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*Image from cover:* Trinity Column, Olomouc Town Square, Czech Republic, a future symbol of the heightened Czech impact on global affairs. Thanks to Bonnie Peterson for the image.



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# Abstract

Czech foreign policy in the post-Cold War period bears three significant imprints. First, a country that had been torn by conflicting loyalties solved that dilemma by firmly positioning itself in the orbit of the West. Second, NATO and the EU became the organizational anchors of that western orbit. Third, fresh images of the possibility of choice and control over history replaced past national images of submission to dependence and fate. Thus, new loyalties, organizations, and images interacted to create a different foreign policy chemistry. That chemistry could enable the Czech Republic to move from its protected Central European base to a purposeful international role in a proactive way.

When the Czech Republic emerged from the cocoon of twentieth century Czechoslovakia, it was unclear what its orbit in the world would be. Life within the cocoon from 1918 until 1993 had been often conflicted and seldom free. While emergence from the cocoon was a surprise to most all observers, it was not explosive. Lifting its head in the sunlight, the butterfly shook its wings in anticipation of a new journey. And yet, life in the cocoon had clearly left its mark. That imprint bore three features that were relevant to future foreign policy. First, a mix of loyalties appeared along the path, as the enticement of the West competed with the tug of the East. Second, two new organizational possibilities cropped up next to the rubble heap of the Warsaw Pact; with each of them the new nation engaged in a mutual courtship that lasted throughout the first decade after 1993. Third, old national images that centered on dependence and fate yielded to new perceptions of choice and possibility. In sum:

1. Seven historical crises during the past century created conflicting loyalties for Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic.
2. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) emerged as the organizational anchors for the Czech Republic after 1993.
3. Three new national images developed in the post–Cold War period.

It is in this three-part mixture of loyalties, organizations, and images that one can glimpse the rhythmic ascent into a flight that could be the nation's own.

## Conflicting Loyalties

After years under the sway of larger political units in the region, during the last nineteen years the Czech Republic has taken three firm steps that underline its ties to Europe. First, the 1989 "Velvet Revolution" severed its link to the Soviet-led empire in the East. Second, it was one of the first three postcommunist states to join the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO), and that entry point to Europe came in 1999, exactly one decade after the anticommunist revolution. Third, in the spring of 2004, the Czech Republic was one of ten countries that entered the European Union (EU). Long negotiations with Brussels-based EU administrators preceded that fateful step. Located in the geographic heart of Europe, this nation encapsulates many of the swirling historical currents that have flowed through that continent in the last

one hundred years. In many ways, it is a microcosm of modern European history, and as such it is a worthy subject of analysis.

The initial thesis of this section is that Czech relations with Europe have been beleaguered with the abiding challenge of loyalty. To whom or toward what should Czech loyalties be directed? How much control do Czech leaders and the Czech people have over the direction in which the nation offers its loyalty? The lesson of past Czech history is that the matter of loyalty is a complex, changing dilemma rather than a constant, stabilizing feature of political life. Based on analysis of past patterns, what are the expectations for future Czech relationships with Europe? This is an important question for the Czech nation, for the European continent, and even for American foreign policy.

During the past century, the country known earlier as Czechoslovakia and now as the Czech Republic has threaded its way among seven different sets of European conflicts. They include:

1. Divided loyalties under the Habsburgs at the dawn of the twentieth century.
2. The First Republic and ethnic loyalties, 1918–38.
3. Coerced loyalty during World War II, 1938–45.
4. Fluid loyalties in the immediate postwar period, 1945–48.
5. Absence of loyalty in the communist period, 1948–89.
6. Competing loyalties of Czechs and Slovaks, 1989–93.
7. Multiple loyalties after 1993.

Each of these conflicts has challenged the Czech people and their leaders in a different way. In each of the seven cases, the conflict has been nearly an entirely European-centered one. At the same time, these primarily regional conflicts have often been part of a global trend. Distinctively, each conflict has required a Czech response, and that response has never been a simple one to make. In fact, the issue of "loyalty" has been one of the principal agenda items in the interface between Czech history/politics and wider regional and even global historical/political patterns. In each case the Czechs have had to decide the question of where their loyalty resided. In some situations they have had discretionary power to influence that choice, and in other situations loyalty was extracted. In the latter cases, Czech freedom to bestow loyalty was severely restricted, and an outside force essentially demanded it.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Czechs were locked into the Habsburg Empire as they had been for centuries. Certainly, loyalty was determined from outside or from above in those years. Vienna made the fateful political

decisions that influenced the lives of the Czechs. Imposed cultural and language patterns were those of the German majority that governed the Austrian half of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Taylor 1970, 73–77). Czech nationalism, which began to emerge in the middle of the nineteenth century, took many forms: codification of a written Czech language, writings of nationalist leaders such as František Palacký, and artistic expressions such as those of the composers Janáček and Smetana. At the end of the nineteenth century, politicians began to lobby and clamor for more rights within the Habsburg political system. Czech loyalties were very much divided as the twentieth century opened. Some remained in the traditional mindset of loyalty to empire, while increasing numbers pledged loyalty to a future political entity that afforded more autonomy and recognition of Czech nationality.

The chance for that autonomy arrived for the first time in 1918, at the conclusion of World War I, with the creation of Czechoslovakia as an independent country. During the twenty-year interwar period, many of the conflicts that assailed the new nation-state were internal in origin. Initially, there was considerable tension between the Czech and Slovak communities, and this was exacerbated by the different historical experiences of each. While the Czechs had been under the sway of Vienna in the Austrian half of the empire, the Slovaks had been under the control of Budapest in the Hungarian part. Levels of education, religious preferences, and stages of economic development were quite different, in spite of the cultural and linguistic similarities between the two peoples. Ethnic complexity was compounded further by the presence of a large German minority, located primarily in the western or Sudeten areas of the new state. An important Hungarian minority also was acquired with the addition of the Slovak territories. Thus, loyalty to ethnic group frequently overshadowed loyalty to nation-state. The efforts of President Thomas Masaryk prior to his death in 1935 were focused on creating a rising tide of loyalty to the new Czechoslovak state. In fact, the original document creating the new state was called the Pittsburgh Agreement, and its signing in western Pennsylvania was a symbol of commitment to Slovak rights and values by the large Czech majority. However, many Slovak leaders and citizens concluded that the new state had not lived up to those promises. Thus, it is unclear how deeply the loyalty to the state had penetrated by the mid-1930s (Seton-Watson 1967, 171–85). The efforts of Hitler to use the Sudeten minority as a wedge to divide the new country also challenged emergent statewide loyalties. Yet by the late 1930s there was an acceptance of the reality of a country called Czechoslovakia, and the Nazi threat sparked questions about how to defend the relatively new geographic unit in the center of Europe.

Coerced loyalty characterized the situation in Czechoslovakia during the period between the Munich Pact of 1938 and the end of World War II in 1945. Helplessness and a sense of dashed hope prevailed in the initial period after the Munich Agreement. The Western allies had basically conceded to Nazi Germany the freedom to do its will in a new country that had only been in existence for two decades. Very soon its independence was totally eliminated. The Nazis broke the country into two protectorates, thus reinforcing the split between the Czech Lands and Slovakia that predated the interwar period of independence. Protests against the regime were tragic and futile: certain Czechs attempted to assassinate the puppet leader of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, while many courageous Slovaks took part in the well-known Slovak National Uprising. Both efforts met with brutal repression. At the same time, death camps were set up in the area, and many Jews, gypsies, and others were sent there as well as outside the country for incarceration and extermination. Clearly, the Czech and Slovak peoples were in profound conflict with the Nazi regime that threw its dark blanket over continental Europe (Luza 2002, 1–32).

After the end of World War II, there was an expectation that the Czechoslovakia that existed prior to the Munich Pact would be reborn. However, in many respects the situation was extremely fluid. Punishment of the German minority for its alleged loyalty to the Nazi regime became one of the first items of business. The Czechoslovak government expelled the Sudeten Germans, and much personal suffering, property loss, and death accompanied this uprooting. Overall, Czechoslovak loyalties also floated between the two emergent blocs in the West and East. President Edvard Beneš returned from London to head the government, and his preferences alighted on Western models of democracy. On the other hand, the Czechoslovak Communist Party operated fully in the open and actually won the highest percentage of votes in the free elections of 1946. Many Czech citizens had concluded after the Munich Pact that loyalty to the West was a risky proposition. Further, the experiment in democracy that had taken place during the interwar period had not produced either a stable political system or a new generation of reliable leaders. Promises from the East to assist in creating a new, more perfect social order did not fall on deaf ears. For many citizens, the issue of loyalty became indeed a swinging pendulum. The presence of the Soviet Union's Red Army in the neighborhood emerged as an external factor that influenced the stew of commitments and reliance.

Once the communist system was put in place in 1948, loyalty took a vacation for the next four decades. Many younger persons initially embraced the new communist visions and were willing to commit to fresh beginnings within the framework of the

new ideology. However, for most those hopes were dashed within a decade. Society was split between an ultra-loyal elite of party members and a wider population that tuned out politics and turned inward toward family and private life (Taborsky 1961, 22–43). During the Prague Spring (1968), an explosion of participation replaced the characteristic passivity. The potential existed for the stoking of renewed loyalty to a system led by a transformed Communist Party. The willingness of the local party elite led by Alexander Dubček, to stand up to Soviet controls evoked greater loyalty to a reforming, communist-headed system. However, the Warsaw Pact invasion of August 1968 squelched those budding commitments and led the mass public again to withhold loyalty from the new puppet leadership. Of course, there was a sharp and painful contrast between this popular absence of loyalty and the extreme subservience of the new regime to Soviet demands.

Following the surprising, unexpected implosion of the communist system in November 1989, the direction of loyalty became problematic. One strong possibility would be a return to the type of independent state that existed in the 1918–38 period. In the euphoria of the spring of 1990, this at first looked like a distinct possibility. Elections were held in May, and new leaders took office under the guiding hand of President Václav Havel. However, renewed affections for the concept of a free, independent Czechoslovakia began to dissipate under the pressure of ethnic differences. This time the loyalty equation was opposite from what it had been during communist times. Now, the population anticipated that Czechoslovakia would behave as a normal state within the European neighborhood, but Czech and Slovak leaders quarreled over the terms of the new arrangement. Complicated formulas for selection of leaders created a situation in which tensions escalated between leadership teams representing the two ethnic groups (Leff 1997, 129–32). By 1992, election results were so mixed that maintenance of the larger state began to seem impossible. An extended ebb tide drained away support for the system, and, by January 1993, the ship of state had indeed broken into two pieces.

Alone at last! As the Czech Republic surfaced by itself in new waters, its leaders and people experienced a multitude of choices. Discussion took place with regard to active participation in a number of western-based institutions. These included NATO, the EU, the Western European Union (WEU), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). To which of these worthy organizations should the Czechs devote primary loyalty? Within which of them would the Czech national interest best be served? How would the Czech Republic remain loyal to its own need for national sovereignty after it joined one or more of these organiza-

tions? As the decade wore on, it became apparent that overlapping memberships in several of these organizations could accelerate the pace of conflict. For example, the American tie was a strong one, but growing loyalty to the EU and its requirements might undercut links to American-led NATO. By 2004 membership in both of these organizations was a reality. Major international events such as the Iraq War made this double membership more conflict-laden than overlapping or reinforcing. Initial elections for the EU legislature revealed that a mutual commitment to both the EU and Czech national interests might even take work. Multiple loyalties became crushing as well as liberating.

Against the backdrop of conflicting loyalties, the Czech Republic confronted its future in Europe. No longer was there a need to worry about enforced loyalty of the type extracted in the past from Vienna, Berlin, and Moscow. At the same time, regional institutions provided an anchor that was sorely lacking in the more fluid and rootless period of the interwar era, the immediate post–World War II period, and the painfully brief time span between the anticommunist revolution and the break-up of the state. However, it could not be expected that unfolding patterns in the new century would simply be a magnification of the outline of relationships that marked the first decade after the separation from Slovakia. Europe would gradually loom larger than the always weak Visegrad link within its immediate eastern neighborhood. However, that same European connection would inevitably challenge, and probably weaken, the bond to NATO with its American leadership. For example, the European Union placed increasing importance on its Common Foreign and Security Policy. Once that component became a robust one, the EU might be more likely to challenge NATO on the direction and nature of troop commitments abroad. Embedded within Europe, the likely challenge for the Czech future would entail careful sifting and balancing between regional and national loyalties.

## Organizational Memberships

As NATO and the EU emerged as the principal organizational foci for the Czechs, both brought to the fore the above-noted tension between national and regional organizational loyalties. In struggling to understand the impact of these two organizations on Czech foreign policy, it is useful to incorporate the academic model of formal systems theory (Stillman 2004, x). It makes more sense to apply systems theory to the study of foreign policy than it would to domestic policy. Political leaders

have more control over the agenda and the evolution of the foreign-policy-making process than they do over domestic policy. In some cases in the post-9/11 world, foreign policy issues contain stakes and threats that are higher for the population itself. In light of these realities, systems theory will be the magnifying glass through which to view the key components of the foreign policy decision-making process. For purposes of systems analysis, the external environment of the security system includes values that developed in both the 1989 anticommunist revolution and post-1989 foreign-policy experiences. The two external pressures that press constantly upon the system include both NATO and the EU. Factors that are part of the internal decision-making scenario include bureaucratic issues, budgetary considerations, and ideological perceptions. Actual national security decisions fall naturally into the categories of high-stakes, middle-stakes, and low-stakes games. Finally, a feedback loop, the ultimate guarantor of democracy, apprehends the sparks from some of these policies and conveys them as electricity back into NATO and the EU, the two most significant external pressures that illuminate Czech foreign policy.

## Environment of National Values

The anticommunist revolution that took place in 1989 was the critical event that made possible membership in Western organizations like NATO and the EU. The Western-leaning implications of that revolution echoed previous cycles of Czechoslovak history. For example, in the interwar period of the twentieth century, the First Republic adopted into its political system many of the features of the Western democracies that had emerged in the previous century and a half. After three decades of totalitarian rule between 1938 and 1968, the Prague Spring reformers again looked to the West and its democratic institutions for ideas and inspiration. Just as the seeds of the First Republic stayed alive beneath the permafrost of midcentury totalitarianism, so also the seeds that the Prague Spring reformers planted continued to germinate after 1968 beneath the veneer of normalization. In this sense, the 1989 revolution was the time when regional and global conditions made it possible for these two dormant seeds of western democratic ideas to sprout.

In many ways the revolution itself was a singular one that differed from the other rebellions that took place within the bloc during the same year. Massive, peaceful demonstrations daily in Prague forced the antiquarian communist structures to collapse. Step-by-step the percentage of communists in the cabinet was reduced to minority status (Ash 1990, 123–24). Alexander Dubček stepped out of the shadows that had encircled him since 1968 and became a visible symbol of the seed planted

during the Prague Spring. More important was the strategy-making role of the dissident and Charter ’77 leader Václav Havel, who coordinated the revolution from a back room in the Magic Lantern Theater. In effect, the power of the people combined with charismatic leadership to put the national value structure on a path to Western institutions. With backbone and restored confidence, the transformed nation could take up an integral role both in its region and on the wider European stage.

Post-1989 foreign-policy experiences also became pointers to future membership in NATO and the EU. First, the break with Slovakia was a foreign-policy decision that located the Czech state a bit further to the west than it had been during the long Czechoslovak period. Further, the Czechs had freed themselves from the pressures represented by the Slovak nationalist and eastward-leaning Vladimír Mečiar. Second, Prime Minister Václav Klaus and his associates made the decision to convert the centrally planned economy to free market principles in a short time, essentially through shock therapy. Western economists such as Jeffrey Sachs were recommending this type of transition for the postcommunist systems, even though a number of key nations such as Russia eventually backed away from that advice. Third, Western leaders deemed the Czech Republic as one of the newly postcommunist nations that was prepared to contribute to NATO very early. Therefore, the Clinton administration welcomed the Czechs as participants in the Partnership for Peace Program. Fourth, the two principal ideological threads in Czech foreign policy during the 1990s nudged the nation toward firm membership in communities of the West such as the EU. The thread of ideology symbolized by President Havel emphasized a “civic foreign policy.” Based on his dissident experience, Havel focused on humanist aims, the common good, universal values, and good international citizenship for the new Czech nation. In contrast, but in a complementary way, Prime Minister Klaus emphasized “free market values” as the foreign-policy key that could unlock the doors to Western institutions (Fawn 2003, 205–08). The forging of such values during the fast-moving events of the 1990s positioned the Czech Republic for invitations from the West into its inner circles.

## External Pressures from the West

The Czech Republic in the 1990s encountered a maze of external pressures and alliances that could become significant in its future historical experiences. President Havel initially had a real fondness for the OSCE, as that group of nations seemed to offer a useful middle course between the defunct Warsaw Treaty Organization and NATO. Also, in 1991 Czechoslovakia, along with Poland and Hungary, signed the

Visegrad Declaration. This neighborhood organization bore the potential to "maintain culture and national character" at a time when larger organizations loomed on the horizon (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2005f). Another attractive organization in the early 1990s was the WEU. At that time, this long-established organization seemed to be the future EU military organization. All these external pressures, however, had receded from view by the latter part of the 1990s.

Eventually, the Partnership for Peace Program of NATO became much more attractive as an external organization worth joining. For several years, the Czechs were part of that framework. Finally, on February 26, 1999, President Havel signed the agreement to join the military alliance (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2005b). Very quickly activity commenced, for the Czechs needed to participate in planning the alliance's bombing campaign in Kosovo. Symbolic of the importance of the Czech Republic was NATO's decision to hold its 2002 conference in Prague. It was at that conference that the organization extended offers of membership to seven additional postcommunist nations. By that point NATO overshadowed the OSCE, Visegrad, and the WEU as an external organizing focus for Czech defense plans.

Simultaneous with the opening offered by NATO were negotiations with the EU. On paper the discussions mainly centered on the economic goals that were at the heart of that organization's activities. However, the EU began to plan for its own military component, once the hopes raised by the WEU began to fade. Thus, it established a component entitled the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). After the Amsterdam Treaty of 1997, planning became more formalized. Brussels took additional control of policy formation, but the member nations received the right to veto CFSP missions if they conflicted with national interests. Within several years the Czech Republic included commitments to the CFSP in its National Program (National Program 2000). The eventual role of the CFSP in European military planning was then unclear, but it did offer promise as a military alliance that would be independent of American direction.

Before discussing NATO and the EU's CFSP as significant external forces in the Czech national security system, it is worth speculating briefly on Czech views of the latent impact of these two organizations on Czech independence and autonomy. Karlas (2006, 35–38) perceives both organizations as emphasizing crisis management and conflict prevention. NATO, in addition, had a major role in providing collective defense. He concludes that both organizations were intergovernmental regimes in their essence and not designed really to dictate policy to the individual member states. At the same time, both did possess limited power to transmit authority with

regard to the agenda. NATO planners were able to create an agenda for the member states, while the CFSP additionally bore the power to push for implementation of the agenda. If that depiction squares with reality, then the Czech Republic would not be dealing with particularly intrusive external organizations. Czech reactions to Kosovo as their first NATO operation were mixed. Initially, they waited ten days to grant airspace rights to those countries actually carrying out the bombing campaign. However, the leadership eventually supported the humanitarian goals of the operation voluntarily, and this fitted in with President Havel's view that NATO in general expressed both Czech and European values (Fawn 2003, 219–21).

As NATO beckoned, a number of key new questions for Czech defense policy emerged. First, what could the Czech Republic contribute to the NATO Response Force (NRF)? The Czechs earmarked a number of capabilities for future missions, including ground forces units such as a mechanized battalion, a chemical defense company, a special forces company, and a mobile unit for a passive tracer system. They also committed several aircraft to include MIG 21s, MI 7s, JAS 39 Gripens, and MI 17s (Ministry of Defense 2006k). Czechs also played a key role in a mission that was really tied to the Iraq War. From December 2003 until January 2005, they commanded the multinational battalion for radiological, chemical, and biological defense that was based in Kuwait. They again played the leading role after June 2006 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006e). Given vitriolic global conditions, the potential for invitations for future roles in NRF missions was high.

Second, NATO regulations loomed large in the ordering of military supplies. NATO possessed a Basic Ordering Agreement that restricted member states in a number of concrete ways. The agreement contained a formula for determining the prices of goods and services that might be ordered. It included a principle of nondiscrimination and equal opportunity in dealing with firms that offered items for sale. It required that as a preferred customer NATO should receive the highest quality equipment. Discovery of defective products required that the buyer explain to the supplier exactly what the reasons for rejection of the product were. There was an additional expectation that outsourcing be used as a dynamic feature of public-private partnerships (Ministry of Defense 2006d). It would definitely be the case that Czech purchasing practices in the future would be somewhat changed in light of NATO membership.

Third, in the 2006–08 period, there was a vigorous discussion about an American antirocket base on Czech soil. American experts checked four sites in the Czech Republic and eventually preferred Brdo. Since the experts had already visited Poland

for the same reason, there was concern in the Czech Republic about some of the issues that had emerged in Poland. Americans seemed to want the exclusive right to make decisions about use of the base, to carry out inspections, and to control information about which weapons were actually on the base. Some compared it to Guantanamo in Cuba, in terms of the lack of local control. Others raised questions whether local persons or Americans would be employed at the base. Further, might it attract future terrorist hits in the Czech nation? Czech officials were more reassuring in pointing out that mutual agreement would determine the nature of the base and that the experts were simply checking to see if the conditions in their country were suitable. Eventually, a public opinion poll revealed that 83 percent of Czechs were opposed to the idea of an American base. For some such a base bore reminders of the recent occupation by Soviet and WTO forces. Unfortunately, the program manager for the base was named William Lamb, and his last name symbolized to some the role the Czech nation seemed to be playing in this discussion (iDNES 2006h).

Eventually, in early 2007, the United States decided to locate ten antimissile interceptors in Poland and the accompanying radar site in the Czech Republic. Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek defended the radar site based on global security threats since 9/11. He argued that the Czech Republic needed to play a role in defending the Euroatlantic sector (iDNES 2007b). As Russian concerns about the system developed in late spring, the prime minister added more supportive comments about the proposal. He did not envision the antimissile system as directed against the "Russian Bear" (iDNES 2007a).

Fourth, several NATO-related events took place in the Czech Republic. Some of these may have been intended to generate more public support for membership in the alliance. For instance, in the summer of 2006 NATO organized a "NATO Day" in Ostrava, providing displays of technology, air demonstrations, troop formations, and demonstrations by antiterrorist units that reenacted how to free hostages from buses (Ministry of Defense 2006b). The British Royal Air Force (RAF) performed to fifty-five thousand people. Also, three Czech veterans who fought in the RAF during World War II were on hand as a reminder of past heroic efforts. Such a dramatic display of military power could reassure the public about what was available if a security threat occurred. It could also provide the government with additional reasons to increase the defense budget. Overall, the day underlined the emerging special relationship between NATO and Czech defense policy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006j).

Fifth, NATO membership also carried with it the possibility of operations far from the Czech nation or the European theater. For instance, the Ministry of Defense

sent one general as an observer to an important NRF exercise in the Cape Verde Islands. The operation tested units in the air, at sea, and in unexpected humanitarian crises, such as evacuating civilians who lived close to a dangerous volcano (iDNES 2006d). Even though only one Czech observer attended this exercise, the experience drove home the message about new activities into which NATO could sweep the Czech military.

Since the CFSP of the EU has a much shorter history than does NATO, there is less evidence yet of the role it can play as an outside pressure on the Czech defense policy system. However, it is possible to examine early Czech perceptions of the EU in general and speculate that similar views would apply to the CFSP. In 2003 the Czech Republic held a referendum on the question of accession to the EU. The parties in the governmental coalition were all in support (80–90 percent), but there was more skepticism within the opposition Civic Democratic Party and the Communist Party; members of the Communist Party allocated only 37 percent of their votes to EU accession (Linek and Mansfeldová 2004, 982–83). The opposition parties worried about lost Czech autonomy, a concern that surely would apply to the CFSP.

Mats Braun (2005/2006, 13–18) discovered that supporters and opponents of the EU had very different views about the legitimation principles that underpin the organization. If the EU resulted in promoting the economic and material interests of the state, then support was generally strong. If the EU mainly stood as an expression of a broad "value-based community," then the doubters in the Czech Republic multiplied. The concern was that promotion of European values might undermine Czech sovereignty. A third view centered on the concept of the EU as a "rights-based union." Braun envisioned this focus on human rights as containing the potential to garner additional local support for the organization. This typology could affect Czech perceptions of the CFSP, for any potential economic benefits would likely lead to a more willing Czech response to this external pressure.

Czech preparations for participation in NATO's response force were paralleled by similar activities in the EU, which was developing certain military capacities through its Rapid Response Force (RRF). In the future there would be invitations both to play a role and to make financial contributions to such a force (Ministry of Defense 2006k). Such parallelism between NATO and EU forces does raise interesting questions about the potential for conflict between NATO and the CFSP in general. Could any CFSP operation be effective in the short term without heavy dependence on NATO equipment and bases? If there was such a linkage, then these two sets of external pressures might often merge into one stream as they influenced Czech defense policy.

There were some significant additional outside factors that impinged upon Czech defense policy. For example, the British invited Czech parachutists from the Prostějov based 601st Group of Special Forces to take part in summer military exercises in Belize. The highpoint included an attack on a terrorist hideout located deep in the impassable jungle. Czech participants did so well that one of their commanders was put in charge of the concluding exercises (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006b). Cultivation of relations with China also served as a desired policy goal. However, consideration of human rights issues that were indirectly related to defense considerations often served as barriers. President Havel met with the Dalai Lama four times and also held meetings with members of the Chinese dissident community as well as with the president of Taiwan. In contrast, his successor, President Klaus, visited China in 2004 with the focused interest of improving trading prospects for Czech firms (Gregušová 2005, 10–11). In the future, Czech defense planning might include activities and actors such as these to a greater extent than is currently the case.

In sum, NATO is the strongest outside force affecting the Czech national security system. That alliance provides a steady stream of military exercises and budget questions to which the Czechs will need to respond. Pressure from the CFSP of the EU is far less at the moment. However, once its plans become more comprehensive and active, there is a potential for conflict with the messages coming in from the NATO alliance. Given the complexity of world politics and the power of globalization, additional external pressures such as a tie to China loom as significant as well.

## Pressures Internal to the National Security System

This discussion of the dynamics of the Czech defense system will center on three critical factors. First, what are some of the day-to-day practical matters that preoccupy the people who play a role in the system? Second, what have been the budgetary trends and allocations within the system, and how do they affect its performance? Third, what are a few of the key ideological perceptions about the role of the defense system in future Czech plans? Exploration of each of these questions will be accompanied by conclusions about their connection to the two external pressures just analyzed.

First, a look at selected practical issues and problems that preoccupy the Ministry of Defense can help convey the flavor and tone of the defense system itself. Leadership is a critical issue, for the June 2006 elections resulted in the appointment of Jiří Šedivý as the new minister of defense. His stated goals included attention to the quality of life of soldiers, preservation of a Czech role in international missions,

and fulfillment of both NATO and EU obligations. Early on he addressed the question of a future NATO base on Czech territory. In his view, that base would initially be American-run but later a NATO facility. Its broad goal would be contributions to European security, and, pointedly, specialists rather than a referendum would decide whether it would be set up (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006h, Ministry of Defense 2006j). An additional key leadership factor was the need to appoint military representatives to the EU. That delegation included both a major general and a brigadier general (Ministry of Defense 2006e).

Another practical matter of future significance was the strengthening of the active reserves. It was anticipated that they would play an important role in major calamities such as the 2002 flood. The arguments for their increased role were substantial ones. They would save taxpayers money, given the existing limits on the size of the regular military. The fact that they held civilian jobs most of the year would ensure that the military in general would not be cut off from the Czech population. They would take over regular army functions when the active military received overseas assignments. Finally, their military service would provide them with both useful technical skills and the habit of good citizenship (Ministry of Defense 2006a). All these arguments reflected discussion in many of the other NATO countries and so linked Czech defense policy perspectives more firmly to those of that military alliance.

Further, the Czechs began to create think tanks and centers devoted to defense matters, a development that also paralleled tendencies in other NATO countries. Charles University established a Center for Security Studies. In the summer of 2006, it sponsored discussions of both traditional terrorist threats and the dangers posed by chemical and biological weapons (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006c). Just as in the West, the growing prominence of such centers offered the promise of an enriched discussion about future defense policy and commitments.

Pursuit of grants to supplement the military budget was also a matter for some consideration. Some of these grants would benefit those whose prior military service would not be seen as a top priority in a tight budget situation. For example, the ministry applied for grants in 2006 to take care of wartime graves and to supplement the money available to institutions that cared for veterans who were totally reliant on the social system. In addition, there were efforts to acquire extra recreational funds for those who had served abroad after 1990. Given the medical needs of the Czech military, some additional monies would assist in complicated surgeries such as robotic surgery at Prague's Central Military Hospital (Ministry of Defense

2006c). Projects like these become even more important with the declining defense budget noted below.

Budgetary trends, the second factor to be considered, have been gloomy for the Ministry of Defense in recent years. The ministry's percentage of funds allocated from the general state budget fell from 6.6 percent in 2003 to 5.8 percent in 2006. Similarly, its proportion of the overall gross domestic product fell from 2.21 percent to 1.8 percent in the same time period (Ministry of Defense 2006i). Budgetary proposals for 2007 provoked quite a political reaction. The ministry had been counting on a commitment of 62.9 billion crowns, but the government's proposal was only 53.3 billion crowns.

The then Minister of Defense Karel Kűhnl criticized this substantial cut. According to the long-range plan adopted in 2003, he noted, the ministry's proportion of GDP should always be at least 2 percent, and it had not been since 2004. In fact, the proposed proportion of GDP for 2007 would be only 1.3 percent. He pointed out that there was a need to inform NATO about the prospects. In addition, the military now would have less capability to assist the civilian sector in the case of a natural disaster like a flood or severe snowfall. Overall, the ability of the military to operate had fallen since 2003 by 15 percent (Ministry of Defense 2006l).

NATO had reacted negatively in earlier years when the Czech percentage of GDP devoted to defense had dropped to 1.9 percent, for NATO had set a standard of 2 percent for all member states in 2002. Thus, the Czechs were not really fulfilling their obligations to the military alliance. In fact, Czech promises to assist the peacekeeping force in Lebanon would be difficult to fulfill. Future such missions would be jeopardized as well. Additional damage would be done to the planned process of reform of the military forces. To leaders in the ministry, there was double pain in the sense that projected growth of GDP for 2007 was a full 6.9 percent (iDNES 2006f).

One defense program that was specifically harmed by the recent trend of budgetary cuts was the plan to purchase more Tatra trucks. The ones in use by the military were often about fifty years old. The original plan had specified 555 new trucks by the end of 2006, but budget cuts had led to an indefinite postponement (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006d). Reliance on such ancient vehicles definitely made it more difficult for Czech troops to contribute to NATO or EU operations on an acceptable level.

A third factor, matters of philosophy and even ideology, also influenced considerations within the defense system. During the 2006 election campaign the Green

Party proposed some radical platform planks with regard to the Ministry of Defense. It called for a sharp reduction in the defense budget and for investment of those saved funds elsewhere. In fact, it proposed that the CFSP replace NATO in assuring European security. This would enable the continent to step out of the shadow of American control. Other parties responded by pointing out that the CFSP was only intended to supplement NATO, not to replace it (iDNES 2006i).

Other voices tended to support American goals and perceptions in the world. For example, Zdeněk Kříž (2006, 71–72) observed that those nations which had done most to arm Iraq in the 1973–90 period were exactly the ones most likely to criticize the American invasion in 2003. French and German firms had assisted the most with Iraq's nuclear program, while the Soviet Union had supplied SCUD missiles. Those three countries ended up being the global powers that most severely criticized the American decision. In fact, the United Kingdom and United States had provided low levels of defense assistance to Iraq in earlier years. They in turn were the leaders of the "Coalition of the Willing" in 2003. The implication of the article is that former economic ties to Iraq had much to do with opposition to the preemptive war led by America in 2003.

Czech academics also began to study topics that preoccupied NATO and the EU in systematic and formal ways. Jan Eichler (2006, 19–42) offered a number of hypotheses about terrorism in order to develop suggestions for preventing the worst attacks. Systematically, he broke down terrorism into the three categories of national, international, and post-9/11 hyper-terrorism. He then examined the attacks on New York (2001), Madrid (2004), and London (2005). After testing five meaningful hypotheses against those examples of terrorist behavior, he then concluded that terrorism was an indirect strategy spawned by contradictory postcommunist global developments. Its aim was to frighten the population and to take innocent lives in a random way. While military action was one inevitable response, so also was attention to preventive action. Studies such as these demonstrate the extent to which both analysts of the Czech national security system and practitioners employed by it are preoccupied with wider concerns that also concern NATO and the CFSP at the deepest levels.

## Policy Outputs

Within the overall framework of systems theory, the eventual policies themselves are a consequence of a chain reaction of national values, external pressures, and the dynamics internal to the system under review. The next step in the analysis

is presentation of a systematic method for classifying those policies and decisions. Game theory in its most basic format provides such a method. At the top and most important level are high-stakes games that can have a tremendous impact on all components of the system. Key political leaders are typically involved in such decisions. Next are middle-stakes games that center on technical decisions of a highly concrete nature. Typically, middle-level managers are involved in the implementation of such decisions, although top political leaders are likely to have assented to the request for a policy. Finally, low-stakes games engage governmental bureaucrats within the system under analysis. These games may eventually take on the appearance of a routine and may be less controversial over the long haul than the other two levels. It is also possible for a game to move from one level to another. For example, the atmosphere surrounding a game that was initially high stakes may change, and the game itself will then move to a lower level. On the other hand, a low-stakes game may become more complicated, and the resulting public pressure can push it up the ladder (Stillman 1999, 219–23).

When the Czech Republic joined the EU in 2004, the decision was the result of a high-stakes game. Top leaders had been working on and discussing the merits of such a move for a full decade. Clearly, many elements of the political system were involved in a decision that had the potential to transform basic economic and political features of life in the country. The emphasis in this essay is on the defense/security system: in that light the Czechs were ready to contribute one thousand troops to the EU's defense force. The contribution would include a helicopter/chemical unit, a field hospital, and a rapid reaction battalion (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2005a). Further integration with the European Security and Defense Policy would entail some restructuring of Czech bureaucratic units within the defense system. For instance, there would be a need to reorganize the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and create both a deputy minister of foreign affairs for security policy and a political director (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006a). Of course, the decision to join NATO four years earlier also fitted into the category of a high-stakes game. In that case, the top political leaders again had guided the decision. Its consequences for the Czech Republic were immediately apparent, as it led to participation both in the Kosovo bombing campaign and in a limited number of peacemaking operations.

Czech participation in the peacemaking mission in Afghanistan is a middle-stakes game in the sense that it centers on contributions of a technical nature. Surely, the top political leaders made the decision to take part in the mission, but implementation was in the hands of skilled special units within the military. Since

March 2004, Czech units have taken part in the NATO operation called ISAF. Their tracks have disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, antidrug policy, and defense of the Kabul airport. They also work with provincial reconstruction teams outside Kabul and thus engage with the civilian population (Ministry of Defense 2006f). They have operated in the northeastern part of Afghanistan in some of the most remote territory in the country. Part of their assignment entails the guarding of visiting dignitaries and NATO vehicles (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006k). The units include eighty specialists in Fayzabad and another seventeen specialists at the Kabul airport (iDNES 2006e).

In March 2006, the Czech 601st Group of special forces also moved into Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. The group—120 military personnel under U.S. leadership—engaged the enemy that summer (iDNES 2006c). Their involvement was kept secret at the time, but eventually it became known that they had set up a base called Prostějov in Kandahar Province. This unit is highly specialized and includes parachutists, divers trained to do searches in rivers, and pyrotechnicians (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006i). As the situation in Afghanistan became more violent in the second half of 2006, this unit's responsibilities correspondingly grew (Ministry of Defense 2006h).

Czech units also took part in the middle-stakes game that was part of the NATO mission in Iraq after 2003. During the war they sent a field hospital to Iraq and a highly regarded biological, chemical, and radiological unit to Kuwait (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2005d). Such specialized technicians are characteristic of middle-stakes games. The Czechs sent another one-hundred-person contingent to Iraq after the initial phase of the war. Initially, it was intended that this mission would end in 2005, but Britain and the Iraqis requested an extension through 2006. Soldiers within this unit rotate every three months, training local police officials and strengthening policy security for the multinational forces that operated in Iraq (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006l). In addition, they provide military police instructors at a new academy called JTA.

Exchanges have also been set up between Iraq and the Czech Republic. As part of this program, the Czech Republic has committed 10 million crowns to protect and renew Iraqi cultural artifacts (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006g). Czech industries that would like to assist in the rebuilding of Iraq can register at the portal of the Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade. Additional assistance includes aid to refugees, food, surgical equipment, and water disinfectant (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006f).

Low-stakes games are less dangerous and often acquire the flavor of bureaucratic routine. For example, Czech units have been part of the force that monitors the Dayton Accord in Bosnia-Hercegovina since 1995. Originally operated by NATO, that mission was turned over to the EU in December 2004. Czech airmen based at Přerov operate helicopters in investigative flights over Bosnia and transport military material. There are also eighty Czech soldiers who work with the Austrians to protect the base at Tuzla (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2005c). Additional goals include furthering European integration, rooting out corruption, and defeating organized crime (Ministry of Defense 2006m).

Czechs have had genuine pride in their role in NATO's Operation Joint Enterprise in Kosovo, particularly after they were given command of the multinational brigade "Střed" in July 2005. That brigade supervises Priština's administrative center in which half of the city's population lives. The Czechs upgraded their unit from four hundred to five hundred troops, and they commanded a total of sixteen hundred troops (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2005e). During the mission, that lasted until the end of 2006, they faced unanticipated tasks such as warning children about the dangers and probable locations of land mines (Ministry of Defense 2006g). They put together school programs which they then presented to a total of five hundred students ranging in age from seven to seventeen (iDNES 2006b). Further, they ended up assisting in the protection of forests by halting the illegal cutting of trees for firewood (iDNES 2006a). Involvement in ending the drug trade that passed through Kosovo became an additional obligation (iDNES 2006g). While routine, this low-stakes game bore the seeds of danger as well.

In sum, the Czech defense system became involved in six major decisions with broad implications after the separation from Slovakia in 1993. The most sweeping were the high-stakes games that preceded the entry into NATO in 1999 and into the EU in 2004. Dangerous middle-stakes games involved the dispatch of critical technical specialists to several operations each in Afghanistan and Iraq. The commitments of troops to both Bosnia and Kosovo were also significant but longer lasting and much more routine.

## Feedback Loop

Systems analysis, anchored in democratic theory, concludes with the concept of a feedback loop. Decisions are never final but only one step in a constantly cycling policy process.

Each of the six policy commitments noted in the immediately preceding section is having an impact on the previously described components of systems theory. First, participation in NATO and EU missions impact the national values of the Czech defense system. The habit of taking part in those activities will build traditions of loyalty to new missions and requests. After a decade or two of participation, it will be second nature for Czech defense officials to think naturally of a continuing role in NATO and EU operations. Second, the experience of taking part in projects on such difficult terrain as exists in Afghanistan and Iraq will influence future Czech perceptions. Those perceptions will guide their response to external pressures and requests coming in from NATO and the EU for contributions to specific missions. Deeper involvement will enable the Czechs to build on their reputations for military police training, special forces operations in remote areas, and airport protection. Third, the continuing involvement and occasional leadership roles in the low-level games in Bosnia and Kosovo can contribute to those new dynamics that exist internal to the national security and defense systems. One major impact would likely be on the budget allocations that the Ministry of Defense receives. In order to finance such routine missions on a year-to-year basis, additional budgeting is needed for equipment and training. Of course, this budgetary need exists for the other four missions analyzed as well, especially since they entail middle- and higher-stakes games.

It is clear in the end that all components of the Czech national security system are intertwined at multiple points with NATO and the EU. Those organizations will become part of the environment of national values within the defense system. They already constitute the main external pressures impinging on that system. NATO and EU missions will also change the internal dynamics of the system, especially in the area of budget calculations. NATO, in particular, has very specific expectations about budgetary allocations as a percentage of GDP. Finally, most of the missions to which the defense system contributes already are connected with either NATO or the EU. One interesting question for the future is whether and when the proportion of EU operations will eventually rival or even surpass the number of NATO missions.

# Changed National Images:

## Moving Away from the Cold War, Renewing Destiny Within the Region, and Transforming the National Agenda

This challenging new set of organizational obligations has promoted a major evolution in Czech images and perceptions. In three respects, Czech images of its

recent historical past have changed under the pressure of events connected with the double accession to NATO and the EU. Those changes began with the critical events of November 1989 and will continue to evolve through the foreseeable future. Profound changes in images and perceptions at times affect both elites and public in the same way and at other times each in a different manner and at a different pace. Whereas past images established constraints that fenced in the policy-making process, new perceptions create the potential for an evolving policy mix.

1. Image of Western linkages replaces Cold War images of Eastern ties.
2. Image of shaping their destiny replaces the image of a compelled history.
3. Image of setting the national agenda replaces the image of receiving it.

First, accession to the EU and NATO has affected Czech images of its Cold War experience. During the Cold War, Czechoslovakia was forced to belong to the Warsaw Pact. Subsequently, the nation's self-image was tied up with membership in an Eastern-centered alliance. If the center of gravity was in Moscow, then Czechoslovakia formed the western fringe of that empire. Events connected with the Prague Spring in 1968 constituted a shift from the collective, dominant image of the two decades following the end of World War II. Efforts in that year to imitate, in a limited way, Western democratic models were out of tune with the self-image that had evolved in the previous twenty years. Resuming in 1969, pressures from the East gained the upper hand for another two decades. Later on, the path that would lead to EU and NATO membership in the 1990s and early twenty-first century replaced that image of the Cold War and the East with a new set of perceptions. From the vantage point of 2004, the Czech Republic lay on the eastern fringe of Europe, and its fate lay with the West and its democratic models of governance. The Prague Spring had been a foretaste of things to come.

Second, movement into the EU and NATO also altered Czech images of its destiny within the region. Connected in part to membership in a Western, Brussels-centered organization rather than in an Eastern, Moscow-anchored structure, this shift also affected the nation's understanding of its ability to control its own fate. Subordinate first to Nazi Germany and then to the Soviet Union, Czechoslovak leaders and population had no sense that they could control their destiny in their home geographic region. With the end of communism and the expansion of the EU in the 1990s, Czech images shifted to include the possibility of independent decision-making. They could choose whether to join the EU and NATO or not. A community in which membership was voluntary replaced one in which it had been coerced.

Third, the Czech Republic's picture of its national agenda was markedly transformed through the process of accession to the two Western organizations. In the earlier period the agenda had been set by the priorities of the socialist commonwealth. Economic, political, and foreign-policy decisions were part and parcel of patterns throughout the communist bloc. The collective image of a fraternal, socialist commonwealth drove individual policy decisions. In contrast, a whole new set of agenda items emerged with the accession process. Admittedly, many of these were pressed on the Czechs by the criteria for EU membership set in Brussels. Whatever the source, the agenda now included establishing democratic procedures, protecting the human rights of minority groups, setting up a viable free-market economy, opening borders in all directions, and joining in the creation of new security/defense structures. Such perceptions about the needed agenda for the future were profoundly different from the perceptions of policy needs within a socialist commonwealth.

Thus, movement toward and into the EU and NATO contributed to formation of three new images of Czech history. Cold War compliance with Soviet directives now appeared to be the exception and the Prague Spring a harbinger of the future. An image of volition and conscious choice supplanted a self-image of a coerced nation and a compelled history. An imagined agenda of policies connected with marketization, democratization, and openness took the place of a perceived agenda that centered on state controls, authoritarianism, and as much closure of the country as possible. In general, voluntarily responding to the tug of the West substituted for involuntarily yielding to the pressures from the East.

## Moving Away from the Cold War

The events of 1945–48 firmly yanked Czechoslovakia eastward into the new Soviet-led alliance. This transition marked a sharp change from patterns in existence between the two world wars, patterns that replicated Western models of democracy. Between 1918 and 1938 even the Communist Party enjoyed freedom of movement and the right to compete in elections. During the immediate post-1945 years, many in Czechoslovakia had temporarily given up on the West. After all, it was the West that had let the nation down through the Munich Pact of 1938. The West had also pulled its liberation/occupation force out of western Bohemia very soon after the defeat of the Nazis. This, coupled with the delayed withdrawal of the Red Army, generated a situation in which Eastern influence began to replace Western. For many young Czechs, both the West and their own interwar leadership had been disappointing. Admittedly, the East included the heavy hand of communism. However, for certain

groups such as manual workers, the Communist Party offered the hope of preserving their material interests. This partly accounts for the fact that it received 38 percent of the vote in the 1946 election (Taborsky, 17).

By 1948, with the abolition of most of the real anticommunist opposition within the country, and with the emergence of a National Front headed by the Communist Party, the fate of the country was firmly linked to the East for a full four decades. In terms of imagery, Czechoslovakia was an integral part of the Soviet-led communist bloc. Military activities and exercises took place within the framework of the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO) after its creation in 1955. Economic and trade relations were dictated by the Council for Mutual Economic Activity (CMEA). Countless bilateral political meetings took place between various Czechoslovak leaders and their counterparts in neighboring "fraternal" socialist countries. Citizens were encouraged to plan vacations and business activities in the same socialist bloc, so that cultural ties would underpin the emerging Eastern-led military, economic, and political connections. In many places along the border, an actual fence came to symbolize separation from the West. And so, the chief Czechoslovak self-image was of a nation whose geographic role was to constitute part of the western fringe of a Moscow-centered alliance.

In the middle of this forty-year forced experiment within an Eastern alliance, the Prague Spring of 1968 attempted to dissolve all the various cements used by the Soviet leaders to bind the bloc together. First, the military cement began to crack. An independent, albeit communist-led, Czechoslovakia would open up a huge gap in the WTO. Concerns emerged in Moscow about the loyalty of the Czechoslovak military in a crisis. The escape of General Jan Šeyna to the West during the year reinforced these doubts. Second, the economic cement began to crumble under pressure from the West German government, which stretched its hand toward the East under the policy of Ostpolitik. Given Czechoslovakia's traditionally high level of economic development, the prospects of market links between the two threatened solidarity within the CMEA. Third, the political cement began to break up. Czech reformers talked of real power for the other three political parties within the National Front. Discussion of more protections for freedom of speech and additional powers for interest groups expanded this challenge. Following the invasion in August by WTO troops from a number of the bloc countries, an image of "normalization" set in. Normalization meant a return to the Eastern alliance and the eradication of all memories of the nine-month dalliance with Western ways. The events of 1968 were now perceived as an aberration (Golan 1971, 223–329).

The emergence in the 1990s of a path to the EU and NATO changed that entire set of Cold War images. When Czech and Slovak leaders, first in common and then after 1993 in their own ways, established new democratic institutions and habits, pre-1948 links to the West were remembered. Even prior to the creation of the nation-state in 1918, connections had been to the empire anchored by Vienna and Budapest, two cities that had clearly shared in the history of Western Europe. Thus, from the vantage point of more than two centuries of history, the Cold War tutelage under Soviet control now became the aberration. In this sense, the use of the term *Central Europe* to characterize the immediate neighborhood of the Czech Republic and Slovakia made great sense. Perceptions of being historically in the mainstream of Europe instead of on the western fringes of a Russian-centered history were on the ascendancy.

What happened in 1968 during the Prague Spring then also took on a new aspect. Each of the Prague Spring reforms established a platform that later put the two countries on a path of preparedness for EU membership. For example, in the military sphere both countries sought membership in NATO. The Czechs gained admission in 1999 and the Slovaks in 2004. Both sent personnel to conflicted areas such as Afghanistan and Iraq, while they also took part in peacemaking operations in the Balkans. Transition into defense structures connected with the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU would no doubt supplement NATO membership in the long-range future. Whereas the 1968 military challenge by Czechoslovakia had threatened to weaken the western military flank of the Soviet bloc, the new military connections of the post-1989 era transformed the two countries into pillars of stability in light of the post-9/11 threats from eastern-centered terrorism.

Economic linkages also shifted direction from East to West, as the prospect of EU membership itself became a huge drawing card to many leaders and parties within the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Admission to the EU for both countries in 2004 opened far broader possibilities than had Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik in 1968. Changing trade patterns symbolized this shift from East to West. For example, during the Cold War, Czechoslovakia and other East European states received approximately 40 percent of their imports from the Soviet Union and sent more than one-third of their exports to the USSR; at the end of the Cold War in 1989, only 15.4 percent of Czechoslovakia's imports came from Western European countries, while 16.5 percent of its exports went to that region. These low figures reflect the emphasis on economic connections with the Eastern bloc during the Cold War. Imports from the EU nations in 1995, however, climbed to 45.4 percent and to 62

percent in 2002. Exports to the EU correspondingly rose to 45.7 percent in 1995 and to 64.2 percent in 2002. In effect, the 2002 figures were very comparable with, and even exceeded, pre–Cold War trade statistics with the West. In 1928, for instance, Czechoslovakia had imported 54.8 percent of its products from Western Europe, while at the same time it delivered 43.9 percent of its exports to the West (Linden 2008, 130–31). From this vantage point, the Eastern trade orientation of the Cold War was an exception.

Political steps in the period after the fall of communism placed both nations in the broadened camp of Western democracies. In that sense, the emphasis of the Prague Spring on political party competition, interest group activities, and freedom of speech lay dormant for twenty years of "normalization" but then sprouted forth in a much more vigorous way. Democratization eased the path to EU membership as well, for a number of checkpoints on the EU list of "chapters" focused on themes such as fair treatment of minorities and the elimination of corruption in the political process. All these expansions on Prague Spring themes transformed the collective image of the Prague Spring from aberration to legitimacy.

## Renewing Destiny Within the Region

Throughout most of their history, the Czechs had experienced little control over their own destiny. Of course, they had been one among many non-German ethnic groups within the Vienna-centered empire prior to 1918. Mid-nineteenth-century Czech nationalists dreamed of more autonomy within Austrian institutions such as the Diet but rarely imagined an independent nation-state (May 1968, 194–96). Later, Jaroslav Hašek's *Good Soldier Schweik* symbolized to many the Czech plight and self-image. Accommodation to the coercive power but clever avoidance of the worst demands summed up Czech capabilities. However, such an image also underlined Czech limitations. Czechoslovakia made choices on its own during the interwar period, yet was unable to avoid the swirling whirlpool of Nazism with its vortex in Berlin. Once again, Czechoslovakia was subject to control from a European capital (Leff 1997, 40–43).

The nadir of Czechoslovakia's aspirations was reached during the long period of submission within the communist bloc. It was always difficult to assess Soviet motives for denying national independence to the small nations on its western flank. Some speculated that ideology was the driving force behind Soviet foreign policy: the desire to expand the universe of nations guided by Marxist-Leninist doctrine. Protection of its own national interests was probably part of the Soviet equation as

well. Old Russia had been invaded by Napoleon and again by the Nazis. A protecting buffer of states that included Czechoslovakia may have created a greater sense of security for the Soviet leadership. Once the Cold War division between a Soviet-led Eastern alliance and the American-led Western alliance emerged, the global balance of power was for a time bipolar, freezing both blocs into fixed patterns and demanding continuing sacrifice of national rights for each group of countries. However, the sacrifices demanded of the Eastern countries were definitely the greater ones. Finally, near the end of the Cold War, Soviet domestic economic needs served as a partial explanation and justification for continued bloc solidarity. The generally higher standard of living in countries like Hungary and even Czechoslovakia meant that the Soviet Union could import East European products to satisfy the economic needs and desires of its own population. In sum, the Soviet period reinforced the historically rooted image that leaders in Prague had little control over the destiny of their nation and its people (Brown 1988, 302–05).

Following the revolution of November 1989, the possibilities for conscious national choice emerged. Many were aware that Czech control over its national destiny would likely involve more options than were available in 1918. First, Czech and Slovak leaders basically made the choice to separate from one another in the early 1990s, in spite of public opinion polls that showed no overwhelming popular desire for such a split. Second, Czech leaders had a whole panoply of regional and international organizations available to them. President Havel had great faith early on in the renamed Organization for Security and in Cooperation Europe. Previously, the OSCE had been called the CSCE (Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe). Substitution of *O* for *C* gave it a more permanent meaning. The Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary talked of reinvigorating the Visegrad Group as an avenue of discussion of common problems. For defense purposes the Western European Union was available as a substitute for the Warsaw Pact, an alliance that had quickly dissolved in the post–Cold War period. UN leaders also offered new roles for the nations that had so recently emerged from the communist cocoon. President Bill Clinton in the United States offered observer status in NATO through the Partnership for Peace Program to the same set of nations. After the disaster of the Bosnian War in the mid-1990s, the Central European countries had the option of applying for full NATO membership. The Czech Republic made the choice for that membership and entered with Poland and Hungary in 1999.

Beginning in the early 1990s, the EU made the decision to offer eventual membership to the best prepared of the newly liberated countries. The Czechs were

considered one of the top-ranking possibilities due to their rapid transition to a market economy under Prime Minister Václav Klaus as well as to their solid record on the indicators of political democracy. Czech leaders vigorously pursued that membership and made many policy decisions that met the demands placed by EU leaders on the aspirant nations. Although it would have been difficult to avoid this path, still it was one decision about national destiny over which they exercised considerable control. The decade-long effort bore fruit with admission in the spring of 2004.

While it is a simple matter to emphasize the control over the above-mentioned choices that the Czech leaders and population exercised, in all these options there lay an element of outside pressure. Once admitted to NATO, the Czech Republic felt an obligation to take part in operations that were earlier unthinkable. Within a matter of weeks they were asked to contribute to the NATO operation in Kosovo. After 9/11 the new link, primarily via NATO, with the United States, led them to feel pressure to help out in Afghanistan. In spite of the controversial nature of the 2003 American-led war in Iraq, the Czechs dispatched to Kuwait an anti–chemical weapons unit in case its services were needed. Finally, during the long process of accession to the EU, Czechs often openly complained about the new tyranny of Brussels-based bureaucrats who graded them on their progress on the list of chapters of the *acquis communautaire*. Thus, a secondary image of constraints in part balanced the fresh perceptions about real control over future policymaking.

## Transforming the National Agenda

Cold War images of national policy possibilities held by the Czechoslovak leadership were inextricably linked with Soviet priorities, in particular, the establishment of a centrally planned economy. After the departure of much of the German community at the end of World War II, a Czech-dominated leadership in Prague made key political decisions in accord with Soviet patterns. Between 1948 and 1968 Slovak economic aspirations were seldom not incorporated into either the national agenda or perceptions about future directions. Communist Party congresses were held in Czechoslovakia shortly after those in the Soviet Union, establishing five-year plans that adapted Soviet decisions to the Czech setting. Day-to-day planning focused on meeting the quotas established within those plans. Cultural life celebrated socialist realism, and key decisions by the political leadership encouraged the artistic depiction of workers' lives. Important elements of the political agenda centered on maintenance of central party controls. Especially after the Warsaw Pact invasion in August 1968, there was a new defensive tone to the party's agenda. Fears of another

eruption of popular discontent, stoked by the brave dissident movement circling around Charter '77, made the party leadership more earnest and committed to fulfillment of an agenda devoted to building a social order on a Marxist foundation.

In the foreign-policy area, both before and after 1968, the agenda did not waver from support for the Warsaw Pact. During the 1950s and 1960s, alliance solidarity entailed sharp criticism of dissident communist states like Hungary, Poland, Romania, Albania, and China, as well as attacks on the Western alliance led by the United States. Whether it was the Middle East crisis of 1956, the Six-Day War of 1967, or the war in Vietnam, Czechoslovak commentary was indistinguishable from Moscow's. After 1968, support for the Soviet agenda by First Secretary Gustav Husák was unrelenting. It included continuing opposition to the American involvement in Vietnam, support for the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, and denunciation of the Solidarity revolt in neighboring Poland.

In sum, both domestic- and foreign-policy agendas reflected images of coerced policy perspectives formulated in the heart of an eastern empire.

In the 1990s, the aspiration for EU and NATO membership generated a deeply changed national agenda of policy initiatives. With a democratic political system and a market economy set up in outline form at the beginning of the decade, the EU agenda in particular began to creep into the Czech set of policy goals (Leff 1997, 255–65). As the Czech leadership developed an image of the country as becoming a working cog in the EU machine, the Czech national agenda of necessity merged with that of the EU. For example, it was necessary for the Czechs to complete thirty-one chapters that constituted the EU's criteria for accession. Every six months, EU administrators from Brussels arrived in Prague, as they did in each of the other aspirant nations and capitals. After examining the progress made toward each set of goals, they offered a mid-course assessment of progress. Further, they always rank-ordered the postcommunist countries in terms of overall success in meeting the EU tests. The Czech Republic enjoyed a running start in areas that pertained to basic democratization and free market goals. However, EU leaders constantly pressed them to expand the agenda to address corruption in government, inclusion of the Roma minority in a fair way, and certain nagging issues with neighboring EU countries. Just as the Sudeten German issue made Germany think twice about admitting the Czechs into the EU, the nuclear issues that emerged in connection with the Temelin facility led Austria to issue occasional warning signals. In the Austrian view, the Czechs had not given sufficient reassurances about the safety of this nuclear plant located close to the border in South Moravia.

The Czech NATO/EU-centered agenda of the 1990s and early twenty-first century was totally altered from what it had been during the Cold War. Images of policy initiatives and accomplishments hinged on establishing a more open and just society within the borders of the country while engaging economically with a broadened EU that would include twenty-seven countries by 2007. As such, the national freedom obtained in 1989 made fulfillment of those dreams a possibility. However, the irony of Czech history lies in the fact that each new chapter of liberation includes a strong element of pressure or even coercion from some larger outside force. In this case, Czechs could only qualify for EU membership by supplanting their own national agenda with that of Brussels. That element of pressure created doubts symbolized by the euroskepticism of President Klaus. Those who challenged this subordination of the Czech national agenda to that of the EU were in one sense the heirs of those who had lamented previous periods in which an outside force even more forcefully dominated the Czech agenda.

## Integrating the Changed National Images

Czech admission into NATO and the EU changed images of modern Czech history in three ways. First, admission into a Western organization centered in Brussels provided fresh perceptions for people who had thought of themselves for four decades as part of an eastern alliance based in Moscow. A corollary proposition is that what they had regarded as the most unnatural, disruptive experience during the Cold War, the Prague Spring reform period, had in fact sown the seeds of much that flowered in a very natural, undisruptive way after the end of communist rule. Second, Czechs imagined themselves for a second time in their brief history to be in control of their own national destiny. The greater degree of stability in Europe in the early twenty-first century offered hope that they could retain this control, a hope that had been denied them in the much more volatile interwar period. Third, control over their own policy agenda flowed quickly into embrace of their future national partners in the EU and NATO. Czech images merged with images held by the two regional organizations to stimulate the flowering of democratic institutions, free market principles, clean government, and justice toward minority groups. And yet, a historical conundrum lies at the heart of all these positive images and developments: How does a country imagine and will a history of national independence, when each past historical experience has entailed the necessity of fitting into the image of a larger outside force?

# Conclusion

The ability both to choose carefully among conflicting loyalties and to make astute use of broader organizational memberships would help resolve the tension among national images. Decisions about the targets and goals to which loyalty should be directed could further clarify images and perceptions. Inevitably, such decisions would deepen the imagery of being an integral part of the West, of actually shaping national destiny, and of developing a modern policy agenda more akin to Czech needs. In addition, use of organizations like NATO and the EU could brighten the image of future prospects for the Czechs. Interaction with those alliances could also reshape the significance of the West for the Czechs, create the basis for independence from outside threats to autonomy, and transform the national agenda. In that sense, loyalties, organizations, and images could interact to create a new chemistry. That chemistry could enable the Czech Republic to continue the flight from its Cold War cocoon through the global atmosphere in a purposeful, vivid way.

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