



CENTRUM TRANSATLANTICKÝCH VZTAHŮ
Prague Centre for Transatlantic Relations

PCTR Newsletter

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PCTR Bulletin

The Prague Centre for Transatlantic Relations of the CEVRO Institute (PCTR) and the Prague Security Studies Institute (PSSI) organized a public talk "The Middle East Democracy Dilemmas" within the 19th Forum 2000 Conference. The event took place on September 15 in the atrium of the CEVRO Institute. The public talk was opened by the PCTR Director Alexandr Vondra and moderated by Jan Fingerland (Analyst, Czech Radio).

The keynote speaker was Dr. Amin Tarzi, the Director of Middle East Studies at Marine Corps University in Quantico, Virginia, who started his talk with a comparison of the two latest American presidents and their respective Middle East policies. He also mentioned the power shift between Shiites and Sunnis after the fall of Saddam Hussein in Iraq or the Muslim Brotherhood rise to power in Egypt, where the undemocratic party used the democratic institution of elections to obtain a power. According to Dr. Tarzi, liberal society is not feasible without the freedom of religion and it is also not possible to deny the basic rights to half of the society – in this case to women – as we can see in many Islamic countries. Then, Dr. Tarzi focused on the issue of Islamism, its development, and the current situation.



The keynote speech was followed by the public debate that was mainly focused on current Middle East issues. The question was raised regarding the potential reestablishment of monarchies in the region.



In this respect, Dr. Tarzi compared two relatively stable monarchies in the region – while in Morocco the general perception of the monarch is positive, Jordan may be considered to be the most artificial state in the Middle East. When commenting on the current migration crisis Dr. Tarzi used his experience of being a three-time refugee. However, according to him, the new immigrants cannot expect that the majority society will adjust to newcomers. After arriving to the USA, learning the language was the essential part for him and he also described his decision to join the Marine Corps as an

expression of gratitude to his new country. Dr. Tarzi also noted that the immigrants to Europe should have similar attitude – ask not what the country can give them, ask what they can give to their new country.

We would like to thank CEVRO – Liberal Conservative Academy for their media cooperation.

Events in Euro-Atlantic relations (September 2015)

The United States government imposed on 2nd September sanctions on Russian armament companies. The sanctions affected not only the biggest Russian arms exporter Roboronexport, but also one of the largest companies in Russia – MiG. The sanctions were imposed due to missile technology transfers to China, Iran, and North Korea and thus nonproliferation agreements violation. The Russian Foreign Ministry strongly opposed the extension of sanctions. One of the affected companies is also Katod, a manufacturer of night vision goggles. Katod CEO then accused US government that with the new sanction the Americans are trying to get rid of unwelcomed competition to US companies.

<http://www.defensenews.com/story/breaking-news/2015/09/02/us-sanctions-rosoboronexport-other-russian-firms/71586410/>

A well-known American tycoon Donald Trump has pledged not to run as an independent candidate or for another political party if he were to lose the Republican nomination. He also added that in this case he would declare firm support to the winner of Republican primary. However, Trump was beaten in the latest candidate debate by former Hewlett-Packard CEO Carly Fiorina. Meanwhile, the former favorite of the race, 45th Governor of Wisconsin Scott Walker, has suspended his campaign. Donald Trump delivered a speech on board of USS Iowa where he promised to make America great again. He also again expressed his negative attitude towards the immigrants from Mexico.

<http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/guverner-walker-odstoupil-z-klani-o-bily-dum/1261257>,
<http://zahranicni.ihned.cz/amerika-usa/c1-64551380-pokud-trump-neuspeje-ve-strane-nebude-kandidovat-zavazal-se-ze-do-voleb-nepujde-jako-nezavisly>,
https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/trumps-sexism-and-fiorinas-dishonesty/2015/09/22/29f2a99e-615d-11e5-9757-e49273f05f65_story.html

American troops from the 2nd Cavalry Regiment stationed in Vilseck, Germany, passed through the Czech Republic from 9th to 14th September. The American convoy under the name "Danube Ride" headed to Hungary to participate in the "Brave Warrior" NATO military exercise. Similarly to the previous and more publicly visible convoy "Dragoon Ride" from the turn of March of this year, this convoy consisted of Stryker armored fighting vehicles together with logistic vehicles. Czech Army provided support in the form of fuel and accommodation for military personnel, while all costs associated with the relocation were paid entirely by the Americans.

<http://www.army.cz/scripts/modules/diary/action.php?id=3906>

On 9th September the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg visited the Czech Republic. Together with the Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka, they discussed the current security issues including the immigration influx to Europe or the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine. They also talked about the NATO action plan for Ukraine or the American troops passing through the Czech Republic within the "Danube Ride" shift.

<http://www.mocr.army.cz/informacni-servis/zpravodajstvi/generalni-tajemnik-nato-jens-stoltenberg-zahajil-navstevu-ceske-republiky-114177/>

On 10th September, Republicans in the United States Senate failed to block the nuclear deal with Iran. The Senate voted 58:42 and the required 60-vote threshold was thus not reached. This voting was also the last chance to block the adoption of the agreement in Senate.

<http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/live/2015/sep/10/iran-nuclear-deal-us-senate-vote-disapproval-live-updates>

The United States commemorated the 14th anniversary of the terrorist attacks from 11th September 2001. During these attacks, the two WTC buildings in New York were destroyed and the Pentagon in

Washington, D.C. was damaged. The victims from the United Airlines flight 93, which crashed in Pennsylvania, were also commemorated.

<http://www.stripes.com/news/full-text-of-president-obama-s-town-hall-meeting-at-fort-meade-sept-11-2015-1.367726>

The "Ample Strike 2015" military exercise of Forward Air Controllers took place in the Czech Republic. Participants from 18 countries – NATO and Partnership for Peace members – attended the training (as was already mentioned in our previous press monitoring).

<http://www.acr.army.cz/informacni-servis/zpravodajstvi/ample-strike-2015-je-v-polovine-114273/>

NATO Days in Ostrava and Czech Air Force Days were held between 17th and 20th September. The two-day event, which is the largest military show in the Czech Republic, was attended by 225 000 visitors. The greatest attraction was the famous strategic bomber Boeing B-52H Stratofortress. The aircraft manufactured in 1955 arrived to Mošnov from its home base in Barksdale, Louisiana. Besides the B-52, visitors had the unique opportunity to also see the Jordan's Female Company for Special Security Tasks or historical SAAB aircrafts. The large strategic and tactical airlifter MDD C-17 Globemaster III also received a lot of attention.

<http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct24/regiony/1587398-na-dny-nato-miri-do-mosnova-desetitisice-lidi>,
<http://www.natodays.cz/zpravy/dny-nato-potvrdivily-pozici-nejvetsi-bezpecnostni-show-v-evrope>

NATO and Ukraine agreed on 18th September on strengthening scientific cooperation within the Science for Peace and Security program. One of the goals is the establishment of multinational telemedicine system for emergency situations. The system would allow medical specialists to participate in case of military conflicts or natural disasters. The NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg attended a demonstration of this capability on 21st September in Lviv, Ukraine.

http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_122773.htm

After more than a year, the United States Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter telephoned on 18th September with his Russian counterpart Sergey Shoygu. For Secretary Carter it was the first dealing with his Russian counterpart ever. The subject of the call was, among others, the American and Russian joint action against ISIS and the Syrian conflict. According to Secretary Carter, the transition of power in Syria and the defeat of ISIS must be coordinated in conjunction. Later Pentagon statement declared that the United States are "open to tactical discussions with Russia". The Russian Federation has indeed increased its presence in the area. Two days before, the US Secretary of the State John Kerry spoke with the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. Secretary Kerry opposed Russian involvement in the Syrian War, namely the Russian support of Syrian President Assad. According to Kerry, Russian involvement may only lead to prolongation of the conflict. In early September, about 500 Russian soldiers, anti-aircraft systems, or T-90 tanks are located in Syria.

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/09/21/russia-to-start-bombing-in-syria-asap.html>,
<http://zahranicni.ihned.cz/amerika-usa/c1-64607760-usa-nesouhlasí-s-ruskou-pomocí-asadovi-krizi-v-syrii-to-pry-akorat-prodlouzi>, <http://zahranicni.ihned.cz/amerika-usa/c1-64622390-ministri-obrany-usa-a-ruska-spolu-po-vice-nez-roce-telefonovali-mluvili-o-reseni-valky-v-syrii>

On 22nd September, the EU foreign ministers accepted an agreement on the relocation of the 120 000 refugees that are currently located in the EU area. The Czech Republic, together with Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia was against the deal. Contrary to the Visegrad Group (V4) meetings where, according to the Czech Minister of the Interior Milan Chovanec, joint approach among V4 countries was agreed on, Poland voted for the refugees' quotas adoption. Robert Fico, the Prime Minister of Slovakia, stated that his country will not follow the quotas and that he is willing to dispute the EU decision. The current wave of immigration to the EU is one of the largest crises in the history of the EU. Some countries like Hungary, restored border controls or even closed the borders. The US President Obama telephoned with the German Chancellor Angela Merkel. They discussed the current immigration to Europe and the recent agreement on quotas. They also talked about the conflict in

Eastern Ukraine and they both agreed that Russia should follow the Minsk Agreements. Obama and Merkel noted that stabilization and the end of the war in Syria seems to be one of the solutions for the immigration crisis.

<http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct24/svet/1588874-schvaleno-ministri-vnitra-prijali-kvoty-na-prerozdeleni-120-tisic-migrantu>, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/09/23/readout-presidents-call-chancellor-angela-merkel-germany>

On 25th September General John R. Galvin died at age 86. The cause of death was complications of Parkinson's disease. Gen. Galvin participated in the Vietnam War and from 1987 to 1992 served as the NATO Supreme Allied Commander in Europe. Gen. Galvin retired in 1993.

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/01/us/gen-john-galvin-a-nato-supreme-allied-commander-dies-at-86.html?_r=3

France initiated airstrikes against ISIS in Syria. The Islamic State positions were bombed by French Rafale multirole fighters. According to the French President Francois Hollande, these strikes are to protect French citizens from the threat of terrorist attacks that are supposedly organized in Syria.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3250753/France-carried-air-strikes-against-ISIS-Syria-President-Francois-Hollande-says-country-s-national-security-stake.html>

The United Nations General Assembly session was held on 28th September in New York. The Czech President Miloš Zeman was among the speakers. He spoke about the need to fight against the Islamic State (ISIS). Overall, the ISIS was the session's main topic. The Russian President Vladimir Putin declared that forming an international coalition to fight against ISIS is needed. Later, President Putin met the American President Barack Obama. They discussed not only the situation in Eastern Ukraine, but also the conflict in Syria. The need for further reinforcements for the Iraqi army was also talked about at the UN General Assembly session.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/09/29/leaders-summit-countering-isil-and-violent-extremism>, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2015/09/28/obama-and-putin-discuss-ukraine-and-syria/73006110/>

The US Congress approved on 29th September a \$612 billion defense budget including the 1.3% pay raise and retirement system adjustment for US Military Force service members. This may help the 83% of troops who leaves the service with no retirement benefits.

<http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/capitol-hill/2015/09/29/ndaa-conference-deal/73036730/>

The Russian State Duma approved on 30th September Russian involvement in the conflict in Syria. This meant a breakthrough in Syrian conflict that was previously considered on theoretical level only. Russian fighter-bombers carried out strikes on Syrian territory. However, according to certain sources, Russia is attacking not only the ISIS positions but also the Syrian moderate opposition.

<http://zpravy.e15.cz/zahranicni/udalosti/putin-muze-zahajit-letecke-utoky-v-syrii-schvalil-mu-to-senat-1231774>

Slovakia and Poland agreed to build a Counter Intelligence Center of Excellence within NATO. The Memorandum of Understanding was signed in Norfolk, Virginia. The main goal of this center is standardization of counterintelligence procedures and documents among member states. Center will be in Krakow, Poland while Slovakia will provide Lest training center. Current Center member states are Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Germany, Italy, Romania, Croatia, and Slovenia. USA, UK, France and others will be joining the Center next year.

<http://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/369212-slovensko-s-polskom-zaklada-centrum-pre-kontrarozviedku/>