeman declared: "Russia is a part of European culture, from which it cannot be excluded." [80] Moreover, the convergence of their values and goals was stressed. As ambassador Bašta was saying: "the Alliance [NATO] and Russia have more in common than they thought some months ago. Not only common interests but first and foremost common and shared values." [81] The Minister of defence Jaroslav Tvrdík insisted on the indispensability of a *democratic* Russia: "Few can imagine a safe world without democratic Russia." [82] Another point of convergence of the Czech and Russian governments highlighted by Czech officials was their stand on the post-World War II settlements. More than once, and without naming them, Zeman mentioned countries of the former Hitler alliance which were allegedly tempted to reconsider the results of World War II and he underlined, as well as lauded, the fact that Russia sided with the Czech Republic against revisionism.[83] [84]

Finally, Czech officials did not fear to use superlatives when describing the state of Czech-Russian relations in the months following September 11. Already in January 2002, the Czech minister of foreign affairs Jan Kavan declared in an interview that "Czech-Russian relations are now the best in the past ten years." [85] Zeman said almost exactly the same thing in April 2002: "according to my opinion, in the present time relations

80 Articles 2001-2002; 3
81 Articles 2001-2002; 7
82 Articles 2001-2002; 5
83 Articles 2001-2002; 9
84 Articles 2001-2002; 10
85 Articles 2001-2002; 12

between Moscow and Prague are the best in the past ten years." [86] As it was mentioned before, Zeman did not hesitate to use the words "befriended country" [87] or declare: "when I say 'friends', it is a seriously meant address." [88]

Under Zeman's government, Czech-Russian relations were revived and Russia came back on the Czech foreign policy agenda. As the analysis of the various statements made by officials shows, the rapprochement between the West and Russia and between the Czech Republic and Russia followed September 11 and the new world order which was perceived to have emerged. Discourses on the new world in which Russia is not an enemy anymore, on Russia as a changed country, on the break with the past, on the common values and goals of the Czech Republic and Russia, and words of partnership and friendship; all of that accompanied policies of rapprochement.

If we use Hansen's model discussed in the methodological part, we can set up a model for the period of September 11 and its aftermath. Using the concept of political identity built around spatial, temporal and ethical constructions, we end up with this ideal-type concerning Russia as seen by Czech official discourse: a European, or Western, state (spatial identity); going through reforms and changes (temporal identity); and sharing goals with the West (ethical identity).

The image of the Czech Republic as revealed by the official foreign policy discourse on Russia was also changed by September 11 and the new geopolitical situation. The new emphasis on the struggle against terrorism and on the anti-terrorist alliance redefined the identity of the Czech Republic as an international actor. It was not only part of Europe

86 Articles 2001-2002; 9
87 Articles 2001-2002; 2
88 Articles 2001-2002; 10

and the euroatlantic civilization, but also of the new so-called anti-terrorist coalition. As Zeman stated, the post-September 11 Czech Republic was "at war against terrorists."[89] NATO was also rebranded by Zeman as an "organization built against terrorism."[90] "He also talked about the "common fight against terrorism"[91] and highlighted to the Russian media that he had been the first foreign politician to support the fight against terrorism in Chechnya.[92] Thus the Czech Republic was presented as a country at war participating in an anti-terrorist coalition, and sharing common goals with Russia. There was also a sense of responsibility ensuing from this point of view: Russia had to be brought in the coalition. Thus it was underlined by Zeman that "Russia has to be included in the struggle against terrorism"[93] and Minister of Defence Tvrdík insisted that "Few can imagine a safe world without democratic Russia."[94]

As it has been exposed in the previous chapters, the interaction of all three elements with policy is the essence of international relations as seen by poststructuralist discourse analysis. As Hansen, quoted earlier, wrote: "the overriding goal of foreign policy discourse is to articulate the three elements in such a manner that they draw upon and reinforce each other"[95]. Often, a text highlighted one element more than the others, but we also saw that some statements on Russia by Zeman and other Czech officials linked all three elements to the policy of rapprochement. In Zeman's interview to *Izvestia*[96], almost all of the elements appeared in the same answer to the question: should

89 Articles 2001-2002; 1
90 Articles 2001-2002; 1
91 Articles 2001-2002; 14
92 Articles 2001-2002; 9
93 Articles 2001-2002; 15
94 Articles 2001-2002; 5
95 Hansen, *Security as Practice. Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 47.
96 Articles 2001-2002; 3

Russia join NATO? Zeman answered positively by saying that Russia was fully democratic (temporal), that it was part of the European culture (spatial), and that it was pursuing the same objectives and collaborating (ethical). There was a harmonic articulation of the three elements that justified collaboration as well as called for it.

Identity	**RUSSIA**	**CZECH REPUBLIC**
SPATIAL	European/Part of anti-terrorist coalition	Euroatlantic/Part of anti-terrorist coalition
TEMPORAL	Changing/Democratizing	At war against terrorism
ETHICAL	Ready to collaborate	Need to fight war / need to include partners
==> ==> ==> ==> ==> ==> Policy of rapprochement <== <== <== <== <== <==		

4.2 Period from 2003 to 2006

In the period following the fall of PM Miloš Zeman's government, the enthusiasm for Russia slightly cooled down. Relations between the Czech Republic and Russia were marked by the dragging negotiations for the settlement of the old Soviet debt to Czechoslovakia, and relations between Russia and the West were marked by the disagreements appearing in the post-September 11 antiterrorist coalition on the issue of Iraq. Czech-Russian relations stayed good however and culminated in the visit of Czech Prime Minister Jiří Paroubek in Moscow in May 2005 and Vladimir Putin's visit in Prague in March 2006. The Czech foreign policy discourse on Russia was mostly focused on economic relations during that period, yet relations with Russian could also become

part of the internal political debate on the geopolitical orientation of the country as the summer 2006 political deadlock in the Czech Republic showed.

As Zeman had mentioned it before, the Czech government was interested in a return of its enterprises on the Russia market and the social-democrats blamed the previous right-wing governments for having neglected it.[97] Zeman had encouraged economic involvement in Russia and that policy was pursued further by the government of Vladimir Špidla. His minister of foreign affairs Cyril Svoboda declared in August 2003 that they wanted to open themselves to the "old-new markets, there is a big effort here to take the way toward Russia, Ukraine, and to Asia"[98]. In the 'Foreign Policy Conception of the Czech Republic for the years 2003-2006' approved by the government on March 3rd 2003, bilateral relations with Russia were almost strictly considered as economic. The document states that: "The Czech Republic will further pursue its efforts for an increased level and a widening of a mutually beneficial economic collaboration with the Russian Federation"[99]. In the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs report for the year 2003, it is stated that "the political dialogue at a high level was deepened. An important attention was devoted to the intensification of commercial-economic relations."[100] Similarly, it was written in the equivalent report for the year 2004 that: "An increased emphasis was, just like in the previous period, placed on cooperation in the commercial-economic sector."[101]

97 Articles 2001-2002; 11
98 Articles 2003-2005; 20
99 Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí. *Koncepce zahraniční politiky České Republiky na léta 2003-2006.* Available at: http://www.mzv.cz/old/servis/soubor.asp?id=4191 Accessed March 2008, 16
100 Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí. *Zpráva o zahraniční politice ČR za rok 2003.* Available at: http://www.mzv.cz/file/15896/Zprava_2003.doc. Accessed March 2013, 12
101 Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí. *Zpráva o zahraniční politice ČR za rok 2004.* Available at: http://www.mzv.cz/file/415693/Zprava_2004.pdf. Accessed March 2013, 219

When it came to the other aspects of Czech-Russian relations, the government was more discreet, often privileging co-acting in larger institutions like NATO or the EU, whose full membership it gained in May 2004. In September 2004, after the terrorist attack in Beslan (Russia), world figures, including former Czech president Václav Havel, sent a letter to the EU and other Western governments to ask them to protest against what the authors saw as the repression of democracy in Russia under the pretext of the anti-terrorist struggle. The newly named Prime Minister Stanislav Gross carefully answered to the requests contained in the letter by saying that "the importance of the EU's dialogue with Russia is rising on all matters." [102] He added that: "If the situation requests it, it is possible to try to use existing forums between the EU a Russia as an efficient tool of open dialogue and explanation of the EU countries' opinions." [103] A spokesperson of the Ministry of foreign affairs added: "Our position toward Russia after Beslan is markedly solidary. From the viewpoint of diplomacy, it is premature to judge the steps and measures of president Putin." [104] When asked to comment on Russia's alleged turn away from democracy, PM Gross said that he wanted to "believe president Putin." [105] During the years 2003-2005, official documents released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs repeated the idea according to which relations with Russia on matters other than economic should be dealt with within the framework of the EU, NATO and other international organizations of which the Czech Republic is a member. [106] The way relations with Russia were considered showed that the official policy was first and foremost to act as a EU or a NATO country when approaching a country like Russia.

102 Articles 2003-2005; 62
103 Articles 2003-2005; 61
104 Articles 2003-2005; 61
105 Articles 2003-2005; 64
106 Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí. *Koncepce zahraniční politiky České Republiky na léta 2003-2006*

Despite the relative calm of Czech-Russian relations, the level of closeness to Russia could be a delicate topic in Czech politics. The right-wing party's (ODS) constant suspicion of an overly friendly policy toward Russia led to frequent criticism of the social-democrats' endeavours in the East. Despite their pro-Western views, the social-democrats did indeed sometimes show a more overt inclination towards Russia. A speech delivered by Prime Minister Vladimir Špidla at the Baker Institute of the University of Houston on July 18 2003 attracted little attention in the Czech Republic, although its content was rather original. As it was reported by the Czech daily *Hospodářské Noviny*: "Russia is, according to the prime minister, a state with a democratic future and the Czech Republic wants to have very good relations with this country. The linguistic and geographic proximity as well as the similar mentality of both peoples can help that." [107] The Prime Minister further described the Russian people as peace-loving and said that such conflicts such as the war in Chechnya was inevitable for such a big country at that stage of development.[108] He excluded the prospect of Russia joining NATO, but declared that the Czech Republic's wish to be on friendly terms with Russia was in agreement with the positions of the EU, NATO and the United States.[109] Once again, it was underlined that the official Czech position belonged within the framework of the EU/NATO, but the statement about the 'proximity' and 'similar mentality' smacked of 19th century slavophilia and hinted at some particular Russian-Czech kinship.

Shortly after the social-democrat Jiří Paroubek became Prime Minister in April 2005, he visited Moscow, where he enthusiastically declared that: "Lately, Czech-

107 Articles 2003-2005; 17
108 Articles 2003-2005; 17
109 Articles 2003-2005; 17

Russian relations have made great progress, but surely this is not their last word." [110] In an open letter on foreign policy published in the newspapers, Paroubek wrote: "I see as an essential factor of the growing importance of Europe as a global factor in the cooperation of the EU with Russia. It is in our interest to widen and deepen this process. We know Russia and we understand it, we value the level of bilateral collaboration reached and we want to intensify it further. [...] The EU cannot act as a world player without Russia, or even against it." [111] Unlike Špidla's comments, which passed unnoticed, Paroubek's text attracted him such harsh criticism[112] that the Vice-minister of Foreign Affairs Vladimír Müller came to his rescue in another text published in the media.[113] In it, he supported Paroubek's position and added that: "a good knowledge of Russia in countries like the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia is shown today and every day in the framework of the EU itself, which is using the knowledge and contacts of Central European countries in Russia for the negotiations of agreements with Russia" .[114] He then went on to laud the awesome economic potential of Russia for the Czech Republic.[115] Although Paroubek did not say that Czechs and Russians were in any way close or had a similar mentality, as Špidla did, he did get criticized, unlike his predecessor. Paroubek's comment was repeated by many politicians from both sides of the political spectrum in the following years though. This emphasis on the knowledge of Russia in the Czech Republic was at the basis of discourses on the special place of the Czech Republic in Russia, or the privileged role the Czech Republic could play in relations

110 Articles 2003-2005; 80
111 Articles 2003-2005; 92
112 Articles 2003-2005; 93
113 Articles 2003-2005; 94
114 Articles 2003-2005; 94
115 Articles 2003-2005; 94

between Russia and the EU, or the West in general. The image of the Czech Republic was thus the image of a country which was different from Russia, but nevertheless had this capacity to understand it.

In March 2006, the Russian President Vladimir Putin finally visited Prague and he was enthusiastically received by both the Czech President Václav Klaus and Paroubek's government. There was even a great deal of tension between the Czech president and prime minister, each fighting for Putin's time and favours.[116] Both sides agreed that Czech-Russian relations were very good and talks were focused on economic matters. As Paroubek himself precised, he did not discuss contentious matters like Chechnya or the lack of democracy in Russia with Putin, and preferred to privilege business talks.[117] In one of his traditional open letters to the press, Paroubek praised to the skies the potential of Russia. He wrote that: "Russia is the most important neighbour of the EU on the European continent. It is the most promising market in our neighbourhood, such a huge potential for the rise of industrial products' export does not exist anywhere else than right there." [118] The enthusiasm shown by Jiří Paroubek was similar to Miloš Zeman's attitude at the turn of the century and as such was nothing special. What was nevertheless worthy of attention was the new emphasis on the EU in the period preceding and following EU accession, and the place which was foreseen for the Czech Republic in EU-Russian relations.

During the summer of 2006, after the elections of June 2-3 led to a political deadlock, the social-democrat PM Jiří Paroubek and the leader of the right-wing ODS

116 Articles 2006; 17
117 Articles 2006; 14
118 Articles 2006; 27

party openly confronted their political views, among others on foreign policy. In yet another open letter, Paroubek attacked the foreign policy views of his opponent: "On the long run, ODS does not conceal the fact that it is aiming for a cooling down of relations with Russia and China. The leader of ODS 'does not want to pander' to those two countries, and is practically aiming at the loss of the exclusivity of our relations with them. And this while we have a real chance of playing the role of gate for the development of Russia's and China's relations with the European Union." This idea of the Czech Republic functioning as some kind of special partner and as an entrance gate for Russia or China had already been expressed by Paroubek before. Following Putin's visit, he had written that Putin had mentioned the idea of investing some of its oil and gas money in the Czech Republic. "The fact that Vladimir Putin turned right to the Czech Republic with this proposition has a deep economic logic. According to it, it has to be a country in the EU, it has to be an industrially well disposed country and rather one of the 'new' countries of the Union." [119] Paroubek seemed convinced that it was logical that the Czech Republic would be that country which could play the special role aforementioned. It was in that spirit that he had mentioned before the fact that Czechs 'know and understand' Russia.

His opponent, Mirek Topolánek, the leader of ODS, did not hesitate to counter-attack with an open letter published in the newspapers. As it was still unsure whether the social-democrats would ally with the unreformed communist party (KSČM), Topolánek put the choices facing the country quite bluntly: "Either we will continue with the successful (re-)unification with the structures of the West, or with Paroubek and

119 Articles 2006; 27

Filip〔leader of the KSČM〕we will make a turn to the East." [120] He went on further, writing: "It was Jiří Paroubek who tried to dislocate the geographical and civilizational logic of our country and turn it into the flagship of China in Europe. It was Jiří Paroubek who had big concerns the 'one-sided' pro-Western minister of foreign affairs Alexandr Vondra〔foreseen in case of a right-wing government〕would turn his〔Paroubek's〕laboriously built relations with China and Russia into 'ruins'." [121] Although Topolánek did also concede that the social-democrats were Western-oriented, he was wary of their enthusiasm for Russia and China and believed a left-wing alliance would push the country in that direction. The demagogic way in which he presented the choice to the readers (West or East) was symptomatic of a lot of debates on Russia and on the relations between the Czech Republic and Russia. Topolánek's intervention was also worthy of attention because it showed this refusal to see the Czech Republic in any other way than Western, or European, or Central-European.

The period from 2003-2006 marked a turn to a more business-like approach in Czech-Russian relations after the intensification following the terrorist attacks of September 11 2001. Russia was not considered as a potential close ally within NATO as some of Zeman's statements had suggested, but the Czech official discourse was still emphasizing its vivid interest for Russia as an economic partner. Using Hansen's terminology, the spatial identity of Russia was that of a foreign country which was different than the Czech Republic, but was nevertheless well known and understood by the Czechs. Its temporality was still one of a changing country, albeit in strictly economic terms, offering huge opportunities. Thus the view of Russia as a democratizing and

120 Articles 2006; 57
121 Articles 2006; 57

europeanizing country was not part of the temporal identity anymore. Its ethical identity was still one of an accommodating partner ready to collaborate, although this mainly concerned economic matters.

For its part, the Czech Republic's adhesion to the EU in 2004 changed the way the country approached bilateral relations, as relations with Russia were mostly delegated to supranational institutions such as the EU and NATO. The Czech Republic increasingly considered itself as a EU state in its discourse and policy. This 'de-politicization' of Russo-Czech bilateral relations led to an ever growing emphasis on the economic side. As an economic partner, Russia was described most enthusiastically by Prime Minister Paroubek, who believed in the enormous potential for Czech exports to Russia. Behind this economic discourse, there was the conviction that the Czech Republic could play a privileged role. Indeed, Paroubek's statements expressed the idea that the Czechs 'know and understand' Russia, and the Czech Republic could be some kind of EU gate for Eastern powers like Russia and China. This image of EU gate defined the spatial identity constructed by Paroubek, whereas the temporality of the country was determined by the new situation resulting from EU adhesion (on May 1st 2004). The ethical identity of the Czech Republic underlined by the official policy towards Russia was one of economic opportunities: the Czech Republic, and the EU, had to devote attention to Russia and profit from the huge economic opportunities it offered. Paroubek insisted on the fact that Russia could not be ignored by the EU, as if the EU had a responsibility to cooperate with Russia. Those perceptions of Russia and the Czech Republic accompanied the official policy of increasing economic involvement in Russia, getting involved within the EU to push for relations with Russia, as well as shaping a special role for the Czech Republic

within those relations.

Identity	**RUSSIA**	**CZECH REPUBLIC**
SPATIAL	Foreign, yet known	European gate for the 'East'
TEMPORAL	Land of huge economic potential	New EU member
ETHICAL	Ready to collaborate	Need to seize economic opportunities
==> ==> ==> Economic involvement with Russia / strive for a special role in the EU's relations with the 'East' <== <== <==		

4.3 The Radar Affair

The return to power of the centre-right ODS party in September 2006 was followed by tensions with Russia, as earlier plans concerning the participation of the Czech Republic in the building of an anti-missile shield by the Americans were put back on the agenda. The government of Mirek Topolánek chose to consider the US proposal to build a radar station on Czech land and the plan was criticized both by the opposition and Russia.

In the context of growing tensions between the USA and Russia, publicly expressed by President Putin's famous Munich speech of February 2007, the Czech government increasingly reacted to Russian threats and reservations. The construction of the image of Russia was thus often linked to the debate around the construction of the American radar base on Czech soil. Czech politicians often emphasized the non-threatening character of

the radar and highlighted the sovereignty of their country. The radar debate revealed an image of Russia as a rising superpower which was restoring, or trying to reclaim, the role of its Soviet ancestor to the point of becoming a possible threat. Czech-Russian relations hit an all-time low during that period and have since not entirely recovered.

As soon as plans for the anti-missile shield were re-launched, there were protests coming from Russia.[122] The Czech government ignored some of the threats made and preferred to answer carefully. Ministers repeated that Russia knew about the plan, was kept informed and was aware it was not threatened by the radar. Before he left, in September 2006, Svoboda emphasized that: "Russia is continuously informed by the American side about the construction of an anti-missile defence system."[123] Ministers also highlighted that it was neither a surprise nor a novelty. The new minister of foreign affairs Karel Schwarzenberg declared in January 2007 that the "Czech Republic being approached by the Americans is not a surprise for Russia. 〔Russia〕 already had information about the anti-missile defence system earlier both bilaterally from the side of the United States and through the medium of the NATO-Russia Council."[124] He added that "the anti-missile system is purely defensive and is not directed against Russia."[125] Just before, the minister of defence Vlasta Parkanová claimed that "〔the Russians〕 know that the system is not threatening them."[126] In an interview given in February 2007, the prime minister Mirek Topolánek stated that fears the anti-missile shield could be used against Russia were "a technical nonsense. And the Russians of course know it very

122 Articles 2006; 62
123 Articles 2006; 56
124 Articles 2007; 7
125 Articles 2007; 7
126 Articles 2007; 6

well." [127] Some ministers used the comparison with the NATO adhesion of the Czech Republic to play down Russian reservations. As early as September 2006, Alexandr Vondra, then minister of foreign affairs, noted that Russia also had reservations about the Czech Republic joining NATO in 1999 but then quieted down.[128] In January 2007, as vice-president for European affairs, Vondra repeated that "Russia also expressed itself critically when we joined NATO." [129] A week later, he said that "when we entered NATO, this rataplan was similar." [130]

Apart from repeating that Russia was well informed and that it would probably quiet down as it had done before, government officials played down Russia's threats. Officials repeated that Russia was only playing tough, or trying to get a better negotiation standpoint, or just trying to uphold its prestige. In January 2007, the Minister of Defence Parkanová thus declared that the Russians knew that the system did not threaten them and "if such statements [saying the contrary] are being heard, they are only aiming political-propagandist purposes." [131] A couple of days later, Vondra stated that the Russian reservations were "rather a question of prestige." [132] In early February, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg answered to Russia's tough statements by saying that "that way President Putin is already building a bargaining position" before President Klaus' visit to Russia.[133] In an interview given at the beginning of February, prime minister Topolánek said that Russian statements "resulted rather from geopolitical concerns, from their fear of losing influence on the sphere of Central

127 Articles 2007; 18
128 Articles 2006; 62
129 Articles 2007; 9
130 Articles 2007; 17
131 Articles 2007; 6
132 Articles 2007; 9
133 Articles 2007; 17

Europe." [134] He went on to add: "I accept that from their standpoint it is a legitimate point of view, but as the Czech prime minister I have the obligation to say that I do not agree with them." [135] Once again, a reason was found for Russian reservations. Topolánek was rather diplomatic and he also showed understanding for the Russian position, although he rejected it. The Czech government was reacting quite calmly to Russia's tough talk and trying to excuse and explain it in different ways.

One of the first statements of a Czech government member which marked the beginning of a tougher rhetoric was made by the leader of the Green Party and Vice-premier Martin Bursík. On February 3 2007, he said in an interview about the Russian threats: "It is the echo of a bipolar vision of the world that we cannot accept because we have personally experienced it and we have had a shiver run down our spine because of that. We have to pursue a dialogue and assure our partners in Russia, that it [the radar] is in no way aimed against them." [136] This reference to the past as well as the tougher stance continued more especially after the famous February 10 speech delivered by Vladimir Putin at the 43rd Munich Security Conference. In his speech, Putin accused the United States and NATO of building a uni-polar world and unleashing a new arms race. He also described NATO enlargement to Russia's borders as a provocation.[137] The Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs Karl Schwarzenberg was at the conference and he reacted immediately, sarcastically thanking Putin for providing advertisement for the conference. He added that Putin "also clearly demonstrated why NATO should enlarge." [138] Schwarzenberg also said that Putin "was claiming for himself the position of

134 Articles 2007; 18
135 Articles 2007; 18
136 Articles 2007; 19
137 Articles 2007; 22
138 Articles 2007; 24

the deceased Soviet Union" [139]. Moreover, he insisted that the radar was "an internal affair" [140] and that "the requests of other states do not influence [his] government." [141]

Starting from the Munich speech, the Czech government started to answer more strongly to Russian reservations and threats about the radar. Often, historic references were made to reject Russia's claims and warn of a repetition of history. Moreover, the Czech rhetoric increasingly linked the government's participation to the US anti-missile shield to Russia's threats, although it had always repeated it was not aimed against Russia. In an interview published on February 16, Alexander Vondra said: "Russia under Putin has been pursuing a far more assertive and confident policy which can count on strong support in his country. And we, with our historical experience, should be careful." [142] In the same interview, Vondra warned that it was dangerous to let Russian capital controlled by the Kremlin in the Czech Republic because "in certain situations, Russia does not hesitate to use economic influence as a tool to promote political goals." [143] The same Vondra declared shortly after that: "Russia does not want to lose its position in world politics" [144] and that "it is an argument why we have to reinforce the transatlantic collaboration and keep the Americans in Europe." [145] In another declaration on February 20, he emphasized the link between the radar and Russian threats: "it is exactly the reason for us to have a defence against missile threats." [146] Whereas Vondra and Schwarzenberg had been the main actors in the radar debate as it became stormy,

139 Articles 2007; 27
140 Articles 2007; 27
141 Articles 2007; 27
142 Articles 2007; 27
143 Articles 2007; 27
144 Articles 2007; 28
145 Articles 2007; 29
146 Articles 2007; 31

premier Topolánek had held back. When he did jump in though, he did not hesitate to argue in favour of the radar by linking it to the 'Russian threat'. At a meeting of the Visegrad group in May 2007, Mirek Topolánek said: "It started with the departure of Soviet troops. The construction of the radar would be the culmination of the process of the newly regained freedom." [147] The Prime Minister was linking the radar to the question of freedom, and was picturing it as a continuation of the country's liberation from Soviet occupation. Shortly after, at the Prague conference on the American anti-missile shield, Topolánek delivered a vibrant speech in which he defended the necessity of NATO and Euroatlantic cooperation. He said that the West had to show its willingness to defend itself against new terrorist threats and that questioning the bases of their belonging to NATO was "the way to the infernos." [148] He stated: "The Euroatlantic collaboration is filling up this 'weird space' between Germany and Russia, as the general Wellington expressed it. Thanks to this collaboration, the nations of Central Europe do not live in a vacuum. In a vacuum that great powers somehow try to fill. This geopolitical factor and nothing else is the reason of Russia's protests against the radar in the Czech Republic and the base in Poland." [149] He then warned against a return of Russia in Central Europe: "Now when the will for defence has weakened in Europe, Russia is feeling the chance to overturn this process [of withdrawing from Europe] or at least to dispute it. But we do not want to belong once more to the Russian sphere of influence though. We do not want to belong to this area of countries which need to ask Russia for permission when they want to assure their own defence." [150] On August 21 2007, Topolánek chose

147 Articles 2007; 88
148 Articles 2007; 90
149 Articles 2007; 90
150 Articles 2007; 90

the highly symbolical occasion of the commemoration of the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact troops in 1968 to warn against Russia: "Still today there are in Russia influential circles who have not yet made peace with the fact that Russian is not heard anymore in the Brdy forests [site of a former Soviet military base and of the projected radar]. That we are disposing of this territory independently of Moscow's wish." [151] He then went on to talk about Russian imperialism: "Today, as it is awaking anew, many of us are hesitating. They are saying: 'For god's sake do not irritate Russia!' But this does not help. Because the most stimulating thing for an imperialist is the existence of a state that does not show enough will for defence." [152] The radar affair exacerbated relations to the extend that Czech officials did not shrink before the word 'threat' anymore, albeit in the conditional form. Karl Schwarzenberg thus declared in July 2007 that Russia could claim back the status previously held by the Soviet Union and "Rusia could become a threat once again." [153]

One of the cornerstones of the rhetoric used to reject Russian reservations on the radar was the strong emphasis put, not so much on the Russian danger, but rather on Czech sovereignty. Vondra had already used this expression to dismiss Russian reservations as early as in September 2006, when he stated: "We have our autonomous foreign policy." [154] This kind of argumentation picked up and was part of almost all answers to Russian reservations. For example, Vondra stated at the end of February: "I think that the word negotiate is a too strong. We do not have to and we will not ask Russia for permission." [155] He only conceded that the Czech side "will reassure and

151 Articles 2007-2; 18
152 Articles 2007-2; 18
153 Articles 2007-2; 8
154 Articles 2006; 62
155 Articles 2007; 44

inform Russia." [156] Schwarzenberg insisted in March 2007 that "we will not let the Russian side forbid us anything." [157] A month later, he repeated that Moscow "does not have the right to veto the decisions of a sovereign country to participate in a security project which cannot influence the legitimate political and military interests of Russia." [158] Shortly after, Schwarzenberg declared in an interview: "The Russian Federation still has a mentality from the time of the Soviet Union. It says that such a system 〔the radar〕 cannot be on the eastern border of the former Warsaw Pact. But we are a sovereign country. And although we take Russian reservations seriously, it does not come into consideration that some could allow or forbid us anything." [159] As shown by this last citation, the discourse on sovereignty was contrasted with the communist past, during which Moscow would dictate its line. As Vondra stated, his government was ready to cooperate "but times when Moscow could tell us what we can and cannot have here are over, today we are somewhere else." [160] The Minister of Interior Ivan Langer also highlighted this break with the past when he said: "Every truly sovereign country has the right to chose its defence strategy. Times when Moscow determined what the Czech Republic (sic) had to do are gone forever." [161] At the Prague conference, Topolánek accepted the idea of a dialogue with Russia in the framework of NATO, but added: "we will decide about our internal matters for ourselves. We do not want to let our recently gained freedom be limited." [162]

In a similar fashion, Czech officials repeated that Moscow was still considering

156 Articles 2007; 44
157 Articles 2007; 46
158 Articles 2007; 63
159 Articles 2007; 76
160 Articles 2007; 112
161 Articles 2007; 82
162 Articles 2007; 89

former Eastern block countries as its sphere of influence and clearly emphasized their refusal of it. The question of the 'sphere of influence' had caused a diplomatic stir as early as in 1994 when the Russian minister of foreign affairs said that Russia considered the Czech Republic as belonging to its sphere of influence.[163] Karl Schwarzenberg stated in May 2007 at the Russia-EU Summit that Russia was considering the new states 〔of the EU〕 as "its zone of influence" [164] and that the EU should "answer to that clearly with one voice." [165] "They〔the Russians〕 think they can interfere in their 〔the new states'〕 affairs." [166] The question of the zone of influence was also part of Topolánek's aforementioned speech at the Prague conference when he said: "We do not want to belong once more to the Russian sphere of influence." [167] The idea, expressed in earlier citations, that Russia wanted to claim back the Soviet Union's former position, or restore the Soviet Union's position, was repeated over and over again by top Czech government officials. Sometimes, this rhetoric also neglected to distinguish between the Soviet Union and Russia, it was simply Russia taking its place back, and not the Russian Federation trying to claim for itself the role once played by the Soviet Union. It was in those ambiguous terms that Jiří Šedivý, the deputy vice-minister of Vice-premier Vondra, stated that "Russia is trying to prove on the international scene that it is returning to its role of great power." [168] Schwarzenberg rather repeated, as demonstrated in previous citations, that "Russia would like to get back the same status the former Soviet Union had. Then Washington and Moscow would be deciding about European affairs." [169] Topolánek

163 Articles 2003-2005; 27
164 Articles 2007; 86
165 Articles 2007; 86
166 Articles 2007; 87
167 Articles 2007; 94
168 Articles 2007; 42
169 Articles 2007-2; 7

expressed similar ideas in previous citations, when he mentioned the Russian "influential circles who have not yet made peace with the fact that Russian is not heard anymore in Brdsky forests" [170] or talked about Russian imperialism as "awakening anew." [171] In a June 2007 interview, Karl Schwarzenberg also mentioned Russians' hardships with making peace with the past and even showed some sympathy. He said: "According to Russians the biggest geopolitical catastrophe was the fall of the Soviet Union. Up to this date they understand it difficultly and it is still not easy for them to accept it. So sometimes their sharp positions are understandable." [172]

One of the other cornerstones of the Czech rhetoric was the presentation of Russia as an irresponsible partner. As the Czech opposition was blaming the government for not informing the Russians about the radar and negotiating with them, part of the answer was that the Czech Republic was sovereign and thus not compelled to do so, and part of the answer was that the Russians were not willing to negotiate, were just threatening, were being irresponsible and undiplomatic, and were ruining mutual confidence. The fact that Russia was not being a responsible partner nor pursuing any dialogue was often highlighted by government members. When Russian general Nikolay Solovtsov threatened to aim Russian missiles at the anti-missile infrastructures in Poland and the Czech Republic, Schwarzenberg said: "We are not preparing any retaliatory measures. When someone from a garden across the field starts to shout on you, then this is not the establishment of a dialogue. Do understand, I will not comment the statements of generals." [173] On another occasion, Schwarzenberg once again criticized Russia's

170 Articles 2007-2; 18
171 Articles 2007-2; 18
172 Articles 2007; 113
173 Articles 2007; 33

behaviour when he stated that "we need to talk openly to Russia, like to a neighbour, but if it does not respect neighbour-like rules, then we cannot make an exception of them." [174] In an interview published in June 2007, Schwarzenberg answered to the question 'What would you say to Putin?': "Mr.President, the way you, and generals subordinated to you, have expressed themselves was highly unfortunate. Russia already had an image that presented it as an accommodating partner, and you have ruined that recently." [175] At a meeting of NATO ministers in April 2007, Schwarzenberg said: "I agree with the building of trust, for which some dear colleagues called. I am for it, but it needs to be built from both sides. And certain statements from the Russian side are destroying this trust." [176] Schwarzenberg's statements presented the argument that Russia used to behave differently and the fact that Russia lost its image of 'accommodating partner' and destroyed previously established trust. The ethical identity of Russia was thus reconstructed, it was not described as a partner looking for cooperation and ready to negotiate anymore, and the change from the past was underlined.

Russia's behaviour was often linked with Czech officials' position. Reacting to the aforementioned threat by Solovtsov, Schwarzenberg replied: "I am always of the opinion that when someone threatens you, it should be reinforcing you in your opinion. It is a known experience that when a man gives in to blackmail once, then he does not have any room left to compromise." [177] He went on to say: "We have our experiences with Russian threats and whenever we have ceded to them, then we had to pay for it." [178] The Czech ethical identity was thus changed by the perception of Russia as threatening and

174 Articles 2007; 54
175 Articles 2007; 113
176 Articles 2007; 73
177 Articles 2007; 30
178 Articles 2007; 31

blackmailing, as the responsibility not to budge was underlined.

In a lengthy interview published in February 2007, Jiří Šedivý, the former minister of defence and then deputy of Vice-premier Alexandr Vondra, pictured Russia's geopolitical orientation as undefined and unstable. "This ambivalence, when the short-term goals of the Russsian military-industrial complex predominate over the long-term strategic interests of the country, reflects the traditional conceptual groping of Russian policy. [Russian policy] has still not found out whether it should orient itself towards the East or the West." He then went on to say that Moscow did not understand where its interests laid: "The West is irreplaceable for Russia not only as a reliable trade partner and a source of modern technologies, but also in the future as a security ally. The Kremlin's muscled rhetoric is aiming in the wrong direction. That way Russia is shifting away for many years from the possibility of beginning to build a long-term, reciprocally beneficial and truly strategic partnership with us." [179] Schwarzenberg expressed the same ideas in his hypothetical message to Putin: "You are a rich country, but you cannot live isolated in the world. The way you acted, you have harmed your country and yourself." [180] On a similar note, Schwarzenberg said in April 2007 that he hoped Russia would recognize the need for an anti-missile shield in the future.[181] In his Prague conference speech, Topolánek also blamed Russia and stated that responsibility was in Moscow's hands: "It is up to Russia, whether it wants to be an ally, whether it wants to contribute to collective security, or quite the contrary." [182] Such statements show how the Czech discourse discarded Russian reservations by building the image of Russia being

179 Articles 2007; 42
180 Articles 2007; 113
181 Articles 2007; 72
182 Articles 2007; 90

somewhat immature, or rather unwise, because it did not understand its true interests and was harming itself.

Moreover, Czech officials brushed aside Russian reservations about the anti-missile shield and linked their position with arguments that the Russians were pursuing some hidden agenda. As mentioned earlier, the idea that Russians were just protesting in order to get a bargain was repeated several times. Similarly, their reservations were often blamed on their will to restore their position as co-decider in Europe, or reclaim Central Europe as their sphere of influence. One of the other accusations was that Russia was using the anti-missile shield to weaken NATO and sow discord among its members. In April 2007, Karl Schwarzenberg stated that Russia was playing its political game and "now considered more useful to pretend to be hurt and to try splitting the EU and the Alliance." [183] A couple of months later, at the Prague conference, Prime Minister Topolánek used a similar rhetoric: "Russia is not threatened militarily. It feels threatened in its newly found great power policy. It feels the chance that if it is able to veto the emergence of the base, if it creates conflict among the allies, it will strengthen its position and weaken the Euroatlantic alliance." [184] This vision of Russia being of bad faith contrasted sharply with the presentation of the Czech Republic as informing the Russians and being a responsible partner.

As it has been described in this part, the debate around the construction of a radar base on Czech ground in the framework of the planned American anti-missile shield created important tensions between the Czech Republic and Russia. At the beginning, the official Czech answer to Russian reservations repeated the same things: Russia is informed,

183 Articles 2007; 72
184 Articles 2007; 90

Russia is not threatened, Russia is just bargaining, Russia is being irresponsible, etc.. Moreover, Czech officials underlined the fact that they were sovereign and that Moscow's control over Central Europe belonged to the past. Yet the Czech position towards Russia remained ambiguous. Contradictory statements were made: although the Czech Republic stressed the fact the project was not aimed against Russia, it linked Russian reservations and threats with statements on the need to build the radar. Gradually, the rhetoric built the image of Russia as a danger and sharpened the tone between both countries to an unprecedented level.

One lengthier statement made by Karl Schwarzenberg put in a nutshell some of the main lines of the Czech position. In an interview published on February 24 he said:

> "I believe, that this is all a power game that [the Russians] are playing above all with the United States. Presumably I imagine that some kind of bargain could come out of this – if at first they take a strong position and then give in, then they will get something for it. But I will tell you something: if the same radar were, I beg you pardon, in Belgium, in Germany or in Norway, they would not even say a word! Also here it is about something that concerns us greatly: about the fact that the Russian Federation is obviously starting to claim the position of the former Soviet Union in Europe, Putin talks about that totally openly. They have the concept of two zones: countries which were then part of the USSR belong to the first, and member states of the former Warsaw Pact belong to the second. And they believe that they should have a certain influence in

both those zones, that they can still veto something in those countries. This is unacceptable for us." [185]

Finally, if we, once again, use the model provided by Lene Hansen, we can build the following ideal-type of Russia as formed by the Czech official line during the early stage of the radar dispute (September 2006 – August 2007). The spatial identity of Russia was one of a great power trying to control spheres of influence and co-decide along with the United States. The temporal identity was centred on Russia's attempt to restore -or rather reclaim the status of- the Soviet Union. It could be described as 'geopolitical nostalgia'. The ethical identity was characterized by Russia's pursuit of its own selfish interests, its disrespect for sovereignty and its unwillingness to negotiate. This 'portrait' of Russia put against the image of the Czech Republic as a sovereign Euroatlantic country taking responsibility for its defence in times of danger accompanied the Czech government's policy of ignoring Russian reservations and going forward with the anti-missile shield plans. The official discourse's construction of itself (the Czech Republic) as facing new threats and taking responsibility for self-defence was also accompanying the government's refusal of a national referendum on the radar. Indeed, it was often stated that national security was too important to be dealt with in referenda and that the government had to act responsibly to face new threats, despite public opposition. [186] [187] [188]

185 Articles 2007; 40
186 Articles 2007; 18
187 Articles 2007; 30
188 Articles 2007; 40

Identity	RUSSIA	CZECH REPUBLIC
SPATIAL	Great power	Sovereign country / Euroatlantic ally
TEMPORAL	Restoring -reclaiming position of- the Soviet Union	Facing new threats
ETHICAL	Pursuing own (dangerous) interests, irresponsible partner, unwilling to negotiate	National security / prevent repetition of history / not cede
==> ==> Close collaboration with the USA. Hard line towards Russia <== <==		

4.4 The Conflict in South Ossetia

The Radar Affair went on for months and months, and the rhetoric described in the previous part stuck to the same lines. Some new elements and metaphors were used by the three main actors of foreign policy, Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek, Minister of Foreign Affairs Karl Schwarzenberg and Vice-president for European Affairs Alexandr Vondra, but the model previously exposed stayed stable. As the debate on the radar continued, a conflict broke out on August 7, 2008 between Russia and Georgia in one of the latter's secessionist republic, South Ossetia. Russia massively intervened when Georgia tried to restore its sovereignty over the territory. There was a massive international outcry, and the Czech government sided with Georgia as well as called for EU action. Czech officials interrupted their vacations, and on August 12 and 14, Vondra and Topolánek commented on the matter in open letters published in the media.

Both politicians began their texts by describing Russia as the aggressor. Vondra opened his letter by writing: "Aggressors like the summer cucumber season" [189] and

189 Articles 2008; 86

reminding readers about historical attacks that had taken place in August. "Russia timed its aggression well" [190], wrote Topolánek in the first paragraph of his. Further down in Vondra's text, the conflict was characterized as a "military aggression against a sovereign state." [191] The term 'aggression' was repeated in both texts.[192] [193] In September 2008, Karl Schwarzenberg also condemned Russia in a speech delivered at the United Nations in New York. He said that the world had been the witness of "the systematic provocations and finally the military aggression of a powerful country, permanent member of the United Nations' Security Council, towards its small neighbour." [194] Part of this description also insisted on the fact that Russia's attack was premeditated. As the previous citation from Topolánek indicates, he believed that Russia planned and timed the aggression. Vondra made the aforementioned parallel with previous attacks and added:

> "The format is the same each time: take advantage of a moment of surprise to change the status quo. The moment when the majority of world politicians are on vacation suits well such operations. This year's summer is really ideal –the olympic games have started in Beijing, the election campaign is culminating in the United States, and the European Union has problems itself because of the unsuccessful ratification of the Lisbon treaty and the beginning economic recession. Russia can think that a massive military operation against a sovereign state will pass unnoticed." [195]

190 Articles 2008; 90
191 Articles 2008; 86
192 Articles 2008; 86
193 Articles 2008; 90
194 Articles 2008-2; 27
195 Articles 2008; 86

Vondra went on to add: "Let us not be fooled: it is not about improvisation, but clearly about a premeditated Russian plan." Topolánek also mentioned the Russian attack was well timed because the American administration was weakened by the ongoing election campaign and the world's attention was fixed on Beijing's games.[196] Moreover, the Czech Prime Minister enumerated all the reasons to see Russia's attack as premeditated and planned. Among others he wrote: "The bombing of the pipeline Baku – Tbilisi – Ceyhan bears witness of the sophistication of the attack. Russia wants to weaken Georgia economically and reinforce its position on the market of energy resources."[197] In short, the Czech immediate reaction to the events in South Ossetia was to blame Russia as the aggressor who planned the attack in advance. Even later in the month, as it became clear that Georgia was less of a victim than it claimed it was, the Czech official line was that the Georgians were provoked: "Saakashvili let himself be provoked, it was planned in advance."[198] The debate was thus less centred on who fired the first shot, but rather on the intentions behind the conflict. According to Czech officials, it was clearly Russia which bore responsibility because it counted on Georgia's attack to have a pretext to react and pursue its own objectives.

The first reaction from the Czech government on August 11 contained an allusion to history, and almost all subsequent critics of Russia hinted at the past. Indeed, Minister of Foreign Affairs Karl Schwarzenberg's first reaction about the conflict in South Ossetia was communicated by a spokesperson who declared: "The Minister stated that the Czech Republic supports Georgia and added that it was an unfortunate set of circumstances that

196 Articles 2008; 90
197 Articles 2008; 90
198 Articles 2008; 109

it came to fighting in Georgia exactly at the moment when we are remembering August 21 1968." [199] In the Prime Minister's open letter, the parallel made with 1968 reverberated right in the first sentence: "Russian tanks in the streets of Georgian towns are reminding of the invasion of 1968 those among us who experienced it." [200] Vondra's open letter was also full of historical parallels: "At the end of the summer of 1939, Germany attacked Poland. In August forty years ago Soviet troops occupied Czechoslovakia. In August eighteen years ago, Saddam Hussein stormed into Koweit. Now Russia decided to settle accounts with rebellious Georgia." [201] He nevertheless insisted that the actual situation in South Ossetia was more similar to 1938, as Germany justified its imperialist policy towards Czechoslovakia by the presence of Germans there, just like Russia pretended to defend its citizens by intervening in South Ossetia.[202] On the day the Soviet invasion was commemorated, on August 21, 2008, Topolánek expressed the following wish: "May there never be a August 21 again, not in our country nor in Georgia." [203] Some of the statements comparing the situation in Georgia with the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 also emphasized the empathy of the Czech government, and even the Czech people, for the Caucasian republic. Topolánek wrote: "We know how it is when you are attacked by a stronger neighbour. We are able to put ourselves in the place of the Georgians who are following on television the scenes of Russian tanks waging war on their country." [204] He ended his open letter by words of empathy and faith: "Georgia is close to us and has the right to be part of the 〔Western〕 community. I believe that one

199 Articles 2008; 85
200 Articles 2008; 90
201 Articles 2008; 86
202 Articles 2008; 86
203 Articles 2008; 114
204 Articles 2008; 90

day it will." [205] The comparisons between the past and the present were mostly used by the authors to condemn Russia's actions and also to highlight their own capacity to understand Georgians and have empathy for them.

Another part of the discourse was to link not only events of the past with those of the present, but also to construct an image of Russia as an imperialist and colonialist. Whereas the debate around the radar had shown that the Czech government presented Russia as reclaiming, or restoring, the Soviet Union, the condemnation of Russia after the South Ossetian conflict continued to do so as well as used new comparisons. Indeed, Czech officials referred both to Soviet time policies as well as to older Russian imperialism and colonialism to explain the Georgian conflict and warn against Russia's ambitions. In his open letter published during the conflict, Alexandr Vondra wrote: "Moscow's policy does not come from the idea of Soviet communism anymore but rather from the interests of Russian nationalism, which is now presented in some kind of humanitarian wrapping." [206] Sometimes, both ideas were expressed in the same text, as in the case of Topolánek's open letter published on August 14. In it, he wrote: "In Georgia, Moscow is obviously trying to take up great power politics of the 19th century." [207] In the next paragraph, he went for the Soviet analogy, writing: "Moscow is trying to assert its post-Soviet revisionism at the expense of Georgia." [208] In Schwarzenberg's aforementioned U.N. speech, the minister condemned Russia's intervention with the following words: "Colonial powers used to act like that." [209] When asked in a subsequent interview whether he really believed that Russia went ahead as far as that, Schwarzenberg replied: "Russia did

205 Articles 2008; 90
206 Articles 2008; 86
207 Articles 2008; 90
208 Articles 2008; 90
209 Articles 2008-2; 27

not go ahead, it never stopped with that. If we examine seriously and thoroughly history since the 16th century, then Russia, just like other powers, colonized or conquered a lot of territory." [210] He went on to say: "Generally, in its argumentation, [Russia's] policy in the Caucasus reminds of the reasons that were used by the French or English in Africa: that they are called upon maintaining order there." [211] This way of tracing back Russia's behaviour to centuries before was the basis of a discursive construction presenting Russia as not having changed, as keeping the same imperialist, or colonialist habits, that marked the imperial and Soviet periods.

Another part of the official Czech discourse on Russia was the emphasis on Russia's disrespect for international conventions. Similarly to critics presented in the previous part on the radar affair, part of Russia's condemnation included the emphasis on Moscow's lack of respect for conventions and its unwillingness to negotiate. Thus Russia was once again presented as an irresponsible partner and the fact that it was harming itself was highlighted anew. Talking about the EU's ministers of foreign affairs stand, Karl Schwarzenberg stated: "All are very unanimous, that Russia transgressed the limit of the acceptable." [212] Answering to Russian threats of deploying rockets in Kaliningrad, Schwarzenberg replied: "I do not consider that as a suitable tone, it is not the first time." [213] Part of the Czech rhetoric highlighted the Czech Republic's responsibility to react to Russia's behaviour. For example, Schwarzenberg highlighted this when he said: "It must nevertheless always be clear that they have violated the basic rules of the game. If they want to continue in this and if they do not want to rectify it, then we cannot deal

210 Articles 2008-2; 23
211 Articles 2008-2; 23
212 Articles 2008; 106
213 Articles 2008-2; 9

with it normally." [214] In the same interview, Schwarzenberg insisted: "We cannot allow noncompliance with rules and conventions that Russia has signed itself." [215] Russia's behaviour was also blamed by Schwarzenberg on its immaturity, or rather backwardness. Answering to the question whether Russia was not just defending its great power interests in Georgia like every other great power, Schwarzenberg replied: "Before, it was like that, it is true, but we have matured further in the development of the world. Russia has not reached this point yet though." [216] This image of the responsible law abiding Czech Republic was set against the image of rogue Russia.

In a similar way, statements on the radar continued to highlight the fact that Russia was unwilling to negotiate whereas the Czech Republic and its allies were of good faith. In an interview published in November 2008, Alexandr Vondra declared: "Americans, Poles and Czechs also have emphasized many times that they are ready to collaborate with Russia and provide it with guarantees of strengthened confidence, including the monitoring of the base in question. Unfortunately, for the moment Moscow is refusing any serious debate and instead of that is withdrawing in an aggressive rhetoric." [217] As we can see, the fault was clearly put on Moscow. Moreover, statements on Russia's unsuitable behaviour linked up with arguments about Moscow's disregard for sovereignty, its revisionism and great power ambitions. For example, Topolánek's open letter published during the conflict emphasized Georgia's Europeaness and desire to join Euroatlantic structures and ended by stating: "Moscow has to respect the freedom of every country to join the West." [218] Schwarzenberg answered to a question on Russia's

214 Articles 2008-2; 23
215 Articles 2008-2; 23
216 Articles 2008-2; 23
217 Articles 2008-2; 4
218 Articles 2008; 90

behaviour: "Take for example what they are saying about the possible Russian presence on the eventual American radar base in Brdy. They claim that they will settle that with the Americans, not with us. We cannot admit that." [219] In the same interview, he talked about the state of negotiations with Russia: "〔The negotiations〕 are not taking place at the moment. We are correctly informing them about the development. But only the present Russian diplomacy is moving along the lines of the former Soviet policy. They would like to establish the same situation than during the Cold War, that they will influence a certain parts of the world, and not that some kind of dwarves like us will be deciding for themselves without them." [220] Once again, Russia's unwillingness to negotiate, or at least, negotiate with the Czech Republic, was highlighted by Schwarzenberg. This fear that matters concerning the Czech Republic would be decided without the Czechs was often shown. Vondra expressed this idea when he criticized France's position on the anti-missile shield during the latter's EU presidency by stating that: "A lot of people in Prague were scared that something is being played 'about us without us' once more." [221] The 'once more' referred to previous moments in history when the fate of the Czech lands was decided by great powers, such as at the 1938 Munich conference or 1945 Yalta conference. As it has been described in the previous part, the Czech official discourse contrasted its own willingness to negotiate and its responsible behaviour with Russia's refusal to respect Czech sovereignty and negotiate with Prague.

Part of the 'responsible behaviour' of the Czech Republic towards Russia was the insistence on maintaining contacts with Russia and further pursuing discussions. On

219 Articles 2008-2; 23
220 Articles 2008-2; 23
221 Articles 2008-2; 4

repeated occasions, Karl Schwarzenberg insisted that Russia that the activities of the NATO-Russia Council should not be interrupted. On August 20, he declared: "It is necessary to maintain a very intensive dialogue with Russia – it cannot be interrupted, it does not make sense. In this critical moment we should be talking to each other." [222] He then added about the NATO-Russia Council: "It has to continue. Those tools are created so that they can function in bad weather, not only when it is nice." [223] In a subsequent interview, Schwarzenberg said: "We have to discuss with the Russians and maintain all possible contacts with them." [224] Thus the Czech 'hard line' towards Russia was characterized by the responsibility to maintain a dialogue and by the responsibility to stand their ground. As Schwarzenberg precised: "Let us be consistent in our positions towards the Russians and let us keep our causes on the agenda. You cannot say something and then after a while drop it and devote yourself to business." [225] He then went on further: "The argument over Georgia will be won by the one who will be really, but really consistent in his positions. In the case of negotiations with the Russians, you must have a long endurance. You should not use strong expressions, but you cannot drop the subject." [226]

As it had happened in the course of the radar affair, there were also mentions that Russia was not acting in its interests. Thus Schwarzenberg said in an interview: "We should also warn Russia that with the steps it has been taking in the last weeks, it is mostly harming itself." [227] In a subsequent interview, the Minister of Foreign Affairs

222 Articles 2008; 106
223 Articles 2008; 106
224 Articles 2008-2; 23
225 Articles 2008-2; 23
226 Articles 2008-2; 23
227 Articles 2008; 120

answered to the question whether Russia is a threat in the following way: "Today it is the biggest threat for itself." [228] Those statements expressed once more the idea that Russia was being irresponsible not only towards its partners, but also towards itself.

After the conflict in South Ossetia, the Czech official discourse linked the circumstances with the unpopular project to participate in the American anti-missile shield. They thus mentioned the so-called 'Russian aggression' in declarations supporting their participation in the anti-missile shield, and closer Euroatlantic ties in general. The 'Russian threat' was increasingly mentioned in the radar debate, even though the central contradiction that the radar was allegedly not directed against Russia (and would even be useless against the Russian force de frappe) was repeated as well. As they had done during the radar debate, top Czech officials liked to repeat that Russia was considering Central Europe as its zone of influence. As Schwarzenberg said in one of the aforementioned interviews: "〔The Russians〕 would like to establish the same situation than during the Cold War, that they will influence a certain parts of the world." [229] In an intervention in October 2008, Karl Schwarzenberg accused Moscow of trying to "create some kind of neutral zone in Eastern Europe, in which the classical security guarantees of the Western defence organisations would be valid only on paper." [230] The Prime Minister put it even more bluntly, often underlining that the Czech Republic was facing a choice: either Moscow or NATO, Moscow or Washington, or still Moscow or Lisbon (constitutional treaty of the EU). In his first intervention concerning the Georgian War, Mirek Topolánek wrote that the Russian tanks in Georgia reminded of August 1968

228 Articles 2008-2; 23
229 Articles 2008-2; 23
230 Articles 2008-2; 14

and added: "It is not about history though. Still today the question is actual, whether we will belong to the Russian sphere of influence. Georgians do not want it for sure. Do we want to go back in it? Of course not. Then we have to do something about it." [231] In the same text, he did not hesitate to mention the Russian threat: "The rejection of the protective shield would have two consequences. First, our security would be weaker. Second, by vetoing the common Alliance defence, we would voluntarily join back the Russian sphere of influence." [232] He also attacked opponents of the radar:

> "Thanks to NATO membership we are today at least equal partners for Russia though. In contrast to Georgia and former Czechoslovakia we thus have the choice. We also had a choice in 1947 when we were deciding whether to accept the Marshall plan. Then we said no to Washington and yes to Moscow. From there, a straight road led us to a slave-like dependency on the Eastern power. Nowadays the Czech government does not go to Moscow for advice on what stand to take on an American offer. Nevertheless some people are offering us the road back in Muscovite thrall anew. You can once again find people who demand that we refuse a project that does not concern Russia out of consideration for Russia. The anti-missile defence, just like the Marshall plan, serves us and does not threaten Russia. [...] I think that politicians who recommend us such a suicidal step [ie. refusing the radar] should go and look at Georgia and ask how they would decide in our place there. The Marshall plan, August 1968, the Russian attack on Georgia.

231 Articles 2008; 90
232 Articles 2008; 90

Those are clear proofs of how important it is to share the 'protective shield' of the Euroatlantic structures." [233]

As he had done when the anti-missile shield treaty was signed with the Americans in July 2007, Topolánek repeated that the Czech Republic was standing in front of a choice similar to the one they had in 1947 when, under Moscow's pressure, they chose to refuse to participate in the Marshall Plan proposed by the Americans to rebuild post-war Europe.[234] In October 2008, he called deputies upon not repeating the error of the Marshall plan refusal and added: "Reject the radar and you will be exposing the Czech Republic to Russia's great power ambitions." [235] A month earlier, at a conference organized by the British Conservatives in the United Kingdom, he had said: "Without an American military presence in Europe, Russia would quickly tip over the balance in its favour, realize its neo-imperial ambition and enlarge its sphere of influence. Let us remember Georgia." [236] The same rhetoric was used by the Prime Minister to support the EU's constitutional Lisbon treaty. In an open letter published in November 2008, he wrote: "The European Union, just like NATO, is the firm constitutional element of the Euroatlantic space and a firm component of our post-1989 foreign policy. It is, or rather it could be, a dam against the great power ambitions of Moscow. And it is by far better, if I had to react to president Klaus' words, to kiss the German chancellor than to hug the Russian bear." [237] He went on to put it quite clearly: "But this choice is not Lisbon or

233 Articles 2008; 90
234 Articles 2008; 70
235 Articles 2008; 15
236 Articles 2008-2; 26
237 Articles 2008-2; 6

nothing. The real choice is Lisbon or Moscow." [238] Topolánek's argumentation emphasized the existence of a serious Russian threat and presented a Manichaean worldview. Indeed, he did not hesitate to present black and white choices: that it was either Washington or Moscow, and Lisbon or Moscow. The mention of the Russian threat was thus linked with several political projects promoted by Topolánek.

Another revealing point exposed during the Georgian-Russian conflict was the Czech Republic's increasing emphasis on the European Union as the organisation through which defence and foreign policy measures could be realized. Although the Czech Republic was quite vocal about its support for Georgia, it did not take measures against Russia by itself and rather supported a common EU approach to the problem. Whereas the radar affair was treated by the Czech government as an internal affair and outside interference both from Russia and Germany or Austria was rejected, the conflict in South Ossetia was to be handled collectively by the EU, according to Prague. The Czech government also showed restrain in its reaction and did not criticize the common EU line. At a EU summit at the end of August, Topolánek commented on disagreements with President Klaus about the South Ossetian conflict and the EU's answer to Russia: "There was a tendency not to escalate the differences of opinions that we have here and also in principle in all countries of the EU. It is not black and white anywhere, just like no problem is black and white." [239] He then added: "It is about the degree of the critic that will resound in the EU-Russia relation. The countries of the EU are unanimous that some critic has to resound, but they are unanimous on its depth." [240] At the same summit, Schwarzenberg

238 Articles 2008-2; 6
239 Articles 2008; 119
240 Articles 2008; 119

added: "We are making efforts, so that the EU can be united on that question [help for Georgia] and so that a reconstruction plan of Georgia can be established." [241] Czech officials were insisting on a common EU answer to the crisis and on the need to act collectively.

Similarly, there was a greater emphasis on the positive role of the EU for the Czech Republic. The government's support of the Lisbon treaty was voiced and the advantages of the EU for the Czech Republic were often highlighted by mentioning the geopolitical dangers, among others, of the Russian threat. In his open letter of November 20, 2008 presenting a choice between Lisbon and Moscow, Topolánek highlighted the advantages of the EU by presenting it as a "community that is a space of freedom, security and prosperity. The European Union can also deal with Russia at least on an equal footing thanks to its strength. Or would we rather discuss about energy security with Moscow by ourselves?" [242] The Prime Minister underlined the weight the EU has when negotiating with Russia and asked a rhetorical question in which the weakness of the Czech Republic in dealing with Russia by itself was stressed. In the government's position, there was also a stress on the EU as an instrument of stability in contrast to a troublesome European past. Topolánek thus wrote: "The European Union is a space of rules. Of rules with which you do not always have to agree, but which are giving this space a firm order and certainty after centuries of instability and conflicts." [243] In an open letter written by Alexandr Vondra and published a day later, similar ideas were expressed:

241 Articles 2008; 122
242 Articles 2008-2; 6
243 Articles 2008-2; 6

"The leitmotiv of the Lisbon treaty, which should allow the Union to face the challenges of the 21st century, are game rules and solidarity. The main contribution of the EU is the order which it [ie. the EU] introduced in the formerly unrestrained relations of European countries, based on the concert of great powers and zones of influence. The value of European integration lies right in its [ie. the order's] respect not only for small and average member states, but also for Europe and the whole world, which has suffered in history from the spreading of European conflicts. The biggest threat lurking Europe is the destruction of this order." [244]

Both Topolánek and Vondra used Europe's violent past to laud its stable present and Topolánek even mentioned Russia in a negative way in his advocacy of the EU project. Whereas Topolánek pictured Russia directly in black and white tones, Vondra rather focused on the refusal of 'old school' power games. He mentioned Russia's difficulty to come to peace with the fact that Central Europe was not its zone of influence anymore and then presented the order established by the EU as the end of great power games and zones of influence. Both men presented a positive image of the EU, but it did not mean that NATO and the stress on Euroatlantic links were downplayed. Quite on the contrary, the EU was lauded as going hand in hand with NATO. Indeed, Topolánek emphasized this in the same text when he wrote: "The European Union, just like NATO, is the firm constitutional element of the Euroatlantic space and a firm component of our post-1989

244 Articles 2008-2; 4

foreign policy." [245] In Vondra's text, the idea of the indispensability of transatlantic cooperation was expressed right at the beginning with a plea for the anti-missile shield: "If we let Europe stay unprotected, then in case of danger our strategic interests could shift away from each other to such an extent that the transatlantic couple will break up. The consequences would be tragic." [246] Vondra even announced the upholding of those relations as one of the priorities of the upcoming Czech presidency of the EU: "As the future country holding the presidency we will press for the realization of our task – to be the keystone between the two shores of the Atlantic, who will work on the basis of the mandate of all member states of the Union. The EU and the USA, even though they compete in a series of domains, should work hand in hand on security matters." [247]

As this section has shown, the Czech official discourse on Russia did not change with the conflict in South Ossetia, but was rather further reproduced. The escalation that took place during the radar affair continued with the conflict between Georgia and Russia, as the Czech government sided with Georgia. Moreover, Czech officials often mentioned the conflict to reproduce the image of Russia that was previously built. Russia was still seen as a great power trying to reclaim the position of the Soviet Union and the conflict in South Ossetia was presented as a proof. To this previous discourse was added the idea that Russia also linked up with their imperial, and even colonial pre-Bolshevik heritage. The ethical identity ascribed by the official Czech discourse was once again one of a disrespectful and immature Russia pursuing its own great power ambitions. The 'Czech

245 Articles 2008-2; 6
246 Articles 2008-2; 4
247 Articles 2008-2; 4

Republic' that was constructed through this image of Russia also stayed along the lines exposed in the part on the radar affair. One slight modification was operated though, as a new emphasis on the Czech Republic's belonging to NATO and the EU replaced the emphasis put on the Czech Republic's sovereignty. Indeed, the Czech Republic was reaffirming its responsibility in front of new threats in the name of the greater European security and the solidity of transatlantic relations. Its stress on the EU was also interesting, as the order anchored in the principles of the EU embodied in the Lisbon treaty was promoted with reference to the Russian threat. The triangles discursively created can be summarized in the following way. They roughly accompanied similar policies expressed earlier, with greater emphasis on action within the framework of the EU and NATO.

Identity	**RUSSIA**	**CZECH REPUBLIC**
SPATIAL	Great power	EU state and NATO member
TEMPORAL	Restoring -reclaiming position of- the Soviet Union; colonial power	Facing choices / at crossroads
ETHICAL	Pursuing own (dangerous) interests, irresponsible partner, unwilling to negotiate	Responsible to its people, to EU/NATO and to the international community
==> Close collaboration within EU and NATO. Hard line towards Russia <==		

4.5 The Czech Presidency of the EU

As it has been highlighted in the previous part, the Czech Republic was preparing its first big EU test in 2008 as it was about to take up the presidency of the EU from France on January 1st 2009. At the same time, the Lisbon treaty was being debated and the government was promoting it. Coincidence or not, the Czech official policy had increasingly stressed their belonging to the EU in their stand on the conflict in South Ossetia and their foreign policy in general. According to the Czech government, the negotiation of an agreement between the EU and Russia was the second priority of the Czech presidency of the EU.[248] Russia became the centre of attention right away though, as Russia and the Ukraine fought over the renegotiation of gas contracts, leading to an interruption of Russian exports of gas to Central- and South-Eastern Europe. The Topolánek government thus had to act in the name of the EU to settle the issue. In doing so, the old discourses on Russia were toned down and other elements were brought up, including the Czech knowledge of Russia.

The Russo-Ukrainian gas dispute was the first test for the Czech presidency and it led to an intensive shuttle diplomacy between Kiev, Moscow, Prague and Brussels. In the course of the negotiations, and the presidency itself, the Czech government showed an unexpected restrain and the strong words towards Russia, which were so usual for 2007 and 2008, became rarer. Indeed, Czech officials stayed demonstratively neutral. Whereas they had unilaterally sided with Georgia during the conflict in South Ossetia, Topolánek refused to compromise himself in an interview about the Russo-Ukrainian conflict published on January 7. When asked whether the conflict was political, he replied:

248 Articles 2009; 1

> "No one formulated it in that way. We formulated it in a way milder way in the sense that it is a commercial dispute and we will not intervene in it directly. Not even now will we directly intervene because we do not have all information. I want to say that it reached a political dimension already before, but it is still between two countries. The question is, how can the European Commission, and eventually the President of the European Council, intervene efficiently in this dispute." [249]

He went on to dodge another question by saying: "But I will not let myself be dragged into some kind of geopolitical discussion, even in this interview." [250] When asked who bore responsibility for the crisis, the Czech Minister of Industry Martin Říman said: "It is impossible to say. I think that we will never find out." [251] In another interview, Topolánek refused to take sides once again: "The dispute about who started first, who stopped deliveries first, who stopped the transit first, is not interesting." [252] No one wanted to start pointing their finger at one or the other parties involved in the conflict. Moreover, it seemed that the Czech government was conscious that it had a reputation as a russophobe state. As Vice-minister of Foreign Affairs Tomáš Pojar highlighted: "The negotiating role of Premier Topolánek during the gas crisis gave the opportunity to show not only to the Russians but also to partners in the EU that we are not russophobe at all." [253] The softer tone adopted on the gas conflict and also on the radar, as it will be shown herebelow, did not mean that older discourses on Russia disappeared however.

249 Articles 2009; 3
250 Articles 2009; 3
251 Articles 2009; 4
252 Articles 2009; 16
253 Articles 2009; 18

Among others, the idea that Russia intended to reclaim the geopolitical position of the Soviet Union or that it followed its great power ambitions was repeatedly expressed by Schwarzenberg.[254] [255]

Although Czech officials did not openly take sides as negotiators of the gas conflict, there was still some criticism towards both countries for the way they handled the issue. Similarly to previously described discourses on Russia's irresponsibility, there were many statements stressing the unreliability and irresponsibility of Russia and the Ukraine as partners. On January 16, despite an agreement signed by all parties, gas deliveries were not renewed, and the Czech Ambassador for Energy Security Václav Bartuška used strong words:

> "Both sides claim that there is a technical protocol missing, 'soglashenie'. But that is obstruction according to me. The Union has fulfilled everything it promised and is waiting for the same thing from Russia and Ukraine: Gentlemen, it does not interest us, who is the biggest responsible of you both. If you are saying that after forty years of gas deliveries to Europe you suddenly do not know how to arrange everything so that it flows again, we do not believe you. We will not listen to the jeremiads of Russia and Ukraine." [256]

In an other statement, he warned Russia and the Ukraine that either gas will be flowing

254 Articles 2009; 22
255 Articles 2009; 38
256 Articles 2009; 9

anew "or Russia and the Ukraine will become untrustworthy partners for the EU, with all the repercussions." [257] In the aforementioned interview, he also stressed the fact that the crisis will push the EU to find alternative energy solutions in the future and addressed the following words to Russia and the Ukraine: "You can play with us for another five, maybe ten years, but it will be to your own cost." [258] He specified his idea by commenting on an eventual gas summit between the EU, Russia and the Ukraine: "I do not see the reason why we should listen to their excuses and jeremiads, and who stepped on whose foot, at the highest level. [...] We will talk about a EU summit, but on how to manage without Russia and the Ukraine on the long-term." [259]

Indeed, during the conflict and in the following months, the Czech government brought up the theme of energy security and the need for alternative energy solutions. In doing so, they insisted on the necessity and advantage of adopting a common EU approach. This was part of the new stress on the EU adopted by the Czech government in 2008 and described in the previous part. As mentioned previously, Topolánek had promoted the Lisbon treaty by asking the rhetorical question: "The European Union can also deal with Russia at least on an equal footing thanks to its strength. Or would we rather discuss about energy security with Moscow by ourselves?" [260] Even before the gas conflict, as Schwarzenberg announced his country's priorities for the presidency, the need for unity in dealings with Russia was highlighted:

"For some time now, many member states of the Union have already been

257 Articles 2009; 8
258 Articles 2009; 9
259 Articles 2009; 9
260 Articles 2008-2; 6

> throwing themselves to compete and see who will be Russia's best friend within the EU. Bilateral agreements that have stemmed from those races are sometimes emerging at the expense of other members though, and they can ruin the balance of relations within the Union as a whole. Strong bases for bilateral and all-Union relations with Russia can only be secured by the EU's fundamental framework. The main strength of Europe in foreign policy is not its dedication to multilateralism based on rules, despite 〔multilateralism's〕 undoubtable meaning, but rather its unity. When the Georgian crisis erupted, Europe united around a common position regarding a Russian withdrawal." [261]

In his text, Schwarzenberg did not name any country, but he did condemn the behaviour of some EU states. Prime Minister Topolánek made a similar statement when he commented on the gas conflict: "All discussions about energy pipelines and alternative routes where always frozen by the fact that big countries signed bilateral contracts with Gazprom for ten, twenty, fifty years, and de facto swept this problem under the carpet. The situation now is showing that not even Germany's fifty year agreement with the Russian Federation eliminates the risk of non-supply in case of such a crisis." [262] In the following months, Topolánek insisted on the need for a common EU energy policy and promoted the Nabucco pipeline project which was supposed to bypass Russia and the Ukraine and bring Central Asian gas to Europe. At the end of January in Budapest, Topolánek declared: "Nabucco is not only an economic project, it is also political. It is

261 Articles 2009; 1
262 Articles 2009; 3

about our independence, and thus also about our freedom [...] The Nabucco project is a test of European integration. The common energy policy is simply a necessity for the European Union. Nabucco will be successful only if it becomes an absolute priority for the European Union." [263] At the same conference, he precised that the project was not aimed against Russia and added: "Nabucco is a project of fundamental importance for Europe's independence and freedom. We do not want Nabucco against someone, we want it for ourselves." [264] The Czech position was thus stressing the importance of the matter of energy security for the whole of Europe and insisted on the need for unity. As it has been highlighted before, Topolánek refrained from using anti-Russian rhetoric, contrarily to what he had done earlier with the radar and the Lisbon treaty.

The Czech government's discourse on the EU in late 2008 and early 2009 markedly stressed its belonging to Europe and its commitment to the EU. Besides being sometimes seen as 'Eastern European', the Czech Republic also had the reputation of being an 'unfaithful' member because of its close relations with the Americans, the hesitations around the Lisbon treaty and the frequent europhobe statements of president Klaus. In an open letter published on January 7 2009, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Karl Schwarzenberg announced the priorities of the Czech presidency by first stressing his country's belonging to Europe and to the EU as a full member state: "The reality is such that the 'old and new' Europe does not exist and has never existed. The break with communism and the reunification is already almost two decades behind us. We Czechs are hundred percent Europeans and so were we even when the iron curtain was separating us from democratic Europe. Apart from that, our pro-European feeling can be even stronger

263 Articles 2009; 21
264 Articles 2009; 19

because our membership in the Union, just like our freedom, is relatively new." [265] Schwarzenberg thus highlighted the fact that the Czechs are new members but not new Europeans, and he even suggested that it could be an asset. In an interview with the German newspaper *Tagesspiegel* on January 19, he reacted to the journalist's use of the word 'Ostblock': "We are a Central-European country, and the fact that we once belonged to the Warsaw Pact and Comecon does not play such an important role anymore. Let us not forget that it was almost 20 years ago." [266] In the confrontation with Russia over the radar, the term Eastern Europe was often used by Russia and rejected by the Czech Republic. Russia used it to refuse an American military presence in 'Eastern Europe' and the Czech Republic rejected it to stress the fact that they were not on Russia's border and belonged to the same region than Germany, where American troops were stationed. As Schwarzenberg said after a meeting with Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov: "We are of course in Central Europe. Claims that we are in Eastern Europe come from the post-war order, and never would we have voluntarily come out for it." [267] In a subsequent interview, Schwarzenberg reacted to Lavrov's insistence to locate the Czech Republic in Eastern Europe: "Why did he say that? Those where countries that were belonging to the Warsaw pact after all. It is troubling and this is also the reason for us to have the radar. Never that it would be aimed against Russia. That not. But so that it is clear that we belong to the West." [268] The radar was thus linked by Schwarzenberg to the Czech Republic's identity as a Western country which does not belong to Eastern Europe, as some kind of statement to Russia and others.

265 Articles 2009; 1
266 Articles 2009; 10
267 Articles 2009; 35
268 Articles 2009; 35

A last point worthy of attention was the return of the discourse on the special knowledge of Czechs on Russia. Ironically, this stress on the Czech know-how on Russia used to be more characteristic of social-democrat governments, as it has been mentioned in earlier parts of this work. Already before the EU presidency, in October 2008, Schwarzenberg had talked about the prospect of dealing with Russia as chairman of the EU: "We might be small, but we have more know-how on Russians than anyone else, because we lived with them for forty years." [269] This idea was emphasized during the gas conflict, as Czech officials underlined the fact that the EU was lucky the Czechs were in charge, as they 'knew' Russians and Ukrainians. For example, the Minister of Industry Martin Říman said: "For countries who got into difficulties [because of the gas conflict], it was a blessing that the Czech Republic held the presidency exactly at this moment [...] first and foremost because we know the Russian environment. We have people who know Russian perfectly [...] Our people have long-term, close ties to important actors in the energy sector in Russia as well as in the Ukraine." [270] In a subsequent interview, he said about the negotiations with the Russians: "I am convinced that it is paradoxically a blessing that the Czechs are now presiding Europe. We know the mentality" [271]. The Prime Minister himself declared that he and Putin understood one another.[272] Nevertheless, it was also highlighted that the Russians (and Ukrainians) were different, thus complying with aforementioned images of Russia as close, yet far. Indeed, as Topolánek said, Putin and him could understand one another, but on many things Topolánek reported saying: "Mr.Prime Minister, we Czechs are not considering it like

269 Articles 2008-2; 17
270 Articles 2009; 5
271 Articles 2009; 7
272 Articles 2009; 16

that at all. We have a different psychology, you consider things through the prism of this big country, maybe of a greater responsibility." [273] The difference was also highlighted by Czech officials having participated in the negotiations. Říman thus stated: "The Russian and Ukrainian environment has a hundreds of year old tradition and the character of negotiations is completely different than elsewhere in Europe." [274] Whereas Říman did consider Russia and the Ukraine as belonging to Europe ("than *elsewhere* in Europe"), he still saw them as being analogous ("*the* Russian and Ukrainian environment") and different than the rest of Europe though. The image created with the Czech know-how was one of a Czech Republic understanding Russia (and the Ukraine) because of its historical experience and knowledge of the language, but different nevertheless, because of its mentality, way of negotiating or else.

On the radar affair, the new tone adopted by the Czech government could also be heard. The context was also different, with the imminent arrival of a new American administration in the White House, on top of the task as EU presiding country. Moreover, the new Obama administration had announced its intention to reboot relations with Moscow. When it came to the Czech government's attitude, it reaffirmed the Czech readiness to discuss, but Russia's unaccommodating behaviour was still underlined though, as it had been before. In the aforementioned interview given by Schwarzenberg to the *Tageespiegel*, the minister said: "If Russia were to see itself as Europe's partner, if both sides would be considerate of each other, then my dream would come true. Because I am actually a great russophile because of my origin and upbringing. The country has always fascinated me, it has a wonderful language and one of the most superb literature of the

273 Articles 2009; 16
274 Articles 2009; 7

world. In contrast there are still those reservation towards Western Europe, towards NATO…" [275] Once more, Schwarzenberg showed that it was Russia's attitude getting in the way of partnership. A week before, Schwarzenberg had confirmed that he would be happy "if Russia were to integrate the anti-missile shield in a meaningful way instead of wanting to prevent it." [276] Prime Minister Topolánek even stated about that idea: "We have been saying that for a long time. It is not only in our interest, negotiations have been going on many times on the American-Russian level as well. I am expecting from the arrival of the new American administration among others the renewed opening of discussions about a common approach." [277] In February, Alexandr Vondra also insisted that the Czech Republic had always welcomed an inclusive project: "It makes sense to orientate the anti-missile defence in such a way so that there can really be a proposition for some kind of cooperation with Russia. We were always open to that." [278] Czech officials, among others Vondra, repeatedly excluded the possibility of a Russian veto in the project though.[279]

The Czech presidency was accompanied by some changes in the Czech official foreign policy discourse, although most of the bases remained. It was a period that was difficult to analyze because it was not always clear whether Czech officials were speaking in the name of the EU or in the name of the Czech Republic. What was noteworthy was the restrain that Czech officials could show and the fact that the gas conflict was not mentioned as a proof that Russia was a threat. Especially Topolánek's statements changed from the spring of 2008 to the winter of 2009. He went from using the Russian threat

275 Articles 2009; 10
276 Articles 2009; 12
277 Articles 2009; 16
278 Articles 2009; 31
279 Articles 2009; 32

almost indistinctly to adopting a more diplomatic attitude. The fact that it did not reflect the position of other important figures of the government such as Schwarzenberg and Vondra was interesting, as it showed how 'official discourse' can be hard to situate. One of the ideas that was further strengthened during the EU presidency was the European identity of the Czech Republic, both its Europeanness and its status of full-fledged member state of the EU. The Czech government fell at the end of March 2009 after a vote of non-confidence and thus the EU presidency was slowed down, but the tendencies observed in the intense first months revealed much about the official position of the country. It emerged as an involved EU member state which promoted a common EU approach to challenges such as energy security and relations with Russia.

Identity	**RUSSIA**	**CZECH REPUBLIC**
SPATIAL	Foreign, but known	EU state and NATO member
TEMPORAL	Restoring -reclaiming position of- the Soviet Union	True European and full-fledged EU member
ETHICAL	unreliable / irresponsible partner	Responsible member state of the EU and NATO
==> Common approach within EU and NATO. Some openness to collaboration <==		

5 Conclusion

The official Czech foreign policy discourse and positions on Russia changed a lot over the first decade of the 21st century. Relations gradually warmed up in words and acts before hitting an all-time low in the wake of the radar affair, which was marked by profound disagreement and a verbal escalation. The goal of the present work was to follow the changes in policy and discourse over time, and hopefully it has successfully demonstrated how particular events were interpreted; how the construction and reconstruction of the Czech Self and the Russian Other took place; and how foreign policy evolved.

As the previous part hopefully made clear, changes happening in the 'identity triangle' accompanied changes in policy. The fact that the spatial, temporal and ethical components of identity were often expressed in statements made by Czech officials talking about Russia and that changes in their formulation went hand in hand with policies resulted in the possibility to trace back discourse and policy developments.

The post-September 11 view of Russia as a European, reforming state fighting with the West against terrorism contrasted sharply with the later opinion that Russia was a great power claiming its Soviet geopolitical position back and pursuing its imperialistic goals in Central Europe. Similarly, ideas on the Czech Self evolved over time, and as it was theorized in the earlier sections, the Russian Other was part of this redefinition. Discourses on Russia's international behaviour often juxtaposed Russia's irresponsibility

and the Czech Republic's responsibility, for example.

When it comes to understanding how discourses emerge and why one discourse dominated over another one, or why a policy over another one, the historical legacy is important. As it has been explained, present discourses on Russia were drawing on previous ones, and the official Czech discourse did not say anything revolutionary about Russia, nor were there any surprising policies adopted towards Moscow. Contemporary discourses on the 'Russian threat' often resembled earlier discourses. Considering the short time span studied, it is not possible to delimitate the whole spectrum of possible ideas on Russia, and the focus on official discourse also limits the scope of inquiry, but it seemed that there was a political divide which coincided with the privileging of one general discourse and political approach over the other.

Indeed, the social-democrats (ČSSD) ruled until 2006 and the right-wing ODS took power afterwards. In the following years there was a change in the relationship to Russia. Is the Czech Republic's official position towards Russia therefore dependent on the ruling party? Or maybe on the Prime Minister, as the imposing figures of leaders such as Miloš Zeman or Mirek Topolánek might lead to believe? What would have happened if the ČSSD had had to deal with the anti-missile shield plans (which it initially accepted), or the Georgian crisis, or the Czech presidency of the EU and the gas conflict? And what should we think of Topolánek's restrain in the early months of 2009, was it only because of the EU presidency, or did he really change his opinion on Russia?

It is impossible to answer to those hypothetical questions, yet the present work does give answers as to the shape of possible discourses and policies on Russia. As it has been shown, some basic elements of discourse and policy stayed, such as a certain distance to

Russia and the commitment to NATO. Indeed, there were never any hints in the official Czech foreign policy discourse that political union with Russia and an exit from NATO might be options. The commitment to the EU was also strong despite political changes and various events.

Suspicions that discourses presenting Russia as a threat were meant to scare, legitimize and support certain policies are also legitimate. Because the idea of the Russian threat is well anchored, as conceptual histories have shown, it is tempting for the government to use it in order to convince the public. The importance is not whether the discourses stem from genuine concern or not, the importance is their impact on the discursive field and the way they limit possibilities for future relations between the Czech Republic and Russia.

Thanks to the present work, it is possible to better understand the contemporary discourses and policies of the Czech Republic towards Russia and how they changed along with context. As it was mentioned in the introduction, the point of such a work is to show how Czech relations with Russia have evolved to better understand how they could develop in the future. It is an important issue because former communist states of the EU have had a strong influence on EU-Russia relations and their vision of Russia has to be better understood to reach unanimity in the EU foreign policy. One of the missing pieces of this research is Russia's voice, of course. Whatever the possible developments of the Czech official position on Russia, potential changes are also dependent on Russia. As Lene Hansen suggests, "another possibility is a *discursive encounter*; [...] the study contrasts the discourse of the Self with the Other's 'counter-construction' of Self and Other. [...] Studying the discourses of both Self and Other – which then becomes multiple Selves

when viewed from the inside of the Other – is significant in that it provides knowledge of the discursive and political room of maneuver of foreign policy issues." [280] The present work is thus a part of the puzzle indicating what the room of maneuver for Czech-Russian relations is. If we correctly assume that the Czech official discourse is somewhat shared by other former communist countries, it is also telling about the prospects of EU-Russia relations.

280 Hansen, *Security as Practice. Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, 76

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DISSERTATION PROPOSAL FORM - 2012

Provisional Title: The Czech Republic and the 'East': The influence of national identity and public perceptions of the 'East' on the Czech foreign policy in the eastern neighbourhood of the European Union.

Reasoned Description:

I would like to see how the Czechs see themselves as a nation, look at the concept of the 'East' and how this has an influence on their foreign policy both as an independent state and as a EU member-state. I will look both at official policy and public discourses about the 'East' in the Czech republic since the EU accession. The Czech Republic and other Central European countries are key to understand the dynamics of EU foreign policy in the 'East'. East-West divides on the European Neighbourhood Policy towards the 'East' are frequent and I believe my research linking identity and policy could help understand the roots of those differences.

Key Research Questions/Hypothesis:

What is the Czech national identity and how does it relate to the idea of Central and/or Eastern Europe? What is the image of the Eastern neighbours of the European Union in public and official discourse? How does this influence the Czech Republic's foreign policy?

Proposed methodology:

To answer those questions, I will draw from cultural studies, especially identity studies and critical discourse analysis. With these tools, I will look at the way the Czechs represent themselves and the East in the public and official discourses. I will also use critical security studies to look at foreign policy.