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Ukraine in the EU's Eastern Partnership Policy 2009-13. A Case of Czech Foreign Policy Making Analysis.

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PLVS RATIO  QVAM VIS

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List of abbreviations:

AA	Association Agreement
CDA	Critical discourse analysis
CDU	<i>Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands</i> (Christian Democratic Union of Germany)
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
COEST	Working Party on Eastern Europe and Central Asia
CSSD	<i>Ceska strana socialne demokraticka</i> (Czech Social Democratic Party)
CSU	<i>Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern</i> (Christian Social Union in Bavaria)
DHA	Discourse-Historical Approach
EaP	Eastern Partnership
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EPP	European People's Party
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
FAC	Foreign Affairs Council
GAC	General Affairs Council
GAERC	General Affairs and External Relations Council
GDP	Gross domestic product
IDA	International development aid
IR	International relations
KDU-CSL	<i>Krestanska a demokraticka unie – Ceskoslovenska strana lidova</i> (Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party)

KSCM	<i>Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy</i> (Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia)
LIDEM	<i>Liberalní demokrate</i> (Liberal Democrats)
MFA	Ministry of foreign affairs
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ODS	<i>Občanská demokratická strana</i> (Civic democratic party)
PiS	<i>Prawo i Sprawiedliwość</i> (Law and Justice)
PM	Prime minister
PO	<i>Platforma Obywatelska</i> (Civic Platform)
PSL	<i>Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe</i> (Polish People's Party)
QMV	Qualified Majority Voting
SZ	Strana zelených (Green Party)
TOP 09	<i>Tradice, odpovědnost, prosperita</i> (Tradition, responsibility, prosperity) 09
UfM	Union for Mediterranean
UMP	<i>Union pour un mouvement populaire</i> (Union for a Popular Movement)
USA	United States of America
V4	Visegrad Four
V4EaP	Visegrad for Eastern Partnership
VG	Visegrad Group

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

On May 7th, 2017 eight years have passed since the Eastern Partnership (EaP) policy of the European Union (EU) was launched at the first summit of EaP in Prague. The policy was designed as a platform to deal with six countries of Eastern Europe and Southern Caucasus – the most important and pro-European among them being Ukraine. Under the new policy framework, the East European partners were supposed to promote security, stability and prosperity thanks to cooperation with the EU on the bilateral and multilateral bases. Looking at the current state of EaP, it is obvious that the EU's policy mostly failed, or at least did not deliver its goals fully. The EU's eastern neighbourhood was not turned into area of security, stability and prosperity as best visible at Ukraine fighting its undeclared war against Russian Federation. Due to its numerous problems, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) went in 2015 through a extensive review that has been implemented since then (European Commission 2017).

1.2. Research rational

The Visegrad Four (V4)¹ stood at the beginning of the most significant EU foreign policy contribution from the new EU member states embodied in EaP, when its prime ministers fully endorsed the policy proposal at the Visegrad Annual Summit in Prague on June 16, 2008. However, contrary to the common V4 position, the final draft was presented to the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) in the same month as the Polish-Swedish initiative, with the then Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Radek Sikorski and his Swedish counterpart Carl Bild put in the spotlight. Therefore, the logical question here is to ask why it happened and how it was possible that the V4, including the Czech Republic that launched the EaP in May 2009 during its EU presidency, is now missing from the public discourse being overshadowed by Poland and Sweden? I am going to argue that this picture of well-known political figures conducting the EU foreign policy presented in the media and accepted by the research community as well as general public is only a shallow way of looking at the very complicated multi-level EU foreign policy making. Moreover, I opine that the public discourse on the topic is superficial and does not capture the complexity of EU negotiation process involving numerous actors at national, regional and European levels. Based on my research, I am going to argue that Czechia² and V4 played a crucial role

¹ The Visegrad Group (resp. V4) comprises of Czechia, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary

² In this work, expressions 'the Czech Republic' and 'Czechia' are used interchangeably.

in the EU political negotiating, coalition-building and in the end supporting the EaP emergence. Among the Visegrad countries, Czechia proved to hold a particularly significant position as it not only opened the discussion on EaP by its non-paper ‘ENP and Eastern Neighbourhood – Time to Act’ consulted by the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) (2008) with the Visegrad and Baltic partners the same as European Commission during its V4 presidency in 2007-8 and later presented at the EU’s COEST (Council of the European Union 2017) Capitals in April 2008, but also keeping the EaP high on its EU presidency agenda and facilitating the process of EaP launching during its EU presidency in first half of 2009. Moreover, I claim that the Polish-Swedish proposal submitted to the GAERC was in fact just a more detailed version of the original Czech draft proposing stronger institutionalisation of the ENP (Albrycht 2010).

Despite these facts, the Czech role in the EU foreign policy making of the EaP is mostly underestimated and generally forgotten, even if it was instrumental for bringing the policy to life. Therefore, I am going to shed a new light on the circumstances of EaP’s creation and analyse the key players involved in the decision-making process and their mutual interplay, including the Czech Republic, V4 and the EU institutions as the most important of them. For that reason, the structure of MA thesis is divided into three empirical chapters each covering one level of analysis – national (Czech), regional (V4) and supranational (EU) of the EU-Ukraine relations during 2009 and 2013 focused on the EaP from the Czech foreign policy perspective. This is rather an unorthodox approach to the EU foreign policy negotiation contributing significantly to the novelty of the study. In this work, I am also going to touch upon the problem of norms, values and interests in the EU’s foreign policy. Secondly, I am going to analyse the mutual interplay between the EU institutions and member states employing the concept of ‘Europeanisation’ and its ‘bottom-up-down’ approach as the main theoretical frameworks, elaborated below. Finally, as the foreign policy analysis, the study deals with the question of change or continuity in the EU-Ukraine relations 2009-13 from the Czech foreign policy perspective.

1.3. Case selection

The MA thesis represents an analysis of the EU foreign policy making employed on the case of EaP and the Czech Republic, a new(er) EU member state of medium size. The question, why Czechia can offer a new perspective on the EU-Ukraine relations is based on the special Czech foreign policy paradigm of the EU-Ukraine relations holding several key provisions, such as the unique experience with political, social and economic transformation after 1989

combined with strong emphasis on democracy and human rights in the foreign policy stemming from humanistic dissent tradition, lack of – in historical terms – long direct contacts with Eastern Europe, including both Ukraine and Russia deeply affecting the question of identity (resp. otherness) and public awareness of the region. In addition, the case selection is built on several factors differentiating the Czech paradigm both from the old EU member states (post-socialist country with lack of experience with the European Political Cooperation) and from the V4 and the Baltic states, as a country with no common border with the eastern neighbourhood and not affected by the historical, political and identity rivalry (Poland) or questions of strong ethnic minorities or cultural and economic ties as in cases of remaining Visegrad members, Slovakia and Hungary (David Kral and Lukas Pachta 2005).³

The period of 2009 and 2013 was chosen because of the EaP tenure. The scope of this thesis covers the period before November 2013 Vilnius Summit of Eastern Partnership, which was followed by toppling of the Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich in the ‘Revolution of Dignity’, among other things due to his refusal to sign the Association Agreement (AA) with the EU. This fact clearly illustrates the strength of the EU normative power – as elaborated by Ian Manners (2002) – in Ukraine. Until today, the EaP remains the most important EU’s foreign policy tool towards the six partner states, even if it sometimes struggles to stay high on the EU agenda. The policy is still advocated primarily by the new EU member states, especially the Visegrad and Baltic countries.

Last but not least, the year of 2013 was chosen as a final point, because of another Czech V4 presidency between 2011 and 2012 that played a role in the EU-Ukrainian relations from the Czech outlook. However, I decided to end the scope of the analysis in July 2013, when the Petr Necas’s (ODS-led) government fell due to large-scale corruption and scandals. Later, a caretaker government took office and one era of Czech politics symbolised by dominance of Civic Democratic party (ODS) and its right-wing governments (2006-2013) ended. In general, the Czech V4 presidencies (2007/8 and 2011/12) and EU Council (1-6/2009) constituted crucial periods for implementation of the Czech foreign policy goals and their realisation at the regional and supranational levels. Therefore, the analysis looks particularly into these formative moments.

³ The Czech compatriots living in Ukraine, especially in its Western part of Volhynia, are and were indeed affecting the Czech image of Ukraine, but it is not as significant as in case of other members of the V4, because the community is rather distant and not very populous.

1.4. Research questions:

- ▶ **MAIN:** What role did the Czech Republic play in the EU foreign policy making of the Eastern Partnership?
 - ▶ How was this role played out at national (Czech), regional (V4) and subnational (European) levels?
 - ▶ How significant were the Czech identity and self-perception within this process?
 - ▶ Finally, why and by whom was the Czech contribution to the Eastern Partnership initiation overshadowed?

1.5. Key arguments

Contrary to the predominant point of view that Poland and Sweden stood at the beginning of the EaP, it was Czechia that initiated the debate on the current shape of the policy. The V4 and Czech contribution to EaP and the EU foreign policy making in general is often underestimated and generally overshadowed. Based on my research, I am going to prove that the Czech Republic and the V4 played an instrumental role in forming of the EU's eastern policy. Moreover, the thesis is going to show how and in which regards did Czechia contribute to the EU foreign policy making process at national, regional and subnational levels. Thanks to the analysis, the reader should be able to better understand the EU foreign policy making and recognise the role of small (resp. medium) new EU member states in it, which is not always dominated by the big powers, such as Germany or France, as best visible at the EaP case. Therefore, I am going to argue that the new EU member states were in past also policymakers, not only policytakers, as is often wrongly believed.

On the other hand, it must be recognised that there are different strategies of the EU members states while pursuing their own foreign policy goals, for example, looking at cases of Finland, Poland, Czech Republic or France and their roles in the EU foreign policy making. For instance, Finland was able to upload its foreign policy preference of Northern Dimension within a two-year period, whereas it took Poland more than five years to succeed in the promotion of its traditional foreign policy domain to the EU level. The question remains, how long it would take Poland without the positive foreign policy setting ('window of opportunity'), provided among others also by Sweden, Czechia and the V4 as well as other like-minded EU countries after the 2008 Russo-Georgian War. Finally, the situation of France and its Union for Mediterranean was also completely different. Therefore, it is essential to look for answers of these complex differences. I am going to argue that in the case of EaP and post-socialist countries, the major difference was played by communist

legacies of weak bureaucracy and diplomatic apparatus having limited experience with the EU foreign policy making (especially informal politics in the ‘Brussels’s corridors’) or problem of weak foreign policy credibility in contrast to the ‘old’ EU member states.

1.6. Research methods

In terms of research methods, the work is going to employ two main tools – critical discourse analysis (CDA) – to scrupulously analyse the relevant primary sources (listed in Appendix 2). The sources come from three levels of the analysis – national, regional and supranational, as these were the key areas of the EU foreign policy making of EaP. When it comes to the bottom-up case of Europeanisation, the national interests are first aggregated within the EU member state and negotiated among its domestic actors (including institutions, political parties, media, NGOs, general public and other interested players) and only then uploaded to the EU level for further negotiations. However, due to the nature of EU foreign policy making process, which is concentrated in the EU Council, the EU member states must first get involved in the coalition-building and gather sufficient number of votes to pass the decision. I am going to argue that in case of EaP, V4 served as a crucial platform for negotiations and coalition-building of interested parties, such as the Baltic states, Romania, Sweden and later also Bulgaria or Germany. Therefore, I decided to include the Visegrad dimension as another layer of the analysis, in order to fully capture the essence of the policy negotiation. Also, this type of analysis of the EU decision-making is rarely present in the literature and therefore brings an added value to the academic literature on the EU foreign policy making and the EU’s eastern policy.

In addition, I conducted ten qualitative in-depth non-standard interviews with the Czech foreign policy elites involved in forming the EU foreign policy during 2009 and 2013. Analysing the discourse of the relevant decision- and opinion-makers provides empirical evidence and supports key arguments of the work, which relate to the Czech role in the EaP initiation. Furthermore, the semi-structured anonymous interviews (listed in Appendix 1) give an added value to the analysis of Czech foreign policy making and bring new information to the research verifying the existing state of the art on the EU foreign policy towards Ukraine. The new data is further complemented by the secondary literature of analytical character.

The CDA is going to serve as the major analytical tool for the selected foreign policy documents and the semi-structured elite interviews. The aim of the CDA, particularly regarding the elite interviews, is to recognise individual identity issues behind the policy-

making process and determine, if the Czech identity and self-perception served as a mobilising strategy for the policy work. Also, I am going to explore if there was a direct correlation between the Czech identity and foreign policy exercised in the case of EaP. If foreign policy can be defined as a continuation of the domestic policy by other – in this case primarily EU – means, the CDA should help to identify the root causes of the policy making and role of identity and self-perception in the Czech elite discourse on EaP.⁴ I am going to claim that – in contrast to Poland – the identity element within the Czech government(s) was not as significant (perception of threat) and therefore, it did not serve as a mobilising factor to gain momentum for the policy work, in order to counter or weaken the Russian influence in the ‘shared neighbourhood’.⁵ On the other hand, I am going to argue that due to limited resources the Czech policy strategy typical for its ‘multilateralism’ was different than the Polish one, which could be identified as ‘sceptical multilateralist’ or ‘unilateralist’ (Chappell 2010). Based on this fact, the analysis includes a question related to the identity and Czech self-perception in the international area, which according to preliminary expectations had an impact on the Czech strategy and performance in the EU decision-making.

1.7. Significance

In the final section, it is essential to explain, how and in which respects my research is significant and where it stands in the current state of the art on the European foreign policy making. As mentioned above, unlike the general line of argument (Marcinkowska 2016, Copsey and Pomorska 2014, Chappell 2010, Copsey and Pomorska 2010, Kaminska 2014, Kaminska 2010, Kaminska 2007, Juncos and Pomorska 2006) accepting the Polish-Swedish leadership in EaP represented by two strong personalities of the EU politics Sikorski and Bild, I am going to analyse the full complexity of EaP’s creation, including the Czech and Visegrad roles. I am going to argue that the public discourse on the topic is superficial and does not capture the real substance of EU foreign policy making involving numerous actors at national (Czech), regional (V4) and supranational (European) levels. The research is going to employ ‘Europeanisation’ on the case of Czech foreign policy as the main theoretical framework using the ‘bottom-up-down’ approach to cover the mutual influence of the EU

⁴ Torreblanca (2001: 5) claims: “[T]he EU has provided an excellent opportunity to enhance the foreign policy capacity and the national goals of a country which had a large and problematic foreign policy agenda, scant economic resources to match ambitions with policies.”

⁵ This was also advocated by the Czech Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek (2009), who during the Prague Summit of Eastern Partnership claimed: “(...) the Eastern Partnership is not directed against anybody. It does not have the ambition to create European spheres of influence.”

member states and the EU institutions. In this respect, I am going to fill a gap in the literature on the role of new(er) member states in the EU foreign policy making, as the previous studies operationalising Europeanisation concentrated mostly on old(er) EU member states (e.g. Larsen 2005, Stavridis 2003, Tonra 2001). Even if comparable in terms of size, the academic research on EU foreign policy making widely lacks case studies of states that acceded to the EU in 2004, resp. in 2007 and 2013. This can be partly explained by relatively short time of these countries being EU members and lack of experience with ‘doing business’ in Brussels. However, it is also a question of capacities and from that stemming ambitions, which were initially rather limited in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) (Edwards 2006).

Nonetheless, the EU member states from CEE were not always only ‘policymakers’,⁶ but also ‘policymakers’ as best visible on the EaP case. Therefore, for us it is more relevant to consider the cases of so-called ‘uploading’ the national interests to the EU level. In this regard, we can find several case studies on Poland, by far the largest and most ambitious of the new EU member states. There are new emerging studies written, for example, by Joanna Kaminska, Laura Chappell, Karolina Pomorska or Nathaniel Copsey on Poland and its uploading analysed below. However, it is essential to emphasize that there are only several cases of successfully institutionalised uploading of the CEE national policy preferences to the EU level since 2004 and therefore, the amount of literature on the topic is relatively limited, even if growing in number over time. For that reason, most of the Europeanisation literature on new EU member states classifies the newly-acceded countries as policymakers, which I try to challenge, the same as shed a new light on the process of EU foreign policy making from the perspective of new EU member states.

To sum up, the analysis of the EU foreign policy making as illustrated on the EaP case and Czechia represents a new approach to the EU foreign policy making that comprehensively deals with new and small and medium-sized EU member states contributing to the EU negotiation process. The case study pays a special attention to uploading of the national foreign policy preferences to the EU level, while recognising other aspects of Europeanisation of the Czech foreign policy as well. Nevertheless, the core of the thesis is built around policy making, rather than institutional or social aspects of Europeanisation,

⁶ This is wrongly believed also in Czechia. According to Eurobarometer (2007, 2009), only 22 % Czechs believed that their voice in the EU really counts and 88 % were convinced that these are the big EU member states which decide about Europe. Therefore, we can observe a general tendency of self-marginalisation typical for the Czech national identity (Brodsky 2000 in Marek and Braun 2011).

which were in place especially at the early period after the EU accession.⁷ Therefore, novelty of such study should be taken an obvious fact, which helps to address a gap in literature on the topic.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Concept of Europeanisation

First and foremost, it is essential to explain, why the concept of Europeanisation is essential for the study. Europeanisation helps to understand and explain the processes happening in the EU and the interaction between the EU institutions and the EU member states. It is a unique theoretical framework describing this phenomenon and therefore it cannot be substituted by any other theory or theoretical concept dealing with international relations (IR) or foreign policy. This is due to the fact that only Europeanisation captures the mutual interdependence and interplay between the EU institutions and the EU member states or candidate countries not only during the process of enlargement (EU conditionality), but even more importantly it explains the behaviour of EU member states and their relationship with the EU headquarters in Brussels. The traditional IR theories or theory of EU integration is unable to do that due to reasons elaborated below.

2.1.1. Definition of Europeanisation

Definition of Europeanisation and its content has been in academic literature identified as complicated and often contested due to its vague character in some cases lacking clear causal value (Haverland 2003). Even the name “*Europeanisation*” can be confusing, as in the English-language academic literature we can also find “*Europeization*” or in some cases also “*EU-ization*” (Kaminska 2014).⁸ If we acknowledge that there are practically no differences between the first two, the third variation of the name strictly refers to the EU’s influence. The reason for that is sometimes misleading nature of the concept and several completely different meanings hidden behind it. The most complex analysis of the Europeanisation phenomenon was given by Johan P. Olsen,⁹ who came with five different descriptions of Europeanisation. Only the third of them is followed by this paper:

⁷ The process of elite socialisation started in April 2003, when the ten new EU member states were granted the statuses of “*active observers*” (Pomorska 2007, 26).

⁸ The thesis works with the term “*Europeanisation*”, as it is most frequented in the academic literature.

⁹ There are also different approaches given, for example, by Kevin Featherstone (2003) or Robert Harmsen and Thomas M. Wilson (2000) and others.

“Central penetration of national systems of governance: Europeanization here involves the division of responsibilities and powers between different levels of governance. All multilevel systems of governance need to work out a balance between unity and diversity, central co-ordination and local autonomy.

Europeanization, then, implies adapting national and sub-national systems of governance to a European political centre and European-wide norms.”

Another issue stems from problematic identification of the concept’s core and “*concept overstretching*” having implications for its explanatory value.¹⁰ Therefore, it is not only the term that is ambiguous, but also how and in which regards Europeanisation influences the EU member states and the candidate countries, or when it takes place. It is possible to find dozens of definitions of Europeanisation (Meiselova 2011), however, the most common and cited in the academic literature was developed by Claudio Radaelli, who refers to the complexity of the EU influence at all three dimensions of public life (2000: 4):

“Process of (a) construction, (b) diffusion and (c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures and policy paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things’, and shared beliefs and norms, which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, political structure and public policies.”¹¹

Moreover, it sometimes becomes difficult to differentiate the effect of Europeanisation from theories of European integration. Thus, at this point it is essential to make a clear distinction between Europeanisation and the EU integration. Zemanova (2007) illustrates the case very well pointing to the fact that Europeanisation simply cannot be the same as EU integration, because the integration theory deals with processes among the EU member states at the intergovernmental level and explains, why the integration happened and where it aims. Whereas, Europeanisation focuses on the interplay between the EU institutions and the EU members, resp. candidate countries. In addition, it is complicated not to confuse the effects of Europeanisation with transformation, globalisation and other processes happening at the same time.¹² Nonetheless, it has been empirically proven that Europeanisation takes place and affects both EU member states and candidate countries and their foreign policies to

¹⁰ Radaelli (2000: 20-25) warns against ‘*overstretching*’ of the concept of Europeanisation and suggests not to dilute the term too much, as it would lose its explanatory value.

¹¹ Radaelli based his own definition on the original Ladrech’s concept from 1994. In 2004, author (2004: 4) revised his own definition and extended the “*domestic*” to “*domestic (national and subnational)*” (also in Bulmer 2007, Radaelli 2004: 4).

¹² While this work recognises the influence of other international organisations (above all the UN, OSCE or OECD) on the EU member states, it does not elaborate their influence in more detail, as these institutions did not play an important role in the EaP initiation and promotion.

various degrees (Tonra 2000). Despite some theoretical weaknesses, Europeanisation has been the most influential theoretical framework for analysing relations between the EU institutions and EU member states and the domestic players (Slosarcik 2006). Therefore, it is useful to employ the framework for analysing the mutual interplay between the EU and its new members states (resp. candidate countries), as it brings an added value in comparison with the traditional (reps. ‘grand’) IR theories that cannot sufficiently capture the processes happening inside of the EU.

2.1.2. Operationalisation of Europeanisation

Now, it is important to define the way Europeanisation is going to be employed in the research. The body of Europeanisation literature has been greatly expanding over the last two decades. Therefore, this subchapter strives to understand one concrete definition of Europeanisation that is going to be employed throughout the study and explain the relationship between the EU institutions and the new EU member states, respectively Czechia, in its effort to upload EaP to the EU level.

The operationalised concept of Europeanisation was first introduced in 1994, when it was conceptualised by Robert Ladrech (1994: 70). After 1999, Europeanisation started to be largely employed in social sciences, where it dramatically expanded over the years (Featherstone 2003: 5). Chronologically, we can identify two generations of the Europeanisation research – static and dynamic.¹³ While the former concentrates on the top-down process of downloading the EU agenda to the member state’s level (Sepos 2008: 5 and Börzel 2003: 20) and determining to which extent did the state approximate with the EU (Zemanova 2007: 37; Börzel 2003: 7), the latter focuses on both downloading and uploading (bottom-up) the national preferences of EU member states to the EU level.

Now, it is necessary to explain the difference between top-down and bottom-up approaches of Europeanisation and describe how they work in practice. For the former, it is characteristic that there is a vertical adaptation pressure from the EU institutions (top) down to the EU member state (resp. candidate country), which stems from the so-called ‘misfit’ based on discrepancy between the EU practices and domestic institutions, structures or policies (Bache 2003). In this situation, the EU and its institutions represent the independent variable and the change on domestic level and the dependent variable (Zemanova 2007: 37).

¹³ This, however, does not mean that the first generation is outdated and was replaced by the other. Both processes – static and dynamic – can be happening at the same time in different areas of public life.

Misfit, which is of crucial importance, was developed by Adrienne Héritier in mid-1990s. It stands for incompatibility between policies, processes or institutions at national and EU levels. Only when this misfit is at place, there is a need for Europeanisation (Börzel and Risse 2003, 5). At the same time, Börzel and Risse prove the causality that the bigger the misfit, the more intensive the pressure on domestic level to comply with the EU pressure. Finally, the concept of downloading is directly connected with the top-down approach and underlines the direct EU influence on the national level. Therefore, when it comes to downloading, the EU is a crucial player initiating the change at domestic level and pushing the EU member states (resp. candidate countries) to accept the EU institutions, policies, decisions or procedures (Sepos 2008: 5) and incorporate them in their own domestic systems. Robert Ladrech (1994), Adrienne Heritier (2001), Jim Buller and Andrew Gamble (2002) also come with their own definitions of top-down processes and downloading.

The second generation of Europeanisation research works with complex and dynamic processes happening during the mutual interplay that have different outcomes at different states. It includes both top-down and bottom-up approaches and characterise Europeanisation as a dialectic, two-way interactive process, which has an open end (Bache 2003: 6; Bomberg, Peterson 2000: 7; Gualini 2004: 9). Therefore, the one-way passive approach of domestic actors is refused and their influence on the EU level is recognised. Concurrently, the process gets more complicated and it is more difficult to recognise who is influencing who at each time. This makes the causal character of the relations more complicated too (Featherstone 2003: 4; Howell 2002a: 7; Sepos 2008: 6). In addition, the concept of misfit is mostly replaced by careful observation of the domestic players and their Europeanisation, including political conflicts (Cabada and Hlousek 2009: 35). As mentioned above, the second generation of Europeanisation research acknowledges not only the top-down, but also bottom-up interaction between the EU institutions and EU member states, resp. candidate countries. The so-called process of uploading is inherently connected with the bottom-up dimension and can be characterised as a situation in which domestic players, including not only the EU institutions at one side, but also national governments and other domestic or international players (Bomberg and Peterson 2000: 7; Zemanova 2007: 37):

“Upload their own institutions, policies and procedures to the EU level and influence the general trajectory of EU integration in a way, which suits their national interests.” (Sepos 2008: 6)

However, the Europeanisation in understanding of scholars from second generation does not end there and encompass also mutual influence of the EU member states and candidate

countries and their mutual interaction. In this context, the Europeanisation can happen on a voluntary basis (in contrast to the first generation) thanks to policy transfers or social learning and might even go above the EU standards (Bache 2003: 3). The dynamic understanding of Europeanisation also explains the potential regression in convergence between the EU and domestic levels, which is reasoned by the interests of the nation-states to transform the EU practices according to their own will (Börzel 2003: 7; Zemanova 2007: 37). That is why, the bottom-up dimension of Europeanisation is attractive for the domestic players, as it “*decreases the need for legal and administrative adaptation typical for the downloading process*”. Börzel (2003: 40) adds that: “*the more the EU level looks like the domestic, the lesser are the costs for adaptation during implementation process*”. The domestic players can also use Europeanisation to mask their own interests, in order to implement national preferences, or on contrary to preserve the status quo (Buller and Gamble 2002: 23). Even more importantly, the domestic players might try to upload their own domestic problems and interests to the EU level, as they are out of their reach or of subnational character (Börzel 2003: 20). This is especially relevant for our case of the EU’s eastern policy, which was of utmost importance for the Czech Republic, as well as Poland and other CEE states, but out of their domestic capacities. Alternatively, the national governments might simply try to enforce their own domestic practices as the EU ones (Zemanova 2007: 38; Zemanova 2008: 40).

Finally, the most complex and suitable for this type of research was identified the ‘bottom-up-down’ model of Europeanisation going along the lines of the second generation of the Europeanisation research, as proposed by Kenneth Dyson and Klaus H. Goetz (2003: 20):

“Europeanization denotes a complex interactive ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ process in which domestic politics, politics, and public policies are shaped by European integration and in which domestic actors use European integration to shape the domestic arena. It may produce either continuity or change and potentially variable and contingent outcomes.”

This approach strictly refuses the one-way effect of one side over the other, considers all three dimensions of public life (polity, politics and policy) and reflects the complexity of mutual relations happening in a dynamic manner. The bottom-up-down model is based on the theory that the policy formulation starts at the grass-root level and is further transported to the EU level, while taking into consideration the pressures and effects of the EU on the domestic level at the same time (see Börzel and Risse 2003: 1, Bulmer 2007: 47 or Graziano and Vink 2007: 9).

2.1.3. Europeanisation of the new EU member states and their FP

2.1.3.1. New EU member states

Europeanisation – as defined by Radaelli coming out of third Olsen’s understanding of Europeanisation – in CEE has, of course, its roots in EU conditionality following the EU’s Copenhagen criteria (European Commission 2016). Since 1993, the EU had mechanisms to enforce its influence in the candidate countries. Among them, Grabbe (2001: 1021) identified: 1) gate-keeping, 2) benchmarking and monitoring, 3) modelling, 4) money and technical assistance and finally 5) advice and twinning programmes. Therefore, the initial experience of the CEE states with Europeanisation stemmed from asymmetrical EU conditionality surrounding the accession process (Grabbe 2001). Nevertheless, the outcomes of Europeanisation in each CEE country were very different, which speaks in favour of the Schmidt’s and Radaelli’s claim about several factors shaping the effectiveness of Europeanisation. Authors (2004) consider: 1) size of the country, 2) pre-existing policies, 3) political processes, 4) reform capacity, 5) domestic political costs and 6) discourse. Therefore, it is necessary to analyse each individual case of the CEE countries for answers surrounding the effects of Europeanisation on new EU member states.

In the bottom-up direction, Juncos and Pomorska (2011) further elaborate the factors based on which the EU member states can shape Europeanisation and affect the EU policies. They divide the power factors into two categories: crude political power and variable political power. While in the first group Copey and Pomorska count population and GDP, in the latter they include: 1) intensity of policy preference, 2) skill at alliance building, 3) administrative capacity, 4) persuasive advocacy, 5) receptiveness of other Member States and finally 6) domestic political strength.

2.1.3.2. Europeanisation of foreign policy

First and foremost, it is necessary to look at the *acquis* in EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) providing legal basis for the relations between the EU and its member states. It is essential to say that the EU competences in foreign policy are weak and mostly defined by the EU member states themselves. This was true before the Lisbon Treaty, and to a large degree until today. Therefore, the EU member states are aligning with the common positions and finding compromises in the EU foreign policy (CFSP) voluntarily having the right to veto every decision, which would not be according to their national interests. This fact makes Europeanisation of foreign policies of EU member states a very specific area of common

interests. At this place, it is essential to define terms of “*identity*” and “*national interest*” that are of crucial importance for the study. Tonra (2001: 31) sees them as:

“(...) identity is the context from which national ‘interests’ are divined and developed by policy makers. Identity does not determine foreign policy but it provides the context for the construction and evolution of declared ‘national interests’. It thus defines the framework from which such a policy ultimately emerges.”

Coming back to the legal basis of EU’s CFSP, Chapter 27 of enlargement negotiations, gives the new member the following requirements:

“(...) must undertake to give active and unconditional support to the implementation of the common foreign and security policy in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity. Member states must ensure that their national policies conform to the common positions and defend these common positions in international fora.”

Therefore, it should be clear that the area of CFSP is typical for its vagueness, but also for loyalty and solidarity that the new EU member states were supposed to show during and after the accession process. At the same time, it is possible to identify a paternalistic approach of the old EU member states towards the new ones characteristic by the phrase that the “*their national policies conform to the common positions*”, which was supposed to prevent deadlock in EU’s CFSP. To further proceed with application of the Europeanisation concept on the national foreign policy, Tonra (2000: 229) conceptualises the problem as:

“A transformation in the way in which national foreign policies are constructed, in the ways in which professional roles are defined and pursued and in the consequent internationalisation of norms and expectations arising from a complex system of collective European policy making.”

Michael E. Smith (2004: 59) adds that Europeanisation affects the national foreign policies in the following areas: 1) elite-socialisation, 2) bureaucratic reorganisation, 3) constitutional change and 4) public opinion support for the CSFP. Smith opines that Europeanisation of national foreign policies leads to:

“Greater familiarity with each other’s position; greater appreciation of the value of acting together to handle external issues; and acceptance of the idea that it is useful and appropriate for Europe to act as a single unit in world politics.”

2.2. Social constructivism and role theory

At the beginning of this section, it is crucial to explain the connection between Europeanisation and social constructivism. The best way to do that is to have a look at the process of socialisation taking place under Europeanisation. There was and until today still is a strong correlation between the level of identification with the EU and the degree of

acceptance and implementation of the EU conditionality, resp. norms and values, typical for the 1990s and early 2000s in the CEE. This correlation was described by Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2005: 8-9) as the 'logic of appropriateness', which they contrasted with the 'logic of consequences', a rather self-interested approach of actors to Europeanisation. Authors claimed that Europeanisation of CEE was primarily driven by internal incentives and strong belief that the CEE countries are members of the Western community and therefore, it is essential to accept its rules of the game. This claim was further supported by Grabbe (2006). The social, political and economic identification with the West (resp. the EU) and its implication for Europeanisation creates a bridge between Europeanisation and social constructivism, as – claimed below – identity and from that stemming identification with a certain community (in our context the EU) is socially constructed. Moreover, the connection is relevant for our case as it not only works for the downloading the EU's norms and values, but also significantly supports the case of uploading the national preferences (resp. interests) to the EU level as convincingly claimed by Kaminska (2014). Therefore, there is a strong correlation between being pro-European and uploading foreign policy preference to the EU level. We could demonstrate that, for example, on the case of Polish Eurosceptic Law and Justice (PiS)-led government during 2005-7 and contrast it with the more pro-European Civic Platform (PO)-led coalition government, which succeeded in shaping the EU agenda to much higher degree than the previous administration. To sum up, the social constructivism provides us with a very good tool, how to analyse the foreign policy identity and understand which role it played in the case of Czech uploading the EaP agenda to the EU level.

2.2.1. Social constructivism

Social constructivism emerged in 1980s and 1990s thanks to Alexander Wendt, but it was Nicholas Onuf, who brought it to the IR academic discourse from sociology and presented it in opposition to the two mainstream theoretical approaches, (neo)liberalism and (neo)constructivism (Behravesch 2011). Its basic postulate holds that the reality and knowledge should not be considered as something given, but rather socially constructed and therefore relative (Berger and Luckmann 2011: 9-11). This thesis has further implications for IR, as it also applies to the behaviour of actors in the international arena. According to Wendt, the interests and identities of actors are socially constructed as well, which is why he suggests analysing the social processes of constructing the national interests and identities, rather than taking them for granted. Constructivism believes in intersubjective shared meanings, subjective understanding and material objectives, which become facts based on

collective agreement. Therefore, social world is always constructed thanks to mutual interaction of an actor and the system, dependent on the mutual interplay.

In its essence, social constructivism in IR is naturally connected to the foreign policy analysis, as both constructivism and foreign policy analysis analyse perceptions and meanings, which are given to social phenomena, even if the former focuses on macrolevel of the analysis, and the latter on microlevel of psychological and cognitive aspects and the process of individual learning (Behravesch 2011). The concept of identity stands in the core of constructivism, which is shared by the role theory. The identity can be conceptualised as an image of who we are serving as a point of reference for political decisions and basic opinions on the world. Collective identity illustrates the sense of belonging to a particular group. This helps us to orientate in how we refer to ourselves and what we do. Identity should be considered as a fluid concept, which can be renegotiated and which might consequently change the foreign policy too (Aggestam 2004b: 82).

Identity is built upon a relationship between *Self* and the *Other*, which was given a lot of attention in the constructivist literature. Nevertheless, Neumann (1999: 35) defines identity in foreign policy analysis in terms of dialectical assumptions of identity emergence, meaning *Self* (integration), which is inseparably linked to the *Other*. Without the reference to the *Other*, there is no point in defining the impact of *Self* on the foreign policy. At the same time, the existence of the *Other* implies integration and exclusion at the same time. Therefore, the identity is a product of constant negotiating process between integration and exclusion, while permanently defining the *Self* and the *Other*. This is relevant for our case as the identity and identification with the EU had a significant impact on the outcome of Europeanisation of the Czech foreign policy agenda, as well as it is important to determine if the identity and self-perception had a mobilising role for the EaP initiation. Finally, the role theory might help us to clarify the *Self* and the *Other* in more detail and explain their place in the foreign policy analysis.

2.2.2. Role theory

The role theory is employed to clarify the social constructivism that sometimes struggles with being a fully-fledged IR theory, in contrast to (neo)liberalism or (neo)realism. Therefore, the role theory is here to fill the white spot in the explanatory power of social constructivism. Nevertheless, even the role theory is only one of the tools of foreign policy analysis, therefore only a combination of both approaches can give us sufficient causal relations between the variables. The concept of role is here to overcome the difficulties connected to the multilevel

social reality, including national, regional and supranational level of the EU foreign policy making.

The role stands in core of the theoretical approach and is further developed by Cameron Thies (2009: 9) or Elisabeth Aggestam (2004a), who focus on several functions of the role, which must be clarified at this point. Aggestam speaks about the ‘role expectation’ (roles that an external actor believes another actor should play), ‘role conceptions’ (roles a foreign policy actor believes it should play), public, ‘role performance’ (the roles which are played), in which all of them have a specific function. Most of the studies employ only one (resp. a few) of these functions, however, this research attempts to employ a full variety of concepts on the Czech case in EaP. Chapell (2010: 228) claims that particularly the role performance is powerful in shaping country’s behaviour in the international arena, especially when it comes to security and defence policy. On the other hand, the role expectation does not influence the actions to such a large extent (or have “*minor influence*”). At the same time, the role expectation might produce a conflict of roles or initiate a policy change.

Finally, it is essential to link the role theory with the social constructivism. Elisabeth Aggestam (2004a) develops a connection between both concepts. Aggestam puts the role together with identity in the core of the foreign policy analysis. The role is defined as a political and cultural approach to the foreign policy analysis. Here, the concept of role is understood as a roadmap for policymakers to act in the political environment. The role represents a bridge between an actor and the structure, as the role includes the active (actors and decision-making process) and passive (institutional context) part of the foreign policy analysis at both structural and domestic levels. Laura Chapell (2010: 227) also utilises the Aggestam’s finding, but adds the ‘strategic culture’ as another element of the foreign policy analysis to lay out the foundations of her article. Chapell claims that both foreign and security policies are “*socially constructed*”.

Yet, Chapell concentrates on the security and defence policy and illustrates the case on Poland and its approach to the EU’s ESDP.¹⁴ Plus, the case of strategic culture is not as relevant to our case, as the role theory, because it relates primarily to the security and military

¹⁴ Chapell (2010: 229) establishes the following roles of Poland in the international arena, especially in relation to security and defence policy: ‘American protectee’, ‘territorial defender’, ‘reliable ally’ using the power pro-actively, ‘Atlanticist’ or ‘sceptical multilateralist’. Particularly the last one is of crucial importance for the research. At the same time, Chapell (2010: 241) discloses two different approaches to the Polish self-perception shared by the former minister of foreign affairs Adam Rotfeld (‘facilitator’) and the former minister of national defence and later foreign minister Radoslaw Sikorski (‘leader’), but the main drive was to bring the EU’s Eastern policy to the table.

issues or national defence. Therefore, I decided to focus only on the role theory and exclude the concept of strategic culture completely, even if in case of Poland it has an explanatory value.

3. Literature review

In general, there are very few cases of Europeanisation of the new EU member states, in particular regarding their foreign policies. However, there are some exceptions from the rule, primarily case studies of CEE countries accepting the EU's know-how as 'policymakers' based on top-down perspective. For example, there is a study dealing with Europeanisation of the Romanian foreign policy by Liliana Popescu (2010), which briefly elaborates on issues of learning, elite socialisation and downloading the EU practices, later transformed into institutional aspects. In addition, academic paper of Sorin Stefan Denca (2009) compares effects of Europeanisation on the Hungarian, Romanian and Slovak foreign policies. The same as Popescu, Denca's study employs the 'institutionalist perspective', while looking at downloading of the EU's practices and compares rather different paths of the three countries in their institutional reforms of the foreign policy apparatus. Similarly, the case study written by Karolina Pomorska (2007) concentrates on issues of learning and elite socialisation, while downloading the EU's 'rules of game' going in detail of institutional changes at the Polish MFA. Finally, Laura Chappell (2010) writes about the role of Poland in ESDP and the way Polish initially sceptical approach converged with the EU under the influence of Europeanisation, explained by several factors from IR to domestic politics. Generally speaking, we can see a growing body of literature employing the concept of Europeanisation on the foreign policies of new EU member states. However, this misperception is exactly what my research tries to challenge, as the above-mentioned studies are mostly focusing on downloading of the EU practices and impact it made on the EU member states from CEE and not reflecting the mutual relationship between the EU member states and the EU institutions in a more complex manner.

3.1. Europeanisation – Czech experience

The Czech experience with Europeanisation reflects the general narrative of the country being primarily a policymaker, which is clearly obvious in the literature on the topic. With few exceptions mentioned below, the Czech debate on Europeanisation has been quite dynamic in number of studies, but overall rather one-sided and unambitious in content, especially when it comes to the Czech foreign policy. The cases of Czech uploading of its national interests virtually missing from the picture. The section below gives an insight and offers a

critique of the Czech debate on Europeanisation and determines a place for this research in it.

The phenomenon of Europeanisation entered the Czech academic discourse in political science and IR relatively recently.¹⁵ Europeanisation in the Czech discourse experienced a boom during the late accession period and after 2004, when number of works (e.g. Rovna, Kasakova, and Vaska 2007; Dancak, Fiala and Hlousek 2005) were published on Europeanisation of all three dimensions of public life in the Czech Republic: polity, politics and policies. Most of the research concentrated on Europeanisation of Czech politics (partly also polity) under the EU influence both before and after 2004.¹⁶ The studies included Europeanisation of the Czech political scene (Dürr, Marek and Saradin 2004) and interests (Fiala 2009), public space (Dvorakova 2010), law (Tomasek 2009), political parties (Havlik 2009a; Havlik 2009b; Hlousek and Pseja 2008; Cabada and Hlousek 2009) and other social organisations (Fiala, Hlousek and Krpec 2007; Slosarcik 2006) or particular policies. The research was in absolute majority of cases focused on downloading of the EU practices, without any further ambitions to investigate the opposite direction.

Among the policy areas that were approached by researchers, we can mention the international development aid (IDA) (Meiselova 2011), security and defence policy (Dobrovolna 2009), politics of human right (Zemanova 2008) or Czech policy towards Israeli-Palestinian relations and the influence of the Czech EU Presidency (Pelc 2012). Pelc is focusing his case study on the influence of the EU on the Czech foreign policy before, during and after the Czech Presidency of the European Council and concludes that the EU presidency and the EU in some respects shaped the Czech foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.¹⁷ However, the Europeanisation effect could not change the long-term foreign policy orientation of Czechia. Moreover, Pelc concluded that the impact of the EU presidency did not have any strong medium- or long-term implications for the national foreign policy preferences, as it was empirically proven that exactly the opposite happened to the Czech position on the Israeli-Palestinian relations. These results are further supported

¹⁵ Zemanova (2007 30) speaks about the fact that the Czech debate on Europeanisation lacks behind the world academia approximately by ten years. This is reflected in the limited number of sources and books published on the topic.

¹⁶ This trend corresponds with the world academia, in which according to Featherstone (in Zemanova 2007: 35) surpass the studies concentrating on politics, rather than polity or policy.

¹⁷ The same as Pelc, Dobrovolna (2009 17) employs the four categories (inertia, accommodation, absorption and transformation) of Börzel and Risse (2003 70) describing the level of adjustment of national polity, politics and policies under the EU influence, using the purely top-down perspective of Europeanisation.

by the academic discourse of Börzel, Risse or Radaelli who point to the fact that Europeanisation pushes the EU member states to adjust their polity, politics and policies only to a certain extent without substantial changes of their characters.

This notion is shared by Meiselova and her research on the Czech IDA. Meiselova employs the bottom-up-down principle while looking at the Czech IDA and concludes that both processes of downloading and uploading of the foreign policy preferences took place in the Czech case and EU regarding the IDA. It is true that Czechia accepted much of the EU's *acquis* in this area, but the Czech Republic was also active in shaping the EU's IDA. This supports the argument of Joanna Kaminska (2014) that the more Europeanised the member state is, the more likely it is to influence the EU agenda. Among the new EU member states, the Czech Republic was one of the most active (according to some Czech representatives in the EU institutions the most active, Meiselova 2011: 158), when it came to influencing the EU development aid according to the Czech preferences. Finally, Meiselova opines that Czechia intensified its influence during its EU Presidency, when the effect of Europeanisation was the strongest. Therefore, author (2011: 208) concludes that we can speak about: “*explicit uploading of the Czech preferences, methods and instruments in the area of IDA (...), in order to influence the discourse of EU's IDA, which reflects the Czech orientation.*” To sum up, the concept of Europeanisation proved useful for both analysing cases of both downloading and uploading of the Czech national preferences to the EU level. Therefore, it might serve a good analysing tool for the Czech uploading of its foreign policy preferences to the EU level. At the same time, this subchapter clearly showed how unambitious has been the Czech debate on Europeanisation (with a few exceptions) completely excluding the bottom-up direction of Europeanisation.

3.2. Polish uploading – case of Eastern Partnership

Now, the thesis is going to deal with Polish experience with Europeanisation, as it serves as a point of reference. Also, the Polish case attracted the most attention of the international scholarship and therefore, it is essential to take a stance on it. In contrast to the Czech experience, the Polish case has been very much different and differently reflected in both Polish and international literature on Europeanisation. As mentioned above, Poland is by far the largest (GDP and population, active and most ambitious CEE state. Poland is also one of the CEE states that from the first moment wanted to shape EU's foreign policy and use the EU's capacities, in order to promote its ambitious national interests to the EU level (Kaminska 2010). In this sense, Poland self-constructed a role of the ‘force for good’ and

active regional leader that is deeply embedded in the Polish mindset and traditional messianism present in the Polish foreign policy discourse (Marcinkowska 2016, 29).¹⁸ Chappell (2010) describes this fact through the “*strategic culture*” of the Polish activism dating back to history and affecting both foreign, but even more security and defence policy. Therefore, most attention of scholars concentrates on the Polish influence on the EU foreign policy making. Among the relevant scholarship, I would like to point out Joanna Kaminska, Laura Chappell, Karolina Pomorska and Nathaniel Copsey as the most respected figures in the field.

First, Joanna Kaminska (2007) focuses her research on uploading of the Polish national interests to the EU level using the example of EU’s eastern policy towards Belarus and Ukraine. However, her original study dates to 2005/6 early EU membership period of Poland and this way precedes the most important case of Europeanisation of the new EU member states, Eastern Partnership. In her study, Kaminska (2007: 15) completely excludes the regional dimension of negotiation process claiming:

“Multilateral cooperation seems to be the weakest point for Polish representative (...). (...) forums as the Visegrad Group fail to act as effective pressure groups.”

In general, Kaminska draws most attention to the bottom-up process and presents the projection of the Polish foreign policy interests to the EU level as a one-way process neglecting the interplay between the EU institutions and the Polish national representation, focusing on the “*Polish vision of power policy*” (Kaminska 2007: 7). Therefore, her research produced only a one-sided picture of the EU foreign policy making presented as a success for the Polish diplomacy. However, this MA thesis stands for the bottom-up-down perspective on Europeanisation reflecting the complex relations between the EU and domestic level, seen as a two-way street to the EU foreign policy-making.

In her later study from 2010, Kaminska goes in more detail of the bottom-up-down approach from the Polish perspective and again uses the example of the EU’s eastern policy as the case study. While Kaminska criticises the ‘Law and Justice’ government for its deadlock over the veto of Cooperation and Partnership Agreement with Russia in 2005 and complete incompetence in the EU politics, she also elaborates on the importance of

¹⁸ The current project of Three Seas Initiative (also Intermarium or ABC project) can serve as a case in point of the Polish leadership in CEE (Reuters 2017). Even if the initiative might be taken as a platform for promotion of infrastructure and cooperation, the current Polish leadership gives it a (geo)political connotations. Therefore, the idea directly correlates with the Polish ambition to lead.

domestic capacities and bureaucratic capabilities for the EU foreign policy making and uploading the national priorities to the EU level. Kaminska (2010: 70) notes that politicisation, problems with coordination and lack of professional members of staff in Polish diplomacy hindered effective Polish involvement in the EU foreign policy making. Finally, Kaminska (2010: 80) recognises the competition over the Eastern Partnership proposal among the Central European countries:

“Even the usual competition between Poles and Czechs on the leadership in Eastern issues was by now constructive and joint efforts were made in order to give life to the Eastern Partnership, European officials highlighted that “getting Swedes was very clever as the more experienced country helped to find the way in the Brussels corridors.”

Second, Copsey and Pomorska’s (2014) article ‘*The Influence of Newer Member States in the European Union: The Case of Poland and the Eastern Partnership*’ gives a very interesting account of uploading of the Polish national preferences to the EU level in case of EaP.¹⁹ This article attempts to reconstruct the EaP creation, however, several deeply flawed ideas can be identified. Firstly, it is interesting to observe that authors (2014: 423 and 441) decided to employ a purely Polish vision of the EaP as the “*great challenge for the Polish diplomacy*”, which turned out to be the “*probably the greatest achievement of Polish diplomacy within the EU during its first five years of membership*”. This view is not only simplistic, as there were also other actors involved in the negotiation process (e.g. Sweden, V4 countries, Baltic states or Romania and Bulgaria), but also merely Poland-centric. In my research, I am going to argue that the EaP would not be possible without the V4, which did not play the leading but rather an important supportive role, when it fully enshrined the Polish-Swedish proposal.²⁰ As Dangerfield (2009: 1742-3) puts it:

“This supporting role of the VG should not be underestimated however, as it has involved a particularly important contribution through the so-called ‘V4+’ facility. The VG has been a forum for policy consultation and alliance-building with other member states and subregional groupings with specific interests in Eastern Europe, particularly over the last couple of years as ENP reform gathered momentum and the EaP proposal came to fruition.”

¹⁹ The article is based on their previous study (2010) dedicated to the power assessment of Poland in the EU and its ability to promote Polish interests at the EU level, which was generally assumed as “*very limited*” (321). However, the outcomes were heavily influenced by the then situation in the EU and its member states (France and Germany) and the first ‘Law and Justice’ government 2005-7.

²⁰ Even if the EaP proposal was presented to the GAERC as the Polish-Swedish proposal.

Secondly, some authors (Albrycht 2010) add that what Poland and Sweden presented as their own proposal was in fact only a more detailed version of the original Czech policy draft. As the Czech decision-makers were deeply involved in the agenda both during the Czech V4 presidency in 2007-8 and the Czech Presidency of the EU Council that preceded the Swedish one during the first half of 2009.²¹ Therefore, it is clearly misleading to present the launch of EaP during the Czech EU Presidency as a mere coincidence (Copsey and Pomorska 2014: 482):

“Following the 2008 joint proposal by Poland and Sweden to the European Council for the creation of the so-called Eastern Partnership, the European Council finally requested a detailed proposal from the Commission, which was originally scheduled to be unveiled during the Czech Presidency of the European Union during the first half of 2009.”

The policy initiative was since the beginning closely coordinated at the V4 level and not only the Czech Republic, but also Lithuania and other states felt sidelined mainly due to Polish unilateral approach to EaP,²² which clashed with the Czech multilateral tradition in IR. The Polish ownership of the EaP and the Polish ambition to lead (Marcinkowska 2016: 32) deeply embedded in the Polish mindset obviously left some bitterness among the Czech public officials and diplomats involved in the EaP negotiations.²³

Last but not least, regarding the V4 cooperation, Copsey and Pomorska are rather sceptical and dismissive towards the added value of the regional element in the EU foreign policy making, which constitutes another important difference from my research. Authors (2014: 425) note: *“discord between the partners prevented the initiative being ‘branded’ as a Visegrád initiative.”* The fact is based on an interview with a representative from the European Commission DG External Relations. However, the EU Commission was not present during the initial phase of the EaP negotiations or the V4+ summits of EU member states devoted to the policy proposal. Therefore, the work done by Visegrad Group should not be just dismissed this way. Finally, it is interesting to observe, what Copsey and Pomorska (2014: 438) write at the end of their study:

²¹ During the Czech V4 Presidency 2007-8, the Czech MFA (2008) circulated their non-paper.

²² Chappell (2010, 241) describes Poland as *“sceptical multilateralist”* and adds the words of former Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Radek Sikorski: *“after 20 years of successful system transformation and integration with the Western structures, Poland takes its deserved place among the leading players of the European league.”*

²³ One Czech diplomat even claimed that *“the Poles had simply stolen the Czech idea”*. Personal consultations of the author with a Czech decision-maker from the Czech MFA.

“Some officials from the Commission thought Poland had ‘not existed in Brussels with regard to the Eastern Partnership’ after it had been ‘rubber-stamped’ by the European Council in June 2008. They had the impression that Warsaw was celebrating this success without actively engaging in shaping the future of the policy in detail—and thus were it not for the war in Georgia, the initiative would have trailed off into nothing, as is often the case with these kinds of new ideas for policies.”

Based on that, it seems that the unilateral approach of Poland to the EaP negotiations threatened the very existence of the policy, which was of key importance for most of the EU member states from CEE, if the Russo-Georgian War of August 2008 did not happen. Retrospectively, this looks like a hazardous game of the Polish diplomacy unilaterally choosing to cooperate only with Sweden deliberately cutting of regional allies deeply interested in the policy proposal, in order to show its own regional and European leadership and gain recognition in the EU’s foreign policy making.

4. Research methods

4.1. Research framework

As outlined in the introduction, the research methods section is going to elaborate primarily on the two main tools – CDA and elite interviews. While the former serves as a tool to analyse the selected primary sources related to the foreign policy from the national (Czech), regional (V4) and subnational (EU) levels and describe the identity-related issues and Czech self-perception, resp. self/other images. The latter should serve as a source of new data contributing to the state of the art on the EU-Ukraine relations from the Czech perspective, focused on the case of Eastern Partnership. Also, the elite interviews help us to reconstruct the EU foreign policy making process and determine the Czech role in the EaP initiation. Finally, the interviews are also useful as they give an individual account of the Czech identity. Last but not least, it should be explained why I decided to employ critical discourse analysis in combination with the elite interviews. First, it is a common practice in the academic literature to use the two research methods together (e.g. Vit Borcany 2015). Second, the CDA of texts together with elite interviews provide a suitable combination of research methods to investigate and fully answer the selected research questions. In this respect, their function to a certain degree even overlaps, especially when it comes to the identity issues and self-determination of the Czech elites.

However, it is first essential to define the format of the study and methodological approaches to the data collection and analysis. The research represents a single-case study employing the

qualitative-interpretivist approach to data, as it works with a specific case dealing with a particular perception of reality represented by the semi-structured elite interviews. Focusing on the Czech perspective of the EU foreign policy making deliberately limits the generalisation of research. Moreover, the interpretivist approach was chosen based on the available data, which constitute individual interpretation of the nature of EU foreign policy making given by the selected Czech elites. Also, the number of Czech elites cannot be taken as a fully representative sample, as their choice was based on accessibility of the figures. The most relevant insiders of the process are / were usually based in Brussels and it is difficult to access them, especially given the restricted time and resources. Stemming from that, it is essential to acknowledge that the research can be generalised only to a certain extent, as it shows a specific point of view given by the obtained data. Nevertheless, this study can still reflect the reality of the EU foreign policy making from the Czech perspective and illustrate the complexity of EaP negotiation process.

At the same time, it is important to recognise that I strived for maximum objectivity and used various approaches to reach as much of reliability and validity of data as possible. This problem was tackled by employment of the so-called 'triangulation' method, in order to constantly verify the data from different perspectives. This aims at identifying potential misunderstandings and misinterpretations of information.²⁴ In addition, the primary data was compared with the existing state of the art to find out if the newly gained data fits in the existing picture, or if it brings a completely different outcome. In case of the latter, the data was again checked to avoid misinterpretations. At the same time, the verification process was in place also during the process of conducting semi-structured elite interviews, which sometimes struggle with problems of subjectivity, misinterpretation of questions or the answers. Therefore, the initial questions were re-examined after the first interview and adjusted to avoid the academic bias.

Coming back to the problem of case study, it was crucial to precisely define the research problem in place and time, including the research topic and exclude the other phenomena that surrounded the process of Eastern Partnership initiation during 2008-9 and later period. The time frame of 2009-13 was deliberately chosen based on the EaP and the Czech involvement in it, which ends by the second V4 presidency in 2011-12 and the consequent fall of the ODS-led government of Petr Necas before the Vilnius Summit of EaP. In

²⁴ This approach is suggested also by Wodak and Meyer (2009: 31) and the Discourse-Historical Approach to CDA, which is going to be applied throughout the analysis.

association with the above, I decided that outcome of the study, even if only to a limited degree, is going to be applied to the new EU member states of small and medium size and their strategy to promote their national preferences to the EU level. Finally, it must be recognised that this is a theory-driven empirical study with a strong theoretical framework of Europeanisation combined with social constructivism and the role theory laying out the theoretical foundation of the research, which is typical for CDA.

4.2. Data collection and analysis

4.2.1. Critical discourse analysis

The CDA – as elaborated by Ruth Wodak (1989, 1997), Wodak and Chilton (2005) in their numerous publications – is going to serve as the major analysing tool of the selected foreign policy documents and semi-structured elite interviews. The aim of the CDA, particularly regarding the elite interviews, is to recognise the individual identity issues and power relations behind the foreign policy-making process and determine, if their identity served as a mobilising strategy for the policy work on the EaP.²⁵ For this reason, I decided to employ two set of codes (identity categories) – abstract image of the ‘East’ (referring primarily to Russia, but also Ukraine) and the ‘West’, which should capture the EU (but also USA as part of the West), in order to find out what roles these categories had in the foreign policy making of the Czech elites. The CDA should help to identify the root causes of the policy making and the role of identity in the Czech policy discourse on EaP. Moreover, the CDA is here to trace not only the identity issues, but also the power relations hidden behind the political discourse on EaP.

Ruth Wodak defines the CDA as:

“Critical Discourse Analysis perceives both written and spoken ‘discourse’ as a form of social practice (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; Wodak, 1995, 1996; Titscher et al., 1998). It assumes a dialectical relationship between particular discursive events and the situations, institutions and social structures in which they are embedded: on the one hand, the situational, institutional and social contexts shape and affect discourses; on the other hand, discourses influence social and political reality. In other words, discourse constitutes social practice and is at the same time constituted by it.”²⁶

²⁵ Jackie Abell and Greg Myers (in Krzyzanowski and Wodak 2008: 145-159) give very good instructions, how to analyse the research interviews, which is followed by this thesis.

²⁶ This version was further expanded by Wodak and Fairclough in 1997 (258).

Wodak (1999: 157) further claims that the social actors constitute knowledge, situations, social roles as well as identities and interpersonal relations using the discourse between various interacting social groups. It is essential to add that the discourse acts are also socially constructed in several ways. Wodak and Meyer (2009: 18) hold that. “*There is no guiding theoretical viewpoint that is used consistently within the CDA, nor do the CDA protagonists proceed with consistently from the area of theory to the field of discourse and back to theory.*” Wodak and Meyer (2009: 25-27) further claim that there are several means of how can the CDA be operationalised. Among them, I chose to follow the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) as the most convenient, as it focuses on politics and political discourse as well as historical issues related to the research problem. DHA pragmatically operates in four-level analysis: 1) determination of content of the topic of a specific discourse, 2) investigation of discursive strategies, 3) specification of linguistic means and 4) examination of context-dependent linguistic realizations of the analysed discourse.

Among the relevant primary documents for CDA, I identified: foreign policy concepts, coalition agreements, election programmes of governmental parties, programme of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU and other programme documents, programmes of Czech V4 presidencies or other relevant foreign policy documents and speeches of politicians involved in the Czech foreign policy towards Ukraine and the EaP. From the second (regional) level of research, it is essential to add other presidency programmes (not only Czech), V4 declarations and statements, plus other relevant documents of common interest produced between 2009 and 2013. Finally, the subnational (EU) section includes some of the statements and resolutions of European Council, European Commission and the European Parliament that are related to the EaP and played a role in the foreign policy negotiations in the EU institutions. However, it is difficult to access the European Commission and European Council as their meetings are not publicly accessible and therefore, there is a lack of information about the negotiation process, which led me to rely on previous studies on the topic (Copsey and Pomorska 2014, 2010; Juncos and Pomorska 2011; Kaminska 2014, 2010) and interviews conducted with Czech elites working in the European Council or European Parliament.

In practical terms, the CDA was applied to the ten most relevant foreign policy documents selected from the three levels of EU foreign policy making analysis and listed below in Appendix 2. Among the questions asked while conducting the research there were:

- 1) What is the perception of the 'East' in the Czech, Visegrad and EU foreign policy documents concerning Eastern Partnership?
- 2) What is the perception of the 'West' in the Czech, Visegrad and EU foreign policy documents concerning Eastern Partnership?
- 3) Is there a different perception of 'Russia' and 'Ukraine' in the foreign policy documents?
- 4) Is there a different perception of 'EU' and 'USA' in the foreign policy documents?
- 5) How do the Czechs view themselves in the regional (V4), supranational (EU) and world dimensions?

The CDA was not only looking for concrete answers to these questions, which are later selectively cited through the three empirical chapters of the thesis (especially in 5.2.2), but also looking at the frequency with which the two sets of codes: abstract image of the 'East' and abstract image of the 'West', are present in the foreign policy documents, in order to find out if the Czech identity served as a mobilising factor for the policy work on Eastern Partnership. Concurrently, the analysis aimed to answer the question, if there was a direct correlation between the Czech identity and the EaP. Looking at the results (Appendix 3), it is obvious that the Czech discourse was strongly Europeanised through the EU presidency, which was only weakly complemented by the Visegrad level. At the same time, it is possible to observe a clear distinction between EU and USA on the one hand, and Russia and Ukraine on the other. Interestingly, Russia was mentioned much more often (by one third) than Ukraine, which illustrates the 'Russia-first' approach to the region. Russia was particularly associated with trade, energy, partnership, but also security. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that the discourse was either completely negative, or positive. For that reason, it would be problematic to claim that the Czech perception of Russia and the identity factor strongly served as a mobilising factor for policy work on Eastern Partnership. In positive terms, Russia was labelled as: 'important partner', 'closest neighbour', 'strategic partner', 'energy supplier' or 'partner in justice'. Negatively, Russia was called especially after the war with Georgia, when 'question marks' were raised over future cooperation with Russia and 'EU unity' and 'speaking with one voice' was considered as important in relations to Russia. Nevertheless, the Czech Deputy PM Vondra called engagement with Russia a '*necessity*' (Government of the Czech Republic 2008b).

4.2.2. Elite interviews

In addition to the CDA of relevant foreign policy documents, I decided to conduct semi-structured elite interviews to bring new information and increase the novelty and added value of the research. The elite interviews were conducted to understand the way of thinking of the Czech foreign policy elites and their patterns of behaviour. Therefore, the elite interviews are not considered a source of primary data as such as they represent only a particular perspective of the EU foreign policy making from the particular Czech viewpoint. Their added value therefore lies in supporting the main arguments of the work with empirical data and providing new information to the existing state of the art. From my perspective, the potential gains from the elite interviews outweighed the risks that are necessarily present during the process of conducting interviews. Among them, I identified the academic and value bias, subjective interpretation of data, selective memory and retrospective point of view of the past events, which are often influenced by the current situation, or ethics concerns. Nevertheless, the semi-structured form of the interview giving sufficient flexibility to the researcher was identified as the best possible means of gaining new data necessary for analysis of the research problem. The so-called ‘snowball effect’ among the Czech elites worked also very well and the interviewees often gave new contacts with insight in the research problem.

Between July 2016 and July 2017, I conducted ten qualitative in-depth interviews with a wide variety of Czech foreign policy elites involved in forming the Czech and European foreign policy during 2009 and 2013, ranging from former policymakers, diplomats and analysts to the Czech and EU public servants. These persons were (some still are) based in Prague, Kyiv and Brussels to cover all three levels of the EU foreign policy making equally. Also, some of the interviewees still held the same offices as during 2009 and 2013, or only changed posts within the same institution (e.g. Czech MFA). Therefore, I decided not to publish the transcripts of interviews and strictly stick to the principle of confidentiality, which is to protect them from any political, economic or security consequences, which they could potentially face after publishing their names or testimonies. Based on that, the interviewees’ names are coded (as X1 – X10) and only with general descriptions listed in the Appendix 1. Their identity is disclosed solely to me, as we agreed with majority of the participants of the elite interviews. Most of the interviews was conducted in public spaces, but in some cases I was invited to the official premises of the institutions, which these people represent, but this did not have any implications for the way these interviews were realised. Due to the fact that

all interviewees were of Czech nationality, I decided to conduct the interviews in Czech language and only later transcribe relevant parts in English, where necessary.²⁷ Finally, most of the interviews were conducted in person after previous arrangements, but in several cases I conducted the in-depth interviews via Skype or mobile phone. However, this fact did not affect the process of conducting and most of the interviews were very open, sincere and to the point.

In case of the EU, the interviews were conducted with a Czech national diplomat working at the Czech Permanent Representation to the EU, as well as with a Czech member of the European Parliament involved in foreign affairs. The European Commission is missing from the picture, as it was too difficult to reach to the relevant Czech representatives, or the Czech Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Stefan Fule (who was nevertheless contacted). Moreover, a research trip to Kyiv (Ukraine) was realised in August 2016 and some informal consultations were realised in Krakow and Warsaw during 2016/2017 with former diplomats and decision-makers together with academicians well-familiar with Poland's involvement in the eastern dimension of the EU's external relations to cover the regional element of the EU foreign policy making based on the Visegrad level.

Among the several topics, I selected: 1) character of the EU foreign policy, 2) role of the EU member states in the EU foreign policy and the level of cooperation, 3) Eastern Partnership as a tool of EU foreign policy, 4) the Czech contribution to the EU foreign policy (resp. the Eastern Partnership), 5) the role of Poland and Sweden in the Eastern Partnership, 6) V4 as a platform for negotiations and coalition-building. At the same time, additional questions were asked to the public officials and diplomats directly involved in the negotiation of EaP and having extensive knowledge of the subject.

Last but not least, it is of crucial importance to employ the right approach to the data and interpret the newly gained information in a correct way. For that reason, I decided to implement the topic-oriented analysis, as presented by Robert Weiss going along the lines of the interpretivist approach on the data from the elite interviews. Weiss (1995) suggests examining the data in four distinct phases: coding, classification of data, partial linking and complete linking. First, it is essential to give the data specific codes and link them to key concepts used in the research. It is common to change and adjust the codes during the

²⁷ Therefore, all translations were done solely by me and I bear full responsibility for potential inaccuracy of the transcript translations.

process of analysis, as it happened in my case. Then, it is necessary to classify the data and organise it in a logic manner to combine the thematical parts of the interviews. In the third step, Weiss advises to partially link the thematical blocks together and analyse the data, which is followed by the complete linking of the chunks of texts and production of a coherent narrative of events. In the final phase, when the data comes together, we get the framework including all elements of the work reflected in the conclusion. Nevertheless, this analytical approach might be only one-sided and requires tracing the analytical process back and constant verification of the implemented processes, but also this kind of analysis is very time-consuming and energy-demanding to obtain the results.

5. National (Czech) level

At this point, the MA thesis moves into its second half providing empirical evidence of the above-described phenomena employed on the three levels of analysis. First, the research goes into the national level elaborating on the importance of the domestic context for the EU foreign policy making, including aggregation of national interests, identity issues or the Czech approach to the Eastern Partnership. The second part of the empirical section is dedicated to the regional element in the Eastern Partnership negotiations, including the role of Visegrad Group and other relevant actors in the V4+ format. In general, the second level of analysis investigates the regional dynamics of the EU foreign policy making embodied in the Visegrad cooperation. Finally, the supranational level provides an empirical evidence of the Czech involvement in the EU foreign policy making of EaP and it specifically analyses the Czech EU Presidency in the first half of 2009, but in fact it goes far beyond that. To sum up, the three empirical chapters are designed to reconstruct the foreign policy making process of EaP and illustrate the fact that for successful initiation of foreign policy at the EU level, it is – specifically for small and medium new EU member states – necessary to go from national to regional and supranational levels, in order to mobilise the support for the foreign policy proposal. This is the key argument that goes through the three chapters dedicated to the three mutually interconnected levels of analysis.

5.1. Domestic sources of Czech foreign policy in the EU

The domestic sources of Czech EU policy constitute the bottom level of the EU foreign policy making. It is essential to start from the national interests that are always aggregated on the domestic level of society and its political system, including various political players and political parties important for articulation of the foreign policy preferences, which are socially constructed the same as identity and self-perception. Nevertheless, they play a pivotal

role in further negotiations at the regional and supranational levels. Therefore, the national level is of crucial importance for getting to know which role Czechia played in the EaP negotiations and how the identity and self-perceptions shaped this process. My key argument is that the Czech national interest in EaP was first aggregated at the governmental level, but the Czech coalition governments of PM Mirek Topolánek struggled with a complicated identity stance and weak parliamentary majority, which finally led to its demise in March 2009. Despite these political turbulences, the bureaucratic and diplomatic apparatus initiated the first EaP proposal that stirred the discussion at the Visegrad level, among the closest allies during the Czech V4 presidency, which was skilfully used for this purpose before the Czech EU Presidency. This was emphasized by X2 that the origins of the idea of the Eastern Partnership can be traced back to the Czech MFA and the Polish invention of the EaP should be taken as a “*pure fairy tale*” (X8). We could even call that a ‘smart power’ strategy, as defined by Nye (2004). In the end, this – however – meant that Czechia lost its high-level visibility and strong political power and was overshadowed by Polish and Swedish foreign ministers.

Dan Marek and Michael Braun (2011) go in detail about domestic sources of the EU foreign policy in Czechia as well as identity issues reflected in the Czech politics. First, it is essential to explore the domestic discourse and public approval of EU’s CFSP. Interestingly, the Czech approval rating of CFSP is highly above the average, in 2008 it was 85 out of 100, in contrast to the EU27 average of 76 percent. However, this outstanding figure does not correspond with the more Eurosceptic opinion of the Czech public about the EU, which was since 2004 most of the time below the EU as well as CEE average (Marek and Braun 2011: 35). The reason for that was the Czech Eurosceptic political representation symbolised by the leader of ODS, former Czech PM (and later president) Vaclav Klaus, who gradually became an ideological enemy of the European project voicing his first criticism already in mid-1990s and who largely shaped the Czech discourse on the EU accompanied by the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSCM), which did not support the EU accession in the 2003 referendum. This was not the case in any other CEE country (Marek and Braun 2011: 17). At the same time, Marek and Braun elaborate on the Czech identity, specific national features and self-perception, which they describe as both positive and negative, but with a strong tendency to self-marginalisation and underestimating.²⁸ This was supported by the non-standard elite interviews (e.g. X9), which confirmed that the Czech

²⁸ Authors use the example of “*Good Soldier Schweik*”, literary figure invented by Jaroslav Hasek as a caricature of the Czech nation in the Austrian-Hungarian times.

diplomacy has in general a problem with self-presentation and self-promotion. Authors also emphasize the geographical location in the centre of Europe as something influential in the Czech mindset. In history, the strategic location of Czechoslovakia (resp. the Czech Republic) led to self-perception of the country as a bridge between the East and West, lying in between the two and being able to communicate with both to its own benefit (Kuras 1996: 9 in Marek and Braun 2011). Finally, especially the 20th century had a strong formative effect on the national consciousness and contributed to the “*littleness*” of the Czech nation and self-marginalisation due to events of 1938/1939 or 1968, which illustrated the powerlessness of Czechoslovaks in contrast to their bigger neighbours. In the end, these formative moments of the Czech identity and self-perceptions had strong impact on the Czech EU policy, including the EU’s eastern policy, where two contradictory ways of thinking about foreign policy could be detected. First of them being closer to the humanistic idea of former Czech president Vaclav Havel oriented on human rights, multilateral cooperation and strongly pro-European and federalist tendency. While the second was characteristic by business-oriented, pragmatic and often unilateralist approach of the former Czech PM and later president Vaclav Klaus, dismissive towards the V4 cooperation. From this point, we can derive two categories of roles played by Czechia in the international affairs – ‘*instrumental multilateralist*’ and ‘*sceptical multilateralist*’.

5.1.1. Czech political parties and the EU

These domestic sources of Czech foreign and EU policy are obviously translated into politics and system of Czech political parties. Among the two more Eurosceptic Czech political parties, far-left KSCM and right-wing conservative ODS, were already shortly introduced, however, it is necessary to analyse the rest of the Czech political scene as well, using their party manifestos and election programmes during the 2009 and 2013 period. Except for KSCM and ODS, in the respective period there were five more political parties present in the lower chamber of Czech parliament: Czech Social Democratic Party (CSSD) on the left, and Christian and Democratic Party – Czechoslovak People’s Party (KDU-CSL) in the centre and the Green Party (SZ) as the centre-right. The year of 2010 brought changes to the Czech party politics and led to disappearance of KDU-CSL and SZ from the Czech parliament. On the other hand, two new pro-European political parties Tradition, Responsibility and Prosperity (TOP) 09 and Public Affairs (VV) entered the Czech

parliament.²⁹ In short, Marek and Braun characterise the Czech political parties in this period as:

CSSD	Pro-EU without reservations / preference for a federal EU
ODS	Pro-EU with reservations / preference for intergovernmentalism
KSCM	Reservedly anti-EU
KDU-CSL	Pro-EU without reservations / preference for a federal EU
SZ	Pro-EU without reservations / preference for a federal EU
TOP 09	Pro-EU without reservations / preference for a federal EU
VV / LIDEM	Pro-EU without reservations / preference for a federal EU

5.2. Czech political parties and the Eastern Partnership

Vit Borcany (2015) reconstructs the Czech identity issues and policy preferences of the Czech government during 2007 and 2009 on the way to EaP. He claims that the first declaration of Eastern Europe as a Czech foreign policy priority dates to August 2006,³⁰ when the then foreign minister Alexander Vondra in first PM Mirek Topolánek's government pronounced Eastern and Southern Europe as the foreign policy preference of the Czech government (Czech MFA 2006).³¹ This stands in a stark contrast to the Polish approach to Eastern Europe traditionally having significant political, economic and above all security importance for independence of Poland following the line of argument of the Polish emigration in France during the communist era.³² The second Topolánek's government was composed of ODS, KDU-CSL and SZ forming a right-leaning executive with weak parliamentary majority and complicated foreign policy stance. This stemmed partially from the different positions on the EU and USA, which was preferred by ODS

²⁹ In 2012, the VV party divided and a new political party LIDEM was created, which stayed in the government and continued to represent the mainstream pro-European vector.

³⁰ Before, Eastern Europe or Ukraine were not emphasized as priorities for the Czech foreign policy.

³¹ Later, Topolánek (2007) spoke about necessity of multilateral approach both region and policy coordination at the V4 level.

³² This comes from the collective of Polish intellectuals based in Paris issuing the literary-political magazine 'Kultura' and headed by Jerzy Giedroyc arguing in favour of reconciliation and independence of Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus, supporting the independence of Poland. (Kultura Paryska 2017).

(Atlanticist orientation) and moderately opposed by the Greens (Europeanist orientation).³³ On the top of that, Vaclav Klaus, well-known pragmatic-Euro-sceptic, held the office of the Czech president between 2003 and 2013. Therefore, the Czech government 2007-9 was to a large degree paralysed. Finally, it is important to note that between 2006 and 2011 the Czech foreign policy lacked a foreign policy conception.³⁴

However, it is important to say that the EaP and a like-minded position on Russia was to a large degree shared by all three governmental parties.³⁵ That is why the state officials from the Czech MFA (among them mainly Martin Povejsil, Daniel Kostoval or Tomas Pojar) got a free hand in reacting to the French initiative of Union for Mediterranean (UfM) and elaborating the initial EaP proposal, respectively the non-paper (Czech MFA 2008) aimed at stirring the discussion over the new EU's eastern policy at the COEST Capitals meeting in April 2008. The non-paper was recognised by both the European Commission and EU member states and informally got better response than similar Polish initiative named 'Elements for a stronger EU policy towards the Eastern neighbours'. At a follow-up meeting, Sweden backed the Czech initiative and recognised the Czech coordinating and mediating skills in contrast to Polish, which clearly pushed for its own national interests.³⁶ Apparently, there was a competition for the policy between Poland and the Czech Republic, in which Czechs had institutionally better situation, but Poles stronger motivation and goal-driven attitude. Nevertheless, the Czech Visegrad Presidency in 2007-8 served as an ideal opportunity for the policy consultations with the V4 partners and other interested players from the Baltic states, Sweden, Romania, Bulgaria or Ukraine and Moldova (Visegrad Group 2008b).

Czech governments 2007 – 2013

September 2006 – January 2007

Mirek Topolánek (ODS)

January 2007 – May 2009

Mirek Topolánek (ODS, KDU-ČSL, SZ)

³³ Interestingly, the smallest SZ party held the post of foreign minister being represented by Karel Schwarzenberg (later chairman of TOP 09) with strong links with the US, in contrast to the party he represented.

³⁴ Instead of the Conception, the research follows election programmes of the political parties and their coalition agreement (resp. the programme document) together with the priorities of the Czech V4 presidency and EU Council as major foreign policy documents before 2011.

³⁵ However, there was a clear dividing line between the Left and Right on the issues of Russia and Eastern Europe, which was best visible on the case of US Radar and 2008 Russo-Georgian War. In general, we can claim that the eastern policy did not get that much attention even from the left-wing parties, but their activities could be interpreted as undermining the official Czech positions.

³⁶ Report from the COEST Capitals meeting held on April 14, 2008. Not public.

May 2009 – July 2010	Jan Fischer (caretaker – independent)
July 2010 – July 2013	Petr Necas (ODS, TOP 09, VV – LIDEM)
July 2013 – January 2014	Jiri Rusnok (caretaker – independent)

5.2.1. Preparations for the Czech presidency of the EU

The party politics, especially in case of ODS, was also reflected in the Czech EU presidency programme called “*Europe without barriers*”, which was dominated by economically liberal thinking and Atlanticism coming from the core values of ODS. This stemmed from the fact that ODS was responsible for most of the EU presidency agenda as its key figure Alexander Vondra, first deputy PM, oversaw the EU affairs and finally assumed the political responsibility for the Prague Summit of EaP in May 2009. In many aspects, Vondra took over some competences belonging to the foreign minister Schwarzenberg, which caused tensions with the Greens (SZ). Concurrently, Borcany (2015: 62) writes that the EaP agenda was generally not much debated at the governmental level, except for the ministers involved in foreign policy issues, despite being the officially declared priority.

The coalition treaty of ODS, KDU-CSL and SZ held that Czechia aimed to become an active foreign policy player and pursue its long-term interests, in order to make the country more comprehensible and visible in the world (Government of the Czech Republic 2007a). The coalition treaty also emphasized economic liberalism and transatlantic relations (ODS) as well as importance of the ENP, human rights and democratisation of Eastern Europe.³⁷ In October 2007, the office of First Deputy PM (Government of the Czech Republic 2008a)³⁸ released the original programme for the Czech presidency claiming that the Government of the Czech Republic (2007b) should have had the ambition to shape the EU policies, or as the case may be bring its own initiatives “*leaving its own imprint*” behind the presidency. In the document, the Czech government presented its priorities, explicitly stating the area of Eastern Dimension of ENP and stronger position of EU in the world, including adequate financial resources. At the same time, this ambition should have resulted from domestic debate and realistically reflect the country’s size and possibilities in the EU, as well as interests of other parties, namely France and Sweden as the countries of Trio EU Presidency. Also, we can find several direct and indirect references to Russia as the power in the East. This clearly points to the multilateral approach to pursuing the Czech national priorities in

³⁷ In addition, the programme document of the government established the office of First Deputy PM, which was responsible for the EU agenda and realisation of the Czech presidency of the EU.

³⁸ In 2008, the priorities were reviewed and streamlined after the Russo-Georgian August War.

cooperation with other interested players and awareness of the its own limited capacities. This section is directly related to the second sub question regarding the Czech identity and self-perception, because from majority of the interviews, it was obvious that the Czech policy and opinion-makers were well-aware of the limited Czech capacities, which translated in the rather limited foreign policy ambitions, despite the official rhetoric. In 2008, the Deputy-PM Vondra (Government of the Czech Republic 2008b) even claimed that the Czech EU Presidency has one advantage and one disadvantage. The former thanks to not having a direct geographical contact with Russia, but understanding it allowing to have a more nuanced position and the later due to not being a “*superpower*”.

5.2.2. Czech identity and self-perception

The second sub question regarding the Czech identity and self-perception was analysed based on critical discourse analysis of selected primary documents and elite interviews. Among them ten primary documents and ten elite interviews were chosen as the most relevant sources at the three levels of EaP negotiation. First, it is essential to acknowledge that several of these documents (e.g. the Czech EU Priorities and the Czech V4 programme in 2007-8) overlap in many of the their key areas, such as: democracy-promotion and human rights in the world, internal market liberalisation and EU reform, ENP and support for integration process in Eastern and South-East Europe, EU enlargement or people-to-people contacts and visa policy – and the V4 programme gives a way to the EU priorities later implemented during the Czech EU presidency in 2009 and reflected in the Czech non-paper and further official communication from MFA and finally the first EaP declaration from Prague (Prime Minister of the Czech Republic Mirek Topolánek 2009):

“The Eastern Partnership carries (...) – solidarity, the promotion of pro-democratic and pro-market reforms and the development of human rights.”

The CDA of the primary documents has shown that the Czechs understood their role in the EU Presidency primarily through listening, debate-moderating, mediating and compromise-facilitating among EU member states. As a medium-sized EU member state, Czechs viewed themselves as the rational power promoting dialogue and cooperation in the EU and beyond its borders (e.g. with Russia). On the top of that, the Czech Deputy-PM Vondra (Government of the Czech Republic 2008b) clearly distanced the Czech governmental position from the Polish (*‘threat’*), German (*‘opportunity’*) or British and Italian (*‘balance’*) ones claiming that Czechs had their own understanding of Russia trying to reconcile the EU member states on Russia, in order to keep the EU united. In 2007, Russia was still seen as

an important trade and energy partner, with whom the EU should eventually conclude a trade agreement, the same as Ukraine. However, it is necessary to say that the 2008 Russo-Georgian War changed this perception and for example the need for energy security led the Czech Presidency to pursue diversification policy in form of the Southern gas corridor (Nabucco). Also, the 2007 priorities also focused on Russia in the CFSP section, traditional domain of the EU rotating presidency, which proposed the transatlantic relations, NATO, ecology – a common ground for all three presidencies, the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe, including Russia, among the numerous ambitious priorities. Ukraine had a prominent place the same as Russia, which was identified as an important actor in Eastern Europe determining the EU success in the region.³⁹

Apart from that, the elite interviews revealed that some of the Czech elites (e.g. X2, X7 or X8) shared a theory about understanding of the ‘East’ (Czech know-how of post-Soviet Eastern Europe in contrast to the Western Europe) and having the trust from the East European partners (e.g. Ukraine). Thus, it was assessed positively as an added value that Czechia negotiated the policy proposal with strong connections both inside and outside of the Union. At this point, it is necessary to investigate the Russian factor in the Czech identity and EaP initiation. The ‘Othering’ of Russia was clearly visible among the foreign policy elites with several references to the historical experience with Russia / USSR, especially after the 2008 Russo-Georgian War. Some of the interviewees described how the European and Russian way of thinking about the Eastern Europe (Ukraine) went simply in parallels (X1 or X6). X3 described the clash of ‘win-win’ or ‘zero-sum game’ thinking:

“We were using the same words, the same sentences, similar arguments, but we were missing each other with Russia completely.”

Also, several respondents spoke about the Russian influence in the EU and the fact that some of the member states played in the Russian favour according to the ‘Russia-first’ logic, which was opposed by them (X2, X8). X1 argued that this was clearly visible during the Czech EU presidency in the first half of 2009 on the example of Czech proposal to open a EU information office in Crimea. Asked about the geopolitical nature of EaP, most of the elites (e.g. X6) refused the argument, for example claiming that *“the EU wasn’t ever interested in spheres of influence and it has no tool to build them”* (X1).⁴⁰ Some even opined that Russians

³⁹ “Key to the EU relations with Russia is maintaining the EU unity” (Czech government 2007).

⁴⁰ However, X5 presented his opinion on EaP as: *“a fundamental threat to the Russian Federation. It is about the fight, the competition for the EaP countries, where the countries are going to aim.”* Whereas X7 called

simply did not want others (resp. the EU) to interfere in their “*sphere of influence*” (X2). At the same time, absolute majority of the interviewees spoke about themselves as representatives of the West identifying particularly with the EU. A few of them, however, made remarks about distinction from the EU, referring to the EU institutions. X8 even spoke about his understanding of the lack of trust to the EU from Eastern European perspective.⁴¹ The differentiation between the Czech national and EU interests was also noticeable, most of the people claiming that the EU did not have any common policy on Ukraine (X5), even if it tried to coordinate the positions of its members. Thanks to the interviews conducted in Kyiv, I got to know about the weekly meetings organised by the Delegation of the EU to Ukraine for EU ambassadors and political officers, which aimed at information sharing and coordination of the EU member states’ positions.⁴² Nevertheless, the insiders (X4) spoke mostly about topical cooperation on particular issues, rather than promoting any common position:

“The common position does not exist, there is none, everyone has their own interests.” (...) “It is best visible at the Poles, they have their own line.”⁴³ *Hm... we [Czechs – author’s note] are often bandwagons. Unfortunately, not even our position on Ukraine, or our politics towards Ukraine is clear. We don’t have clear priorities and everything we do comes from the Embassy.” (...)* *However, of course there are given some common ‘orientees’. We all want them [Ukrainians – author’s note] fight against corruption, we all want them to do reforms, we all want to have a certain way of democracy here [in Ukraine – author’s note], etc. There is this kind of interest, but if we are doing that together, we cannot say that.*

This was also confirmed by X6, who spoke about “*common minimum*”⁴⁴ that every EU member state must have fulfilled, but added that every actor (including the EU institutions) has “*its own interests*”. On the other hand, X2, X6 and X7 explicitly claimed that the EU institutions had their own agenda based mostly on the so-called ‘EU norms and values’,⁴⁵ rather than

the EaP: “*a platform enabling the Ukrainian society to move forward and modernise (‘a modernising anchor’). Then, it was only up to the Ukrainians themselves, they are given an opportunity to decide what they want.*”

⁴¹ For example, X3 claimed that the EU decision-making process, including foreign policy, is isolated, far away from the EU citizens and EU bureaucrats closed in the ‘Brussels’s bubble’. However, in fact the EU’s centre in Brussels “*never had a strategy or a plan B*” in Ukraine, which caused the lack of preparedness in different situations. X3 contrasted the situation in the EU Delegation in Kyiv with Brussels based officials and decision-making centre.

⁴² X4 spoke also about meetings devoted to human rights or economic development.

⁴³ This was further developed by X3, who spoke about Polish traditional ties and geopolitical interests in Ukraine, differing the Polish approach to Ukraine to, for example, Lithuanian.

⁴⁴ X3 spoke about the “*lowest common denominator*” and making constant compromises, which are very costly and take much needed time. At the same time, X3 characterises the EU’s CFSP as the art of making political consensus.

⁴⁵ This was backed by X3, who described the normative approach of the EU to Ukraine between 2009 and 2013 in context of Association Agreement agenda.

promoting the EU interests, which belonged to the category of EU member states. X7 illustrated the difference on the example of egoistic foreign policy conducted, for example, by the Polish, French and German foreign ministers coming to Kyiv in February 2014 negotiating about the transition period for Yanukovych's regime. Nevertheless, some of the respondents (e.g. X1 or X2) claimed that both the norms and values as well as foreign policy interests are always interconnected. The position of Czech diplomacy on Ukraine was described as rather active and among its partners, the V4 and Baltic countries as well as Germany were identified as the most significant. This fact further supports the 'instrumental multilateralist' character of the Czech diplomacy both in and outside of the EU.

5.3. Czech EU presidency

Most negotiations concerning the EaP took place before January 2009, when Czech Republic took over the rotating seat of the EU Council. It happened still before the Lisbon Treaty entered into force, therefore, there were still substantial expectations from the member states in foreign policy, including external representation of the Union or chairing the EU's GAERC. This happened to be the case during several crises in the EU's neighbourhood, e.g. the Russo-Ukrainian gas dispute in January 2009 or the Israeli-Palestinian crisis starting in January/February 2009.

In July 2008, the long-term programme of the so-called EU Trio Presidency of France, Czech Republic and Sweden was finally published by the Council of the European Union (2008) putting strong emphasis on both dimensions of ENP, the future UfM and EaP, Ukraine became a key country in the east. The last important moment before the Czech presidency took place in December 2008, just one month before its start, when European Commission initiated its Communication to the European Parliament and the Council. Even if Czechia was invited to take part in the consultations together with Poland and Sweden, Borcany (2015: 78) holds that the Commission did not really consult the proposal with Czechs, but only presented a final draft to them. This fact is rather surprising, if we consider that it was supposed to be the Czech presidency launching the initiative just six months later. However, X8 opined that it did not cause any problems to the Czech Presidency and the initial EaP proposal was elaborated by the European Commission "*very well*".

The Czech Presidency finally culminated in May 2009 with the Prague Summit of EaP, which proved to be the last major event of the Presidency.⁴⁶ Some people claim that the Summit did not fully succeed, as there were many European and partner leaders missing at the

⁴⁶ A day after the summit, Topolánek's government stepped down and Fischer's cabinet took over.

founding summit. However, the most important fact was that German Chancellor Angela Merkel took an active part and endorsed the policy proposal. The reasons why many heads of states did not attend the summit were at least threefold: 1) the government was already in demission and lacked international credibility, 2) for many countries (France, Spain, Portugal or Malta), the priority was rather the UfM, and finally stemming from that 3) the Czech PM Mirek Topolanek did not attend the official launch of UfM organised by the French presidency. This clearly points to the conflict within the Troika presidencies of France, Czechia and Sweden, which was obvious during the Czech presidency, when France several times criticised the Czech administration for incompetency and slow approach to solving the international crises, but also due to financial resources allocated to both vectors of ENP.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the Czechs managed to push through the first declaration and in this regard, it is possible to assess the Presidency as largely successful. Or as X8 puts it in the words of The Financial Times (Barber 2009): “*Their officials were very good. Their politicians were catastrophic?*”.

5.4. Eastern Partnership in the Czech foreign policy 2009-13

After 2009, Czechia still belonged to the camp of supporters and promoters of the Eastern Partnership. Nevertheless, it was gradually possible to observe declining importance of the policy for the Czech diplomacy symbolised by the rhetorical “*Czechia supports?*” without any real content of the claim (Havlicek and Tysyachna 2016: 8). It is possible to identify several reasons for that:

First and foremost, this was the domestic context symbolised by a general lack of interest in the foreign policy shared by the general public and political parties alike. This was even multiplied by the split of Czech elite on Ukraine, partially using the logic ‘Russia-first’. This can be explained by the fact that the Czech Republic had – historically speaking – no common border with Eastern Europe and therefore only very limited knowledge of the territory. Secondly, Czechia has a completely different tradition of understanding Russia than, for example, Poland or the Baltic states, based on lack of experience with the Russian element before the 20th century. On the one hand, Russia is sometimes portrayed as the Soviet invader of 1968 Prague Spring, but on the other as the 1945 Second World War liberator and a fellow Slavic nation. Therefore, Russia has traditionally been a dividing

⁴⁷ The French president Nicolas Sarkozy even suggested that France could take care of the financial issues through its chairmanship of the Eurogroup due to doubts about the Czech capacity to lead and solve the economic crisis of 2008 and 2009 (Marek and Braun 2011: 135).

element of the Czech society (Kratochvil and Rihackova 2015: 14). Whereas Ukraine is often viewed as a distant and rather unknown country in the ‘East’ having a small Czech minority in the Western part of its territory. Moreover, the Ukrainian minority, consisting mostly of economic migrants, plays a significant role in terms of portraying the picture of Ukraine in the Czech Republic (Seidlova 2015: 31). Thirdly, already before 2013 Czechia was facing a pressure from the Russian influence and exploitation of the social polarisation supporting, for example, the extreme right and left-wing parties all around Europe, including the V4 countries (Conley 2016). Unfortunately, the Czech diplomacy was and until today still is struggling to find its place in the world feeling lost in its “*littleness*” weakening the traditional alliances, the EU and NATO. Based on that logic, Czechia was already before 2013 often seen as an unreliable partner, which pushed the other V4 countries (resp. Poland) to look for alternative alliances, e.g. the Baltic states or Romania (Dostal and Jermanova 2017: 32).

6. Regional (V4) level

The second phase of the EU foreign policy making of EaP took place at the Visegrad level. It illustrates the importance of regional platforms in the EU decision-making process, especially for small- and medium-sized EU member states. Moreover, for the new EU member states, the regional platforms are even more significant as they lack the EU ‘know-how’ of doing business in Brussels and also the credibility and power (population, financial resources, voting weight) to push for their own agenda, as for example France. Therefore, my key argument is that the Visegrad cooperation proved fruitful in this sense and served as a coalition-building platform as well as a source of legitimacy and first place to consult the foreign policy proposals only later uploaded to the EU level. Therefore, the V4 role in EU foreign policy making should be understood as instrumental and supportive, but not primarily leading as the V4 was not designed to work as a ‘power-block’.

6.1. V4-Ukrainian relations before 2009

In 2004, the relations between the Visegrad Group and Ukraine entered a new phase. The historical mission of ‘returning back to Europe’ was completed and the V4 faced a dilemma how to proceed after its original goal was accomplished. On 12th May 2004, the Visegrad Group (2004a) came with the Kromeriz Declaration illustrating the new geographic focus of the V4 to the East and South and underlying the importance of assistance to these states in their own EU accession. Moreover, the Declaration determined agenda for the years to come and gave V4 a new meaning. This was a strong message for all those suggesting that the Visegrad Group should be dissolved.

The pivotal role among the post-Soviet countries was, of course, played by Ukraine, the biggest and most important player in the EU's eastern neighbourhood. The Orange Revolution gave the country a strong incentive to pursue closer ties with the EU that was recognised and supported by the Visegrad Group (2004b). In 2005, the European Parliament first approved the European aspirations of Ukraine and later even claimed that Ukraine should be given a "*European perspective in the long term*" (Committee on Foreign Affairs 2005). It is essential to note that the Visegrad deputies, primarily the Polish ones, stood behind the initiatives and became the driving force for the European support to Ukraine. For that reason, there might be some doubts about the common Visegrad approach to Ukraine, as most of the initiatives were driven primarily by Poland. Consequently, the V4 confirmed its rhetorical interest in collaboration with Ukraine, but even offered some concrete help with the Ukraine's transition and reform process.⁴⁸ The Visegrad countries also launched scholarship programmes or supported the people-to-people contacts across the Schengen border.⁴⁹

After 2004, the V4 countries launched their programmes of the international development cooperation and among the supported states Ukraine played a key role, in comparison with Moldova where the V4 governments between 2004 and 2011 spent three times less financial resources. Zsuzsanna Vegh (2014) asserts that the V4 states have their added value in the unique experience of political and socio-economic transition combined with the accession period and implementation of the EU's *acquis communautaire*, which makes them an obvious partner for the East European and Balkan countries. The most influential tool of the V4 multilateral diplomacy and international development aid has been since 2000 the International Visegrad Fund, in 2011 substantially expanded by the 'Visegrad 4 Eastern Partnership' (V4EaP) initiative.⁵⁰ This programme was specifically focused on development of civil society and people-to-people contact aimed at socialisation among the V4 and EaP countries.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Such as twinning programme or technical help with the transition (European Commission 2004).

⁴⁹ Between 2004 and 2007, 73 Ukrainian students were given scholarships by the International Visegrad Fund. The total number of scholarship was 106, which means almost 70 %.

⁵⁰ Gyimesi (2016) specifies that: "*The V4EaP is funded through the International Visegrad Fund, the general grant scheme of the V4. The annual budget of the V4EaP amounts to 1.46 million EUR, which is far below the total ODA of around 70 million EUR that EaP countries received from the Visegrad states. The largest recipient of grants from the "Visegrad 4 Eastern Partnership Programme" is Ukraine, which received 3.8 million EUR between 2004 and 2016, amounting to a tenth of the ODA that the country received from V4 states in 2014 alone.*"

⁵¹ Between 2004 and 2013, Ukrainians received 399 scholarships out of 660 in total, second being Belarus with 154 students, which clearly speaks in favour of Ukraine (Vegh 2014: 36)

6.2. Initiation of the Eastern Partnership 2008-09

In May 2009, the relations between the V4 and Ukraine entered a yet another phase, when the EaP was launched during the first EaP summit in Prague. It was a strong symbolic gesture of EU's interest in the region of Eastern Europe (X1, X3), however specifically for Ukraine it was rather disappointing due to the lack of new incentives for the country (the then frontrunner of ENP) and missing membership perspective (X4). Also, it is necessary to emphasize the early reactionary character of the V4's involvement in the EU's Eastern policy, which began in July 2006, when Poland together with Lithuania only reacted to the German plan of 'ENP-Plus' (Visegrad Group 2007b). Afterwards, both Poland and Czech Republic took an active part in the negotiation process, even if the power and capacity was stronger on the Polish side (Dangerfield 2009: 1741-2). Since 2007, the Civic Platform (PO) and the Polish People's Party (PSL) held much stronger position in the EU, in contrast to the previous PiS-led administration due to the connection with the European People's Party (EPP) and good contacts with the ruling CDU/CSU and UMP in Germany and France creating the so-called 'Weimar Triangle', Poland being the self-proclaimed leader and representative of CEE. The V4 proved its role of reactionary power being primarily driven by the Polish and sometimes Czech activities with weak interest of Hungary and Slovakia.

Besides, during the Czech V4 Presidency 2007-8, the Czech MFA (2008) presented its non-paper, by which it opened the discussion on the topic of EU's eastern policy and brought it to the attention of other member states. The V4 proved to be the first and most important platform for discussions and coalition-building. However, even if the EaP proposal was endorsed at the Prime Ministers' Annual Summit in Prague on 16 June 2008 by all four Visegrad states, it was later presented to the GAERC as the Polish-Swedish proposal. Therefore, the V4 did not play leading, but rather a supportive role, when it enshrined the Polish-Swedish more detailed version of the original Czech proposal (Albrycht 2010). This outcome obviously left some bitterness among the Czech public officials and diplomats involved in the EaP negotiations.⁵² However, as Dangerfield (2009: 1742-3) emphasizes:

"This supporting role of the VG should not be underestimated however, as it has involved a particularly important contribution through the so-called 'V4+' facility. The VG has been a forum for policy consultation and alliance-building with other member states and subregional groupings with specific interests

⁵² The Czech decision-maker spoke about the Polish diplomacy that "just stole" the initial Czech proposal. Personal consultations of author in Prague.

in Eastern Europe, particularly over the last couple of years as ENP reform gathered momentum and the EaP proposal came to fruition.”

The launch of EaP gives us an interesting lesson about the V4 operation, the Visegrad’s foreign policy, including its Europeanisation. Firstly, it shows that due to lack of institutionalisation,⁵³ V4 can only serve as a coordination and coalition-building platform, rather than a ‘power block’ for pursuing foreign policy initiatives. Secondly, due to lack of experience with the EU policy-making and lack of trust of the old member states, for the V4 it was more convenient to play a supporting rather than leading role in upgrading its vision to the EU level. However, the Visegrad Group’s (2008b) role in preparing the policy was crucial as it was not only Sweden, but also the Baltic states or Bulgaria and Romania that were invited for policy consultations (Visegrad Group 2008a). Hand in hand with that went the pivotal role of the Czech and Swedish presidencies of the EU Council in 2009, which served as the ‘window of opportunity’ for formulation and realisation of the V4 foreign policy goals and common priorities towards EaP and Ukraine (Dangerfield 2009: 1743). Thirdly, it must be admitted that it was essential to accommodate the old member states, such as Germany, to agree with the original V4 proposal and support the EaP proposal. For example, the Czech PM Topolánek had to reiterate that the EaP is not aimed against anyone and even submit to the German wording of “*East European partners*”, instead of the original “*European partners*” in the Prague Declaration of the EaP (Council of the European Union 2009).

6.3. V4 and Ukraine until the Revolution of Dignity

In 2009, the Eastern Partnership sent a strong political and symbolic message to the EaP countries that the EU was interested in the region. The V4 pushed for more initiatives aimed at democratisation, promotion of human rights, trade liberalisation and overall transformation of the partner countries, including accession to the European *acquis*, in order to associate the countries with the EU more closely and integrate them in the common EU market. X7 spoke about the role of Visegrad countries as the “*strict teacher*” towards Ukraine and other partner countries passing their own transformation experience to them. Among the successful CEE initiatives, it is essential to mention the EU’s European Endowment for Democracy launched in 2011 during the Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU and supported by the Czech V4 presidency, about which X7 mentioned that it was lobbied by Poland. The year of 2011 was also crucial for two more reasons. First, the Visegrad Group

⁵³ The only V4 institution until today has been the International Visegrad Fund.

celebrated 20 years of its existence. In Bratislava, the Visegrad Group (2011b) issued its declaration once again confirming its goals and values stating:

“(...) to facilitate the process of enlarging the area of stability and democracy in the EU neighbourhood and actively contribute towards the implementation of European and Euro-Atlantic ambitions of the countries of Eastern Partnership and continue to support the Western Balkans countries in their EU and NATO integration. The added value of the unique know-how of the V4 and pooled resources of IVF may effectively assist partner neighbourhood countries to turn their integration and democratisation endeavours into success; (...)”

Second, the V4 countries launched the ‘V4EaP’ project within the International Visegrad Fund, as mentioned earlier. The V4EaP aims at supporting the political and socio-economic reforms, but also at reacting to the degradation of democracy and human rights in the Eastern neighbourhood, namely in Ukraine. Visegrad Group (2011d) chose to focus on the civil society and people-to-people contact as the main driving forces of change and socialisation with the EU. Moreover, the Visegrad Group (2011c) countries continued to coordinate their activities with Germany, the key player within the EU being interested in the EaP. Nevertheless, not even the Visegrad Group’s (2011e) support could prevent the degradation of democracy, human rights and rule of law that appeared after the 2010 presidential elections in Ukraine won by Viktor Yanukovich. Together with stronger resistance towards political and socio-economic transition and democratisation initiatives, it was possible to observe a gradual weakening of the V4’s real ambitions (despite rhetoric) that are visible practically until today.

7. Supranational (EU) level

Finally, the supranational level of the EU foreign policy making took part in the EU institutions, namely the EU Council and European Commission. The Czech role at the third level was rather complex involving negotiating with other EU member states and the European Commission elaborating the EaP proposal. In its efforts, Czechia backed the Polish-Swedish tandem and secured the financial resources from the Commission, the same as facilitated the launching of EaP during its presidency in May 2009. Consequently, it bolstered the policy and became an active member of the informal club of EaP friends, even though the Czech support for the EU’s eastern policy has been diminishing over the last couple of years. The main argument here is therefore that small and medium EU member states must play a smart game of coordinating, facilitating and negotiating to succeed in

uploading their own national preferences to the EU level, particularly in positions of EU Presidency. They must rely on coalition-building and persuade the big players (e.g. Germany) to endorse the policy proposals to achieve their own goals, which stands in contrast to the major players themselves (e.g. France), largely relying on their own capacities.

7.1. Nature of the EU foreign policy

At the beginning, it is important to elaborate on the EU foreign policy, its practical aspects and their implications for the EU member states both before and after the Lisbon Treaty entered into force in December 2009. The EU's CFSP having its roots in 1970 in the European Political Cooperation, is still placed in the second pillar of the EU's architecture. Therefore, consensual and intergovernmental approach was always applied to the CFSP with every member state having the right to veto any foreign policy initiative.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, it is essential to view the CFSP as something more than the lowest common denominator, even if on controversial issues (e.g. Russia, Israel, USA) this has often been the case. The CFSP has a long history of mutual consultations and tradition of finding compromises going beyond the lowest common denominator (cost-benefit rationalist approach, or logic of consequences), rather focusing on the common norms, values and interests of the European community (logic of appropriateness), as elaborated by Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier. Therefore, it is not possible to understand the CFSP as a power game between the big EU member states, only pursuing their own interests at the expense of others. This has been one of the direct effects of Europeanisation of the EU member states, as described in the Europeanisation literature. Based on that, even small or medium-size states can substantially affect the EU's foreign policy agenda and promote their own interests (or domestic practices) to the EU level, as it previously happened, for example, in areas of human rights, ecology or Northern Dimension of the CFSP.

As for the practical aspects of the EU's CFSP, in the period before the Lisbon Treaty (valid for the Czech EU presidency), it was the European Commission (resp. DG RELEX)⁵⁵ being responsible for practical conduct and monitoring of the CFSP agreed previously in the Council of the EU. From the original GAERC, the Lisbon Treaty newly created the General

⁵⁴ Nevertheless, thanks to a sophisticated mechanism of mutual consultations and negotiations at several levels, this has been rarely the case. However, there were some notable exceptions from the rule, such as the Polish veto of new EU-Russian cooperation treaty in 2005, which blocked the negotiation procedure regarding the issue for two years (Longhurst and Zaborowski 2007).

⁵⁵ DG RELEX was in 2011 replaced by the European External Action Service headed by the High Commissioner of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

Affairs Council (GAC) and Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) and placed the elected head of the European Council in charge of the GAC and High Representative of FAC, instead of the EU rotating presidency, which chaired both formats before 2009. As a result, power of the rotating presidency over the CFSP dramatically decreased, especially when it comes to agenda-setting and power- and consensus-brokering, which was largely passed to the EU institutions (together with representation of the Union externally). Concurrently, the primary role of EU member states in the EU's CFSP, including ENP and EaP, stayed the same also after 2009. The EU member states have been shaping the CFSP through various mechanisms, such as coalition-building, mutual negotiations, persuading, blaming and shaming or cooperation with the EU institutions during the time of policy formulation and negotiations in the EU Council. However, the Council's meetings are not available to public and it is therefore complicated to precisely reconstruct the negotiation process among the EU member states. Based on that logic, Helene Sjursen criticises the current way of conducting the CFSP due to lack of democracy and transparency of the negotiation process, which often comprises of 'shady deals' concluded in the Brussels's corridors⁵⁶

7.2. Case of Eastern Partnership

Part of the negotiation process was already reconstructed in the subchapters dedicated to the Czech EU presidency as well as to the importance of Visegrad role in the EaP negotiation, but it was the then Polish government of PO and PSL that conducted the consultations with the European Commission on the EU's eastern policy in April 2008. Already in May 2008 during the GAERC, Poland and Sweden presented their first proposal of the EaP, which was supposed to be further discussed during the next meeting in June 2008. In June 2008, the Annual Meeting of V4 prime ministers fully endorsed the EaP proposal, but the policy proposal was later submitted only as a Polish-Swedish initiative. The GAERC meeting accepted the Polish-Swedish draft and instructed the European Commission to elaborate on the policy initiative until 2009. However, the process of EaP work was substantially accelerated only after the 2008 Russo-Georgian War.

It should also be noted that the Czech and Polish visions of the EU's eastern policy did not fully match. While Czechia preferred a project-based multilateral approach to the Eastern neighbours, which would be complementary with the existing Black Sea Synergy and other

⁵⁶ Helene Sjursen goes in detail about the democratic deficit in the EU foreign policy making and also the role of identity in the EU foreign policy elaborated in the RECON (2007) project coordinated by ARENA – Centre for European Studies at the University of Oslo.

EU initiative, whereas Poland gave a clear preference to bilateral relations with the countries of Eastern Europe and South Caucasus. Finally, both approaches found their place within the policy, but the more institutionalised Polish approach to the EaP clearly prevailed, as visible from the Prague declaration of EaP. Nevertheless, Czechia was present during the negotiations and held the position of one of the main proponents and advocates of the initiative. Czechia was also offered a place at the negotiating table with the European Commission before December 2008, when the final draft was announced. Nonetheless, it was the EU Commission that elaborated the original proposal according to its own vision of the policy. One could even say that among the ‘friends of Eastern Partnership’, Czechia had a special position of interested player, which was recognised and later awarded by giving the post of Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy to Czechs and their diplomat Stefan Fule. This proved very significant in the years to come after signing the Prague declaration of EaP in May 2009, as noted by X3 or X4.

In addition, it is interesting to observe the dynamics of decision-making process of EU foreign policy on the EaP case. In June 2008, the European Council requested the EU Commission to elaborate the EaP policy proposal. However, it was only after August 2008, when the Commission really speeded up its work on the initiative in the context of the Russo-Georgian War and extraordinary summit of European Council on September 1, 2008. Then, the Commission presented its work in December 2008 and the Czech presidency chaired the summit in March 2009, when the policy was finally agreed. The EaP launch with the Eastern European partners took place in May 2009 in Prague. This, however, does not mean that in May or June 2008 everything was agreed and there was no hard work behind the scenes not only from Poland and Sweden,⁵⁷ but more importantly Czechia, which had the ambition to launch the initiative during its presidency in the first half of 2009 and had to prepare the grounds not only the launching of the policy, but also negotiating the first EaP declaration and gaining financial resources from the European Commission. As mentioned by X8, while persuading the other member states about importance of the policy, the Czechs employed a strategy of four ‘NOTs’: 1) not aimed against anyone (Russia), 2) not to take financial resources from the existing policies (Black Sea Synergy), 3) not to enlarge the EU,

⁵⁷ Several insiders from the European Commission criticised Poland for not being active enough during summer 2008, some even claimed that without the Russo-Georgian War the initiative would not emerge at all, as it could have been traded for some political compromises, which is – according to their opinion – a common practice in the EU decision-making process.

4) not a competition to other existing policies. X8 added that the work was sometimes more difficult with the EU member states, than the East European partners.

7.3. Czech work at the EU level

The process of initiation of the EaP before January 1, 2009 was already described in detail, but the crucial period of Czech EU presidency should be covered more extensively as the most important Czech contribution to the EaP during 2009 and 2013. As mentioned above, there were two crucial moments during the six months, when Czech Republic played an important role for the EaP, the GAERC in March 2009 and the Prague Summit of EaP at the beginning of May 2009. At these occasions, the rotating presidency used to play the role of power-broker and chief mediator, among the different camps in the EU. Obviously, Czechia was known for its views and belonging to the camp of supporters of the policy proposal. Therefore, it opted for keeping low-prolife in the EaP (X9), in order to have the credibility to mediate between the two camps promoting EaP (Poland, Sweden) and the other group of member states preferring the Union for Mediterranean (France). Interestingly, both parties were present within the same Troika presidencies, France on the one side and Sweden together with Czechs on the other. Clearly, France – heavyweight of the EU politics and self-perceived power – had a very different strategy to the EU foreign policy making than Czech Republic or Sweden (X10). If Czechia played a role of power-broker and mediator, which has been typical for EU member states (especially of small and medium size) presiding over the EU affairs, France chose to openly promote its own national interests embodied in the UfM, as it was well-aware of its capacities and strong alliance of Southern EU member states standing behind the initiative. The strong disproportion of hard power indicators (population, GDP and voting weight) playing in favour of France and the southern group was reflected in the final score for the ENP budget giving 2/3 of total financial resources to the UfM and 1/3 to the EaP. In concrete terms, this was translated into 600 million euros until 2013, which could be considered a success taking into consideration the mutual disproportion and lack of experience with similar negotiations within the EU institutions. Another major success of the Czech EU presidency was the first EaP declaration signed in Prague. Czechs managed to push through several of their priorities reflected in the V4 presidency 2007/8 and the Czech priorities for the EU presidency, most importantly the focus on European Neighbourhood Policy and Eastern Europe aimed at balancing the UfM. Among them, the emphasis was put on democracy-promotion and human rights or people-to-people contacts and visa policy (“*Europe without barriers?*” motto of

the Czech presidency), which were explicitly stated in the text of Prague declaration. The unofficial communication from the Czech MFA revealed that the public and private partnership promoted by the Czechs and welcomed by Germans in the initial proposal also found its way to the joint declaration (point 17). Last but not least, the project-based type of partnership between EU and Eastern Europe was reflected in the four thematical platforms and flagship initiatives giving the partnership a concrete content. Therefore, it is possible to claim that the initial Czech ideas and presidency priorities were to large degree reflected in the Joint Declaration of the EaP Summit in Prague. The policy proposal succeeded not only thanks to Czech partnership with Poland and Sweden together with V4 and Baltic states, but also Germany a crucial player of the EU, which supported the initiative and even agreed to invest a substantial amount of money in EaP.⁵⁸ The initiative matched the German national interests in Eastern Europe and the German leadership was – the same as Czechs and Swedes (X9, X8) – annoyed by the French power-politics and its ostentatious exercise in case of UfM.

Furthermore, it is essential to clarify the question of relations between Czechs and the Polish-Swedish tandem. It could come to one's mind that Czechia voluntarily gave the floor to both countries to push their initiative through the EU Council with the Czech help. This would make sense, if it was not problematised by the former Czech minister of foreign affairs Karel Schwarzenberg, who refused this kind of 'gentlemen agreement' being unofficially concluded between the three parties. If Schwarzenberg was right, it would place the Czech involvement in the EaP in even more enigmatic circumstances and provoke a question, why the Polish-Swedish tandem did not wait for the Swedish rotating presidency and made use of the opportunity to launch the initiative on their own. Only thanks to non-public information from the Czech MFA, I got to know that Sweden pledged to officially support the French UfM and could not initiate the EaP during its term due to behind-scene politics and its own policy of Baltic Sea Strategy, which was reciprocally backed by France. Therefore, the EaP had to be launched during the Czech EU presidency. This was confirmed by several interviews (e.g. X10 or X8), which pointed to extensive communication and coordination between the three countries – especially between Czechia and Sweden within the Trio Presidency. This was further supported by X10 who criticised Schwarzenberg for his lack of activity regarding the policy and referred to his "*sleepiness*" the crucial moments of EaP

⁵⁸ Earlier, Czechia was successful in persuading the other EU member states to open the discussion over the Southern energy corridor known as Nabucco pipeline.

initiation. Another interviewee (X8) also held that the then Czech foreign minister did not do much work regarding EaP. However, Schwarzenberg himself reminded that the Czech government had serious domestic disputes that paralysed its foreign policy activity due to internal disagreements (including questions of identity) and weak parliamentary majority.

In the end, the Czech diplomatic effort was complemented and strengthened by the Polish-Swedish tandem, which was necessary to create a coalition of EU member states, only which was able to bring the policy to life. One of the interviewees even claimed that the Swedes did more hard work to initiative the policy than Poles (X8) and another added that this was a very smart tactic by the Czech diplomacy in achieving their goals, even if it led to being excluded from the media discourse on the topic (X9). In general, this Czech behaviour could be described as ‘instrumentally multilateral’ not only within the EU, but also regarding the East European partners and Russia. The Czech approach to EaP might be contrasted with the Polish one, which has been characterised both in literature and by the actors of decision-making process as ‘unilateral’, resp. ‘sceptical multilateralist’ focused on the Polish national interests. To confirm that, X10 spoke about lack of negotiation skills and “*brutality*” with which the Polish foreign minister Radek Sikorski pushed for the Polish national interests. Even if this could have been to some extent compensated by the Deputy PM Alexander Vondra, the good and efficient work of the bureaucratic-diplomatic apparatus (especially the MFA) was not translated into the high-level political visibility and inclusion of Czechia in the public discourse on EaP together with Poland and Sweden. Therefore, even if there was a substantial Czech contribution to the initiative and its promotion after 2009 in terms of ideas, political and diplomatic energy, later even recognised and awarded by the EU Commission by giving the post of EU Commissioner for Enlargement to the Czechs, there is still only limited recognition of the Czech involvement in the public discourse on Eastern Partnership superficially focusing on the personalised EU foreign policy making, which needed (strong) personalities (Sikorski, Bildt), rather than bureaucrats to put in the spotlight.

8. Conclusion

The MA thesis dealt with the EU-Ukraine relations from the Czech foreign policy perspective with a special focus on the Eastern Partnership during 2009 and 2013. This work strived to come to understanding, what was the Czech role in the mutual partnership, looking especially at the Czech presidency of the EU Council in the first half of 2009, when the Eastern Partnership policy was initiated. While doing so, the thesis approached the research problem from three mutually interconnected angles – national (Czech), regional (Visegrad)

and supranational (European) levels of analysis. The research employed the CDA of selected primary documents as well as non-standard interviews with Czech foreign-policy elites, in order to understand the role of Czech identity in the EaP initiation at the national level. Secondly, the paper focused on the Visegrad Group and its role in the EaP initiation trying to deconstruct the EaP negotiation process and combine the domestic factors of EU foreign policy making with the regional cooperation. Finally, the work analysed the concrete Czech contribution to the EaP at the supranational level and described the EU decision-making at its full complexity with various actors involved in the negotiations at all three levels.

Regarding the main research question and the first sub question, the MA thesis concluded that Czechia played a rather complex role in the EaP, including its initiation and promotion during the 2009-13 period. At the national level, the Czech Republic played a role of an initiator of the policy and chief promoter of the idea at the V4 and later EU levels as well. The process of reconstruction of the EaP initiation showed the roots of the policy going back to the Czech MFA, which came up with the first non-paper on the topic discussed with the V4 and Baltic partners as well as European Commission and other partners. Even if the initiative was later taken by Poland supported by Sweden, the line of thoughts clearly came back to the Czech government and the bureaucratic apparatus, despite being paralysed by the clash of domestic identities, weak parliamentary majority or opposing voices in the political system (the Czech President, opposition) undermining its position and international credibility, which finally led to collapse of the Topolánek's government in March 2009.

As for the regional level, the research concluded that the Visegrad cooperation played an instrumental and supportive role for the policy development. The V4 clearly served as a platform for discussions and negotiations, coalition-building (within the V4+ format). However, due to weak institutionalisation, the Visegrad Group cannot be understood in terms of a 'power block', but rather an informal format of mutually-beneficial partnership and a source of international legitimacy. The Visegrad cooperation also showed as important based on the experience with position-coordination with the like-minded partners (V4+ format) able to shape the EU decision-making process thanks to mutual cooperation. Nevertheless, the V4 never played a leading, but rather a supportive and sometimes only a reactionary role, as its members lacked sufficient experience with the EU foreign policy making, strong reputation and power within the EU to upload their own agenda, in contrast to – for example – France. What is more, the historical perspective clearly illustrated that the Visegrad states – Slovakia and Hungary in particular – did not share the same interest in the

EaP countries, which limited the common position of the grouping. Finally, after 2011 the V4 proved to have only limited capabilities and resources to influence the domestic processes in Ukraine. Therefore, even if it was possible to observe more continuity than change in the Czech approach to the EU foreign policy and Ukraine provided by the Czech foreign minister Schwarzenberg, the external factors (e.g. domestic situation in Ukraine) after 2010 dramatically changed, which led to diminishing influence and activity of Czechia and Visegrad in general.

Finally, at the supranational (EU) level, Czechia proved to meet a profile of the 'instrumental multilateralist', which clearly overplayed the 'sceptical multilateralist' role of Czechia willing to cooperate not only with the regional allies and EU partners, but also the East European partners or Russia. This approach might be to a certain degree contrasted with the situation of Poland which in past opted to side-line some of its regional partners and allies, in order to promote its own foreign policy goals and security interests embodied in the EaP. In this regard, the "*brutality*" of Radek Sikorski was widely present in the literature and further supported by several interviewees. Moreover, Czechia proved to play a role of successful coordinator and policy negotiator mediating between the two camps in the EU, one supporting the UfM and the other focusing on the EaP. This materialised especially during the negotiations about the financial support from the European Commission. Last but not least, the Czech diplomacy employed the smart power in achieving its goals (promotion of democracy and human rights, trade or people-to-people contacts and visa facilitation), despite keeping a low-profile in the EU foreign policy making and facilitating the process of the policy initiation in cooperation with the regional allies, led by Poland and Sweden, even if it was not put in the spotlight the same as both main proponents of the policy.

As far as the second sub question connected to the impact and meaning of the Czech identity and self-perception for initiation of the EaP is concerned, the issue of Czech identity was assessed as of secondary importance for the policy mobilisation. Even though the 'Othering' of Russia in the responses of the Czech foreign policy elites as well as the selected primary documents was clearly present, only one part of the discourse on Russia was negative or openly hostile. The discourse was based on the negative historical experience, mutual misunderstanding between the West (resp. EU) and Russia or parallel thinking about the shared neighbourhood. The way of thinking about the region was clearly identified as different, but nevertheless this did not hold the ground for initiation of the EaP as a tool to counter Russia. Rather, the discourse of modernisation and promotion of stability, security

and prosperity or simply establishing EU's relations with the East European countries as a way of balancing the UfM was present among the interviewees. What proved quite important was the willingness to talk to Russia and justify the idea that Russians might profit from the project as well ('win-win situation', instead of 'zero-sum game'). Interestingly, there was a discourse of understanding the 'East' and having the know-how to speak with the partner countries and Russians. Finally, most of the elites considered themselves representatives of the 'West', with overwhelming majority identified with the EU. However, there were several instances, when the respondents differentiated themselves from the EU decision-making process conducted in Brussels and the EU institutions, or even expressed their distrust towards them. Nevertheless, it is possible to conclude that the Czech elites – with only minor exceptions – identified with the West (resp. the EU) and pursued both the EU and Czech national interests, in order to establish the Eastern Partnership. Therefore, it can be claimed that the Czech rhetoric and practical conduct of policy towards Eastern Europe, especially during the EU presidency, was to large degree Europeanised. At the same time, I identified several characteristics of the Czech thinking about the EU. Most of the elites spoke about a limited power (GDP, population and voting weight) in foreign policy, which they contrasted with the French influence within the Union. Several interviewees claimed that it was much better to cooperate with Sweden in the EU Troika Presidency due to its size and like-minded approach to Eastern Europe. Furthermore, many of the interviewees recognised the Czech EU presidency as an opportunity for the Czech foreign policy to pursue its goals. However, the eternal feeling of underestimation and lack of self-recognition was present not only in the secondary literature, but mentioned several times during the interviews as well. According to one of the respondents, this was one of the reasons, why Czechia was not among the EaP initiators together with Poland and Sweden, when he spoke about problems of self-presentation and confidence, even if the hard work was mostly done by Czechs, he added.

This leads us to the final sub question of crucial importance related to the Czech position in the 'Polish-Swedish' project of EaP. The thesis came to the conclusion that there are several reasons, why the Czech role in initiation of the policy was overshadowed. First of them, just mentioned above, goes to the problem of self-presentation and lack of confidence rooted in the Czech politics and society. This was further multiplied by the internal problems with identity and foreign policy orientation of the Topolánek's government (Atlanticism vs. European vector), weak parliamentary majority and lack of support from the president Vaclav Klaus, or parliamentary opposition. This was mentioned by one of the interviewees,

as the main problem of the Czech diplomacy. Others emphasized the personal factor of former foreign minister Schwarzenberg, who was not as active as his Polish and Swedish counterparts. Therefore, the Czech role in this very personalised understanding of the EU's foreign policy was mostly overshadowed. The approach to international affairs practised by Czechia and Poland was also identified as different. If Poland considered itself a leader of the CEE and regional power, Czechia – being four times smaller in terms of population and voting weight – had limits of its own power and its exercise at the EU level. The clash of 'sceptical multilateralist' (resp. unilateralist) and 'instrumental multilateralist' attitudes was visible on the case of EaP initiation. In addition, while Czechia had a better negotiating position in EaP promotion as a less self-interested and more Europeanised player acting the interest of all, Poland was expected by the old EU member states (especially Germany) to provide its know-how of the 'East' and help to establish the EU's eastern policy. On the other hand, both Czechia and Poland had similar issues as for weak administration capacity (bureaucratic apparatus), lack of experience with the EU decision making process (diplomacy) or lack of trust from the old EU member states (foreign policy credibility). Finally and most importantly, the EU presidency largely required Czechia to keep a low-profile on the EaP issue, in order to play the role of good mediator and negotiator standing in between various groups of EU member states, persuading them of the importance of the policy for the EU as a whole. This role was fulfilled very skilfully and the Czech Republic – despite internal problems – managed to at least partially accomplish its ambitious goals in the Council Presidency, most importantly the EaP. Therefore, it might be concluded that there were several different reasons, why Czechia was missing from the public discourse on the Eastern Partnership; most likely a convoluted combination of the above-described factors rather than any single reason causing the phenomenon.

To partially generalise the research outcomes, the previous section gives an illustrative example of the EU foreign policy making from a perspective of middle-sized new EU member state. In order to upload its foreign policy preferences to the EU level, it is not only necessary to aggregate the national preferences at the domestic level, but for such a state it is essential to play a smart game and get involved in extensive policy consultations and coalition-building among like-minded EU member states, for example at the regional (Visegrad) level. What is different from the 'old' EU member states are first the communist legacies (as elaborated above) and lack of crude power to push its foreign policy preference through the EU decision-making process (e.g. case of France and UfM). Therefore, it is essential to get the big players (e.g. Germany or France, Italy, UK) on board to support the

initiative, also when it comes to the financial resources. It can be concluded that the strategies of EU member states in promoting their national interests in the EU differ not only based on size and wealth, but also on other factors, including administration capacity of bureaucratic apparatus, professionalism of the diplomacy, or know-how of the Brussels-based decision-making process and informal rules in the 'Brussels's corridors'.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 – Interviews:

X1	Czech diplomat from MFA
X2	Former Czech minister
X3	Diplomat working for the EU delegation to Ukraine
X4	Former Czech diplomat based in Kyiv
X5	Former Czech policymaker, Member of European Parliament
X6	Czech diplomat working for the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the EU
X7	Representative of NGO sector and head of research centre
X8	Former Czech special envoy for the Eastern Partnership
X9	Former Czech high-ranking bureaucrat from MFA
X10	Former Czech minister

Appendix 2 – Selected primary documents analysed with CDA:

- 1) 'ENP and Eastern Neighbourhood – Time to Act'
- 2) 'Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit'
- 3) 'Joint Statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad Group Countries, Sweden and Ukraine'
- 4) 'Opening address by Mirek Topolánek at Eastern Partnership summit'
- 5) 'Priorities of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the First Half of 2009'
- 6) 'Priorities of the Czech EU Presidency – press release by Deputy PM Alexander Vondra'
- 7) 'Programme of the Czech Presidency of the Visegrad Group (June 2011 – June 2012)'
- 8) 'Programme of the Czech Presidency of the Visegrad Group (June 2007 – June 2008)'
- 9) 'Work Programme of the Czech Presidency'
- 10) '18-months programme of the Council'

Appendix 3 – Frequency of codes:

Frequency	EU	USA	V4	Russia	Ukraine
ENP and Eastern Neighbourhood – Time to Act	75	0	3	0	3
Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit	61	0	0	0	2
Joint Statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad Group Countries, Sweden and Ukraine	13	0	14	0	14
Opening address by Mirek Topolánek at Eastern Partnership summit	10	0	0	0	7
Priorities of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the First Half of 2009	200	15	0	6	2
Priorities of the Czech EU Presidency – press release by Deputy PM Alexander Vondra	43	10	0	21	1
Programme of the Czech V4 Presidency of the (June 2011 – June 2012)	53	3	109	1	3

Programme of the Czech Presidency of the Visegrad Group (June 2007 – June 2008)	85	5	159	0	4
Work Programme of the Czech Presidency	311	13	0	25	4
18-months programme of the Council	328	10	0	7	1
Total	1,179	56	285	60	41

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