

Address

by

His Excellency Petr Nečas

Prime Minister of the Czech Republic

Good Morning, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Trans-Atlantic Alliance has been one of the most successful, beneficent and benevolent alliances in the history of the World. It had emerged from the common fight against the Nazi Third Reich, it was cemented by a common need to contain and deter Soviet aggression and Communist expansionism, it has preserved freedom in the West, it has kept Western Europe free, it eventually induced the Soviet Empire to collapse in the 1989, and consequently, it has helped to extend freedom to Central and Eastern Europe. Even more, it has been able to achieve all that without a major war in the nuclear age.

All of us have reasons to be thankful to the Atlantic Alliance for its past accomplishments. However, the question could be raised: what is the need for the Atlantic Alliance in a contemporary World, if any? Is there any need for the Atlantic Alliance today, at all?

Is it the current struggle against radical Islamist terrorism?

That is not the sole reason. The comprehensive reason for the Atlantic Alliance is much broader and more significant than just current events or military operations.

Yes, the Alliance has been standing together – from the beaches of Normandy and keeping the watch at the Fulda Gap yesterday, to patrolling the snowy hills of Afghanistan and sunny shores of Tripoli today, but this is not her sole *raison d'être*. The reason for the Alliance is not a military and defensive one only, but primarily a political, even civilizational one.

In the emerging World of the 21st Century, there are several new rising powers, China, India, and others. In this emerging World, we might find out, and probably will, that liberal democracies of this World will not possess the sole hegemony in the World.

If that is the case, hence, in my view, it will be a powerful reason to stay together, to preserve our Alliance, even to renew it.

All countries and societies have their ideals and their interests. Prudent foreign policy must pursue both. To pursue ideals without paying attention to interests could be naive, lead to exhaustion and over-extension. To pursue interests without ideals could lead to moral confusion, cynicism, loss of support among our peoples, and hence, paradoxically, to paralysis and weakness.

The proper blend is the right mixture of ideals and interests, both in our foreign and domestic policies.

What we, America and Europe, have in common, are our ideals, our common Civilization, our mutual history. Our interests overlap to a considerable degree, no doubt about that, and will continue to do so in the 21st Century, too, but our ideals of liberal, constitutional democracy, rule of law, civil rights, and individual, political and religious freedom, will remain the same, identical, and will never change.

In that sense, we are more than just brothers – we are twins.

Our interests, e.g. the war against radical Islamist terrorism, might lead us to temporary alliances with emerging powers, which do not share our values and our ideals. However, in the long term perspective, the only solid foundation for an alliance in a shaky, turbulent and unsecure World, where liberal democracies might find out one day that they do not enjoy a sufficient hegemony, is an alliance between those, who share the same values, the same ideals, the same Civilization – between liberal democracies. Which means, primarily, between America, Europe, Israel, Australia, and our democratic allies in Asia and Latin America like India, Japan, South Korea and Colombia.

There is one sphere, where our ideals and interests overlap directly and which is highly relevant to the issues of today. That is the sphere of economic cooperation, trade and commerce. Freedom of trade, free movement of goods, is a part of our understanding of freedom. And, in a current situation of a continuing economic recession, further removals of remaining barriers and obstacles to trade between the European Union and the United States would lead to job-creation and would boost the economic growth. They would be, in other words, in our best interests.

Hence, in the current situation of general efforts to create jobs and boost economies, the issue of deepening and enhancing the trans-Atlantic trade should be focused on - both in the U.S. and in the E.U. There are no doubts, that an increased trans-Atlantic trade would lead to new jobs on both continents; that's why it should be a major issue for both the E.U. and the U.S.

It would contribute to our efforts to boost our economies, and simultaneously it would strengthen, integrate, and deepen the Western Alliance even more, which is just desirable in a contemporary World of many challenges. Simply, it would be a win-win situation for both Europe and America. Hence, I support putting the issue of a mutual trade enhancement through removal of trade-barriers on the agenda of the coming E.U.-U.S. Summit next November.



Ladies and Gentlemen, let me briefly state the priorities of the Czech foreign policy:

Firstly, we strive to have good, even excellent relations with all our neighbours, with all our neighbouring countries. That goes without saying.

Secondly, we stand on two pillars of a cooperation with our friends and allies: the European pillar, in the form of the European Union, and the Atlantic pillar, consisting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Thirdly, we support the West Balkans countries' integration into the European and Atlantic structures. Those should be admitted, when they are ready to be admitted, not sooner, but if a country is ready, it must not be blocked by another country because of the name of her choosing, as it has happened in the case of Macedonia.

Fourthly, we support, in a prudent and efficient way, spreading of human rights and democratic values in the World. Let me mention just the case of Cuba, where the Czech Republic has been traditionally very active.

Fifthly, we consider our loyalty to our allies and cooperation with them in countries, where we have sent in our military and civilian missions, to be of an utmost importance. We might not be the first to join the missions, but once joining, we definitely will not be the first to leave them, to desert them.

Sixthly, predictability of the Czech policy in the above-mentioned sense is a must.

And last but not least, we struggle to persuade our partners in the European Union to develop a common Eastern policy of the European Union, a common European policy towards Eastern neighbours of the EU. As is well known, our closest allies in the EU Eastern policy are Poland and the Baltic states.

Concerning the Eastern policy, a lot has been said on the so-called “reset” between the United States and the Russian Federation. Our view from Central Europe is the following: as it takes two to tango, it takes two for a “reset”, and we have seen, so far, a willingness for a “reset” by only one.



Ladies and Gentlemen, let me conclude by addressing the challenging events of the “Arab Spring”. Firstly, we must be aware that there is a huge difference between particular Arab nations. Conditions in respective Arab countries are not identical. The most conducive conditions for a successful implementation of a liberal democracy are, by far, in Tunisia.

Secondly, we observe that pro-Western dictators abdicated their power without major or any bloodsheds; however those traditionally anti-Western ones have been more than ready to initiate bloodbaths in order to stay in power. That indicates a lot, for those willing to see. So far, the net result of the “Arab Spring” has been a weakening of Western influence in and on the Arab governments in the countries, which have already experienced the “Arab Spring”.

Thirdly, due to the turmoil in the Arab Sunni world, an increase in a relative influence of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the region of the Middle East could happen. Hence, it is our Western interest that a possible increase of the Iranian influence is not misused against peaceful and liberal developments, that could otherwise happen in the Middle East.

Thank you for your attention.