



THE WIKILEAKS CABLES AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE VISEGRAD COUNTRIES AND THE BALTIC STATES



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*The WikiLeaks Cables
and Their Impact
on the Visegrad Countries and the Baltic States*

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Introduction

The book is a result of a research project entitled “The WikiLeaks Cables and Their Impact on the Visegrad Countries and the Baltic States,” which was supported by the Small Grant of the International Visegrad Fund. The articles in this book are the proceedings of a conference held in Budapest in June 2012 in the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs.

The main objective of the project was to compare the effects of the WikiLeaks cables on the Visegrad and Baltic States regions regarding both foreign policy and domestic politics. There were four main research questions posed.

First, it asks whether the “CableGate” affair had any significant effect on domestic politics in the given country. Did the leaks play a role in the national elections anywhere in the region studied? Second, how can the general foreign policy-related impact of the WikiLeaks be assessed? Did it result in any turn in foreign policy? Third, what were the topics and issues particularly relevant for the State Department in the given country, in terms of both domestic and foreign policy? Finally, the research also studied the reactions of the wider public to the releases.

In addition to the work’s academic value, a specific policy-related objective of comparative research in this area should be the mapping of those issues and topics that are/were interesting for U.S. diplomacy. Identifying these “common denominators” may well contribute to the understanding of U.S. foreign policy objectives towards the wider Central European region.

Before going into detail, it is important to clarify the purpose of this book. The objective is to provide a comprehensive, methodologically well-grounded, lively and diverse picture of the ways in which the WikiLeaks cables affected the countries of the Visegrad region and the Baltic States. However, the book does not aspire to be any kind of a guide either to the WikiLeaks in general or to the “CableGate” affair in particular. Numerous descriptions, often almost user manuals, have already been published about the WikiLeaks, including the meanings of the codes and abbreviations used in the cables, etc. Hence, herein no detailed technical description is provided for the cables themselves, as all this information is easily accessible both on paper and on the internet. Instead of focusing concretely on the cables, this collection of studies concentrates on their impact on foreign policy and domestic politics in the region studied.

Methodological Considerations

When studying the WikiLeaks cables, one needs to face several methodological concerns, regarding both the content of the cables and the ways of analyzing them. Without being aware of these hardships, one may easily overestimate the information mentioned in the cables, may misunderstand their meaning, and may draw ungrounded conclusions from them.

The very first concern to be addressed is whether the cables are real at all. The other option could be that they are results of an immense, unprecedentedly massive fraud committed by some person or persons apparently anti-American, with the alleged objective of seriously damaging not only the worldwide image of U.S. diplomacy, but also of harming its practical means of operation due to the overall loss of confidence in U.S. diplomats, etc.

There are a number of very strong arguments to support the claim that the cables are real. First, the U.S. administration has been consistent in not commenting on the content of the cables, either in general or in any particular respect. However, no explicit denial regarding the overall reality of the cables has ever been issued by any U.S. official. Second, numerous State Department cables have been published earlier in a number of books,¹ where the system of labeling information was described in detail. These descriptions and terminology match the ones used in the WikiLeaks cables, and so do the abbreviations, the structures, and the so-called TAGS (Traffic Analysis by Geography and Subject) system. Third, the cables did not reveal much brand-new information, or at least not in the case of Central Europe and the Baltic States. There was nothing new of strategic importance in these cables that was not known factually before. The cables provided only details, although often very interesting and valuable ones, of the political processes that had already become known previously. Fourth, the trial against Bradley Manning, the former U.S. army intelligence analyst who allegedly leaked the information to WikiLeaks, also supports the argument that the published cables are real. So does the warning sent by the U.S. government to its allies in advance about the leaks coming.

Hence, considering all these factors, the current project is based on the assumption that the cables are real, and they are parts of the confidential exchange of information between the Department of State and various U.S. diplomatic representations abroad. However, even after adopting this starting hypothesis one still has to face numerous methodological difficulties.

The most important issue is what the cables are and what they are not. The leaked cables are predominantly reports of U.S. diplomats serving in various parts of the world in various U.S. representations, such as embassies, offices of representatives, etc. Out

of the 251,287 cables only 8,017 were sent by the Secretary of State Office, and thus only approximately 3 percent of the cables can be described as documents that originate from the center where foreign policy is made. The remaining 97 percent of the cables were sent from U.S. diplomatic posts abroad, and they are mostly reports, analyses and suggestions, besides a great deal of administrative material, such as personnel issues, etc. Hence, the cables cannot simply be considered to directly represent official U.S. foreign policy. They have, in some cases at least, contributed to the making of U.S. foreign policy, but are not policy-setting documents.

Moreover, the cables originate only from State Department actors (either the center in Washington D.C. or the representations abroad.) Practically nothing is known about what other actors of the U.S. security community reported to Washington, for example the Department of Defense, the intelligence agencies and others, even though reports and analyses from these agencies also contribute to the central foreign and security policy decision-making of the U.S.

A content-related concern is that what the U.S. diplomats wrote in the cables does not necessarily correspond to objective, factual reality. Diplomats reported according to their own interpretation of the given events, influenced by their own values and background knowledge. In other words, concerning their content, most analytical cables have, by definition, a subjective approach. Another problem is that one cannot be sure whether the subject of an interview (for example, an expert or a politician) was telling the full truth, whether the diplomat interpreted it correctly, and whether he/she was aware of all the circumstances that were necessary for providing a proper interpretation. Thus the cables should not be handled as factual reality in themselves, but rather as subjective perceptions and interpretations thereof.

Moreover, it is not known what share of the total number of diplomatic cables the leaked ones represent. In many cases there are obvious gaps in the row of the leaked cables, simply shown by their numbering. Furthermore, their distribution in time is also very uneven. For example, in Hungary September–October 2006 was an extremely turbulent period due to the riots that took place in the heart of Budapest, in fact very close to the U.S. Embassy. However, from September there are only four (!) cables available, and only eleven from October, while even from the relatively calm period of February 2007 eighteen cables were made available. One can almost be sure that in the busy autumn days of 2006, when even the possibility of the collapse of the government could not be excluded, U.S. diplomats in Budapest produced many more reports, analyses and other messages than the leaked ones.

Therefore, taking into account the gaps in the numbering and the uneven distribution of the cables in time, one has to be extremely careful when trying to analyze what depth of information U.S. diplomats had about a given issue. One may rely only on the leaked cables, while the content of the non-leaked ones in most

cases cannot even be guessed. In many cases it is quite probable that the leaked cables represent only a minor share of the lot sent and received in connection with a given issue.

In other words, the cables reveal only what issues the U.S. diplomats were certainly interested in. However, one cannot define either what exactly they knew about the given topics or the complete pool of issues that were interesting for them. The cables provide only a limited insight, not more.

All in all, it is difficult to define what the cables are from the perspective of foreign policy analysis. It is much easier to conclude what they are not. They surely do not represent the official U.S. foreign policy line, and nor do they represent the full scale and depth of information that the U.S. foreign policy decision-makers had about the given issues. In most cases they are not policy-setting documents or orders, but subjective reports, analyses and sometimes recommendations, in addition to reports on numerous administrative measures.

Hence, one may argue that the real added value of the cables lies not in their factual content, but in their style. For example, it has clearly turned out from the cables that U.S. diplomats reported even from the most confidential meetings, including those where the subject openly asked for matters to be off the record. The often informal, not always polite, language and wording of the cables was also a surprise for many, who had got used to the very rigid, formal languages used in many other foreign policy administrations.

The cables revealed for the wider public the system used by U.S. diplomats for the exchange of classified information, the so-called SIPRnet (Secret Internet Protocol Router Network). There exists a second, parallel system as well, called NIPRnet (Non-classified Internet Protocol Router Network) that is used for exchanging less sensitive information. Before “CableGate”, the public was hardly aware of the existence of these systems. Originally the SIPRnet was developed and operated by the Department of Defense, and access was extended after 9/11 in order to improve the exchange of information between various U.S. governmental agencies. This strongly interconnected system enabled Bradley Manning to leak the approximately 250,000 cables to the WikiLeaks website.

The book contains six country studies, covering the cases of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Unfortunately, the case of Slovakia could not be covered due to *vis maior* circumstances. All the authors use slightly different approaches to the research questions set, depending on the number and content of the cables dealing with their respective countries. In certain cases, for example regarding Latvia, more attention is paid to domestic politics, while the study on Hungary focuses more explicitly on issues of foreign and security policy. While in the cases of the Baltic republics, according to the cables, the U.S. diplomacy paid a

lot of attention to the relationship with Russia, in the Visegrad cases there is no such prioritized topic, although Russia still enjoys a high level of attention.

All six country studies come to similar conclusions in the sense that the leaked cables did not cause any significant turn in terms of foreign policy. The basically pro-Atlanticist approach of the national governments did not change, despite the often critical tone used by U.S. diplomats in some of the cables. The countries of the region remained strongly connected to the U.S. both in terms of fundamental values and main policy interests, regardless of the leaks. The fact that not much completely new information was published by the WikiLeaks has certainly contributed to keeping the level of damage inflicted by the leaks relatively low. In short, one may conclude that although the leaks were inconvenient for all national governments involved, in the field of foreign policy they did not cause anything other than temporary embarrassment.

However, the publication of the cables caused many, mostly corruption-related, scandals in the domestic politics of the given countries, particularly in Latvia and Estonia. Nevertheless, they did not seem to have a direct effect on the elections anywhere. Another common element is the fact that the information published by WikiLeaks was used highly selectively by the various media agencies in every country, depending on their political affiliations and preferences.

This leads to an additional conclusion: despite the often wide media coverage, very little systematic research has been conducted on the WikiLeaks, particularly by comparing various country cases. The experience of the project “The WikiLeaks Cables and Their Impact on the Visegrad Countries and the Baltic States” confirms that there is indeed room for such comparative projects focusing on the WikiLeaks matter. They not only contribute to a deeper understanding of U.S. interests and policies, but also help to extend knowledge of the domestic politics of the individual countries studied.

The editor would like to hereby express his gratitude to all the contributors of this book, including his fellow colleagues at the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs, and, last but not least to the International Visegrad Fund for supporting this research project.

Budapest, January 2013

The Editor

Notes

- 1 See, for example, Raymond F. Smith, *The Craft of Political Analysis for Diplomats* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2011), pp. 85, 97, 106.

The WikiLeaks on Estonia

Leonid Karabeshkin

Introduction

The total number of cables from the U.S. Embassy in Tallinn contains about 600 items for the period 2006–2010. This seems to be a big number, although it is clear that Estonia has never been a primary focus of the U.S. State Department. The picture of Estonian foreign and domestic politics was quite comprehensive. The external issues covered included such issues as Estonian foreign policy priorities and security policy, including transatlantic solidarity and participation in overseas operations, support for U.S. initiatives internationally, economic and technological cooperation with the U.S., and Estonia's relations with other countries of interest to the U.S.. A substantial proportion of Tallinn's Embassy cables is devoted to Estonian–Russian relations, which intersects with the internal issue of the domestic integration of ethnic minorities (first and foremost the Russian-speaking one). Other internal issues of major interest include electoral prospects and results, as well as energy security and transit. The special agenda not specific to Estonia includes protection of intellectual property, fighting digital piracy and cybercrimes.

The form of material subject to analysis is highly correct and polite, which does not exclude some points of friendly criticism on such questions as the status of the Russian-speaking minority and relations with Russia, as well as Estonia's approach to security and defense.

The publication of WikiLeaks did not provoke a large-scale discussion in society or the media. Only a few issues resulted in minor scandals, and these did not lead to meaningful political changes.

Estonian Foreign and Security Policy

The WikiLeaks cables discussed several fields and issues of the foreign and security policy of Estonia.

Foreign and Security Policy Priorities

The U.S. traditionally views Estonia as an ally in the NATO and pro-American force inside the European Union. There is a clear domestic political consensus on the issue: "Estonia has consistently supported U.S. positions within NATO and has voiced opposition to a European Security Defense Policy (ESDP) rivaling or duplicating NATO's role."¹

The security and defense policy of Estonia merited a mostly positive evaluation and support from U.S. diplomats. They stated that Estonia is committed to alliance relations with the USA and NATO. In a practical sense, there is a consolidated support for the operation in Afghanistan, while the continuation of the presence in Iraq depends on the results of discussion in the U.S.; Estonia is committed to spending 2 percent of its GDP on defense and to increasing the number of deployable troops.

The slight criticism by U.S. diplomats was caused by over-concentration on internal (territorial) defense, explained by the potential Russian threat. As is stressed in one of the cables,

expenditures on internal defense will compete for shrinking resources Estonia needs for the development of a lighter, more agile and deployable force capable of supporting NATO and other international operations. Both State and DoD [Department of Defense – LK] offices reiterate the need for Estonia to develop a modern military useful to NATO, and not focus on heavy armor to repel a land attack from the east. We will continue to look for opportunities to promote Estonian-Russian engagement and to allay Estonia's security concerns.²

The discussed possibility of Estonia's establishing its own air-policing by 2018 (alongside the existing NATO AP mission in the Baltic States) was called "a bad use of limited military resources."³

Although the promises of increasing overseas deployment have been unrealized, American diplomats found objective reasons for this, such as lack of "experienced and sustainable cadres of forces." So the U.S. Embassy periodically encouraged U.S. military assistance to Estonia, which is "well-worth the time and money spent."⁴ Estonia was praised for being "one of the few countries in the region nearing its target of spending two percent of GDP on defense, even during the current economic downturn."⁵ Furthermore, it was stressed that there were no "caveats" in Estonia's operations in Afghanistan. While talking about military cooperation, American diplomats did not forget about lobbying for the interests of the American military industry.⁶

After the EU enlargement Estonia's foreign policy was objectively subject to an increased European agenda, which caused some jealousy on the part of U.S. diplomats. In one of the scenesetters for an official arriving in Tallinn, it is recommended to "press

Estonia to be active in voicing its support for strong transatlantic ties within EU and international fora [because] Estonia has the tendency of wanting to play the 'good European' by being silent on EU matters..."⁷

The cables confirm the assumption that the U.S. is interested in using its allies to help to achieve the required positions of the EU. True, "GOE [government of Estonia – LK] officials often describe Estonia's approach within EU structures as 'pragmatic'. As a small country Estonia recognizes the extent to which it can influence EU policy."⁸ However, the Embassy proposes to "urge Estonia to continue to take a proactive role in EU discussions on energy security."⁹ Recognizing an over-concentration of Estonian diplomacy on the Russia-related agenda, it is recommended to "encourage Estonia to take an active role in the EU on issues aside from Russia and to continue to develop a more practical dialogue with Russia."¹⁰

U.S. diplomats provided assessments of the personal foreign policy preferences of Estonian politicians. So Prime Minister Andrus Ansip is characterized as being "ardently pro-American, a leading advocate for Estonia's military engagements abroad."¹¹ President T.-H. Ilves was expected to pursue a more liberal economic policy and a more pro-U.S. foreign policy, making efforts to strengthen transatlantic ties.¹² At the same time, "Ilves wants Estonia to have a more vocal and active presence in Brussels." Soon after he was elected as president he announced his intentions to place Estonia "among the generators of ideas in Europe, to speak up in EU debates on behalf of Estonia and aspirant countries, and to help increase the influence of the EU's new member countries in the formulation of common EU policy."¹³

After the accession to EU and NATO (2004), like other Baltic States, Estonia was looking for a foreign policy niche in European politics. Bearing in mind the growing deterioration of Russian–Western relations and the increased interest of U.S. and Europe in the post-Soviet space, Estonia became an active player in neighborhood policy. This was welcomed by the U.S.: "Estonia's support for U.S. positions through its promotion of democracy within the region (primarily Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and the Balkans) and participation in international peacekeeping operations remains strong."¹⁴ One of the cables argued that Estonian experience is valued by post-Soviet counterparts, while the Estonian government "believes that long-term regional security and stability ultimately depend on these countries moving closer to Brussels and farther away from Moscow."¹⁵

Support for the U.S. in International Fora

The U.S. regularly indicated interest in ensuring Estonia's support for its policies worldwide. For instance, Estonia (together with the Czech Republic, Poland and some other new EU member states) shared the U.S. concern over the Spanish Minister of

Foreign Affairs' visit to Cuba. This may be shown with reference to the position of the Estonian Minister of Foreign Affairs, who said that Estonia "understands dictators such as Castro and what they can do to their people, and does not see any reason to ease up on him now."¹⁶ In a similar way, Estonia supported the U.S. positions on sanctions against Iran,¹⁷ climate change, the situation in Somalia, Haiti and Yemen, etc. Estonia agreed to consider the opportunity of accepting one or more detainees from Guantanamo prison for resettlement, but made the reservation that it would not agree to hold a Uighur, due to China's negative position to that.¹⁸

At the same time, these issues were peripheral for Estonian diplomacy, a fact that was noticed by U.S. diplomats. They claim that responses to many issues were often "thin," because Estonia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs is "thinly staffed, and most Estonian diplomats are focused on European issues, Russia or a few global and hot spots. Coverage of other areas is often superficial at best [...] Several Estonian diplomats have told us their only source of information on many countries comes from the media."¹⁹

The points of disagreement were mostly insignificant. For instance, Estonia does not share a number of U.S. positions on the environment, e.g. on the preservation of polar bears.²⁰ Another story included refusal to accept a detainee from Guantanamo for resettlement, a matter that became an issue of media coverage and would then be reviewed further.

Estonia's Relations with Countries of Special Interest – "Read-Outs"

The U.S. conducted "read-outs" of contacts of Estonian officials with representatives of some countries sensitive for U.S. foreign policy. The list of these countries included China, Belarus and Russia.

Following the visit of the Chinese delegation to Tallinn at the beginning of November 2009, the U.S. Embassy quoted an official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who characterized the interest of China as mostly economic. She expressed the impression that Estonia appeared to be "too small a market for China, and noted that the Chinese promised nothing concrete or detailed." The government of Estonia expressed interest in widening trade and technological cooperation with China, and Prime Minister Ansip proposed to increase air cargo transit through Tallinn Airport. The head of the Chinese delegation complained that it was difficult to receive over-flight permission through Russia.²¹ It is remarkable that there were no objections on the part of the U.S. on widening contacts with China: "These agreements will help promote Estonia as a desirable transit point for trade between the EU and the Far East. They may also enable Estonian transit companies to reduce dependence on Russian goods."²²

After the visit of Minister of Foreign Affairs Urmas Paet to Minsk on October 20–21, 2009, the read-out took place on its content. As mentioned, Paet had a personal meeting

with Lukashenko, which lasted 90 minutes instead of the arranged 30. This happened for the third time in the diplomatic history of Belarus. Lukashenko assured Paet that Estonia is not an enemy for Belarus, while Russia could be. Lukashenko said that he hoped that the Nordic countries would ban the Nordstream project, and that a new branch of the “Yamal” gas pipeline through Belarus would be installed. Furthermore, he claimed to be “forced to recognize South Ossetia and Abkhazia this winter in order to get cheaper energy from Russia,”²³ accusing Russia of triggering the war in Georgia. Minister Paet tried to convince Lukashenko that NATO is not a threat for Belarus, but the Belarusian leader reportedly “did not buy it.”²⁴

The Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the U.S. Embassy about contacts with Russian diplomats. For instance, it was briefed on the content of Russia’s Ambassador Nikolay Uspensky’s visit to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where he outlined Russia’s reasons for recognizing South Ossetian and Abkhazian independence.²⁵ The U.S. Embassy recommended the Deputy Assistant to the Secretary of State to “solicit views and insight on key regional challenges vis-à-vis Russia.”²⁶

Estonian–Russian Relations and Domestic Integration

Estonia’s relations with Russia occupy a substantial portion of special and general U.S. Embassy *dépêche*. This provides for a clear picture of Estonian foreign policy thinking. The events around the Bronze Soldier in Tallinn (April 26–27, 2007) contributed to extended lightening of the issue and required coordination with other diplomatic representations, first and foremost in Moscow. The amount of material devoted to this subject grew exponentially as a result of the demolition of the monument to the Soviet Soldier-Liberator in one of the central squares, and its removal (or, in the official discourse, relocation) to the military cemetery at the outskirts of Tallinn, initiated by the ruling coalition (April 26–27, 2007). This act was perceived negatively by the Russian-speaking community, and was accompanied by public protests and disorder, as well as bringing about the deterioration of Estonian–Russian relations.

Estonia has traditionally had a cautious approach to economic cooperation with Russia, being afraid of “emergence of sizable players with unknown background who might seek to influence the domestic and foreign policy decisions of the country’s institutions.”²⁷ In this context, according to Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials, there were differences between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Economy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs commissioned a special report on the role of Russia’s investment in sensitive areas such as media, energy and transit.

In September 2006 the cable indicated a moderate optimism on the prospects of improving bilateral relations present both among Estonian officials and Russian diplomats. Although the issue of the border treaty ratification (the Border Treaty

between Russia and Estonia was signed in 2005, but ratified by the Estonian Parliament with reference to the Tartu Peace Treaty of 1920, which was unacceptable for Russia) was not on Estonia's agenda, the recent visits of Estonia's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Russia's Minister of Transport contributed to a more positive atmosphere.²⁸

As reported, "The government [of Estonia – LK] is keen to have its foreign policy 'move beyond Russia', as some MFA [Ministry of Foreign Affairs – LK] interlocutors have put it." It is further interpreted that this means continuation of practical projects in economic sphere without initiating bilateral normalization, including resolving the border treaty issue.²⁹

The Bronze Soldier in the Cables

As early as in May 2006, the U.S. Embassy indicated an escalation of the discussion on the Bronze Soldier among the ruling coalition, witnessing Prime Minister Ansip's desire to relocate the monument. One of the cables defined the neutral U.S. position: "We plan to keep our distance from this debate. If asked, we will say this is a matter for Estonia to resolve."³⁰

At the same time it is recognized that the plans of the coalition to demolish the monument of the Bronze Soldier put at risk any cooperative efforts in relations with Russia. It is stated that the Party of Reforms (the leading force of the coalition) stood behind the removal of the monument: a high-ranking unnamed representative stated that "If it wasn't [the statue] Moscow would find something else to criticize us for... that's how the Russians are."³¹

On just the next day after the demolition of the Bronze Soldier, the U.S. Embassy in Tallinn informed Washington that the very process of excavation took place without great incidents, but interlocutors in the Security Police (KAPO) were ready for protests deriving from both local and external sources. The source in KAPO said that Minister of Foreign Affairs Urmas Paet "gave KAPO the green light to embarrass the Russians." According to the information from the Ministry of the Interior announced on the governmental meeting, up to 400 Russian nationals could be sent to Estonia to participate in the protests. The Director General of the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Siimu Tikk (also Ambassador in Moscow in 2009–2012), alleged that Tallinn had tried to involve Moscow in cooperation on the issue for at least a year, but this proposal was rejected. Although it is the Party of Reforms that was a driving force behind the demolition, the provocative behavior of Moscow enhanced coalition solidarity. Furthermore, interlocutors from different agencies stressed that any step back would result in disastrous consequences for the Estonian government.³²

The following day the U.S. Embassy in Tallinn gave more details and comments on the night's demolition of the monument. The most interesting among them include

the recognition of Andreas Kaju, Advisor to the Minister of Defense, that the protest events were not organized (although there was later a year-long court trial aimed at charging four persons with plotting and organizing the protests), as well as of the Head of the Integration of Non-Estonians Foundation, Tanel Mätlik, who expressed concern that the events would seriously damage trust between the titular nation and the Russian-speaking community. An MP from the Party of Reforms, Sergei Ivanov, said to the Embassy that he had warned Prime Minister Andrus Ansip that demolition of the monument was a mistake, leading to a deterioration of relations with Russia and complications with the USA.³³

On May 2, 2007, U.S. Ambassador Philipps wrote about briefing for diplomats, organized by the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, devoted to the situation around the Estonian Embassy in Moscow. It was noted that Estonia is going to urge the EU to assist Estonia in resolving this issue, at the same time recommending the State Department to make a diplomatic demarche to Russian Embassy in Washington.³⁴

The next day the expectations of Estonian authorities in terms of international support were clarified. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Head Paet made it clear that rigid EU reaction should mean “suspension of EU–Russia negotiations and postponement of the EU–Russia Summit.” President T.-H. Ilves privately formulated the Estonian position: “No more ‘even-handed’ statements, that it is time for the EU to take a side.”³⁵

The U.S. Mission in Moscow undertook some efforts to support Tallinn. The U.S. Chief in Moscow William Burns informed the State Department that he had had two meetings with higher officials from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and warned them against imposing sanctions in the energy sphere.³⁶ Furthermore, the U.S. Embassy in Moscow mentions the meeting of State Secretary Assistant Daniel Fried with Russian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Grigory Karasin, which took place on May 15. The American official expressed his commitment to sovereignty and independence of Russia’s neighbors and rejected spheres of influence, at the same time reassuring Moscow that Washington is urging Estonia to “develop good relations with Russia and not provoke it.” Furthermore, it was recognized that “Estonia’s actions in removing the Soviet WWII memorial were not wise, and we told the Estonians so” [no evidence of that is found in U.S. cables from Tallinn – LK]. Simultaneously, Karasin was quoted as recognizing Russia’s response as not “elegant.”³⁷ He must have had in mind the protest actions of the pro-Kremlin youth movement *Nashi*.

On May 11 the U.S. Embassy from Tallinn informed that the Estonian government appreciated the U.S. support. Prime Minister Ansip said in a phone call that “We don’t want to be a trouble-maker or create problems for our allies, but Russia’s behavior is ‘awful.’” Simultaneously, the Head of the Ministry of Defense (responsible for the monument’s demolition) Jäak Aaviksoo complained that Europe was a little bit slow with support: “U.S. government has a better understanding of what is going on in

Russia right now than West European governments do.”³⁸ He said that Russia’s strategic goal is to split solidarity in Europe.

According to WikiLeaks, Europe was far from showing unanimous support for Estonia. Germany tried to reconcile Estonia and Russia, contributing to the visit of Russia’s State Duma delegation to Tallinn, which took place on April 30–May 1, 2007. The very visit, as appears from the cable, became possible due to the phone conversation of Ansip with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, which took place on April 27.³⁹ Furthermore, as recognized in the cable from the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, the temporary departure of Estonian Ambassador to Moscow Marina Kaljurand, after the blockade of the Embassy organized by the pro-Kremlin youth movement *Nashi*, was a part of a “face-saving deal worked out between the Estonians and the EU Presidency – Germany – and the GOR [government of Russia – LK].”⁴⁰

Gradually the tough position of Estonian authorities vis-à-vis Russia was evolving. An official from Estonia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs was quoted as stating that Estonia had and would continue to urge the EU to unite behind “strict talk with Russia [...] and a strong position – the only thing the Russians understand,”⁴¹ rejecting the usefulness of direct working contacts with Russian officials. At the same time, Estonia claimed not to be interested in blocking Russia–EU negotiations on the new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, which is different from the previously sounded position.

The U.S. Embassy also tried to evaluate the possible consequences of the political crisis in Estonian–Russian relations for the economy. It appeared that the sources in business underestimated the negative repercussions of the Bronze Soldier’s demolition. A source in oil transit business expressed hope that after a slight decrease the volume of oil transit would be restored, because it would be too expensive to re-orient supply (which did not happen in reality). The exports of agricultural products to Russia are viewed as insignificant (only (!) 23 percent of total export of this type).⁴²

A lot of attention has been paid to the cyber-attack against governmental and private institutions in Estonia, reportedly initiated from Russia (despite the lack of any direct evidence). The topic of the Bronze Soldier was gradually turning into a cyber-attack against Estonia. The U.S. Ambassador claimed that “Estonia has been the victim of the world’s first coordinated cyber-attacks against a nation state and its political and economic infrastructure.”⁴³ At the same time, one of the previous cables cited the expert sources from the area, which assured the Embassy that there were no real facts proving that Russia was to be blamed.⁴⁴

Frozen Relations with Russia

A message belonging already to 2009 stressed that the Estonian government would keep to the same strategy of handling relations with Russia on the working level, while further improvements were not expected. The August 2008 war in Georgia

convinced Estonian decision-makers that Russia represented the main security threat, which required a strengthening of defense capabilities. The U.S. Embassy in Tallinn reported that “strong but narrowly-focused US Government support has been and will continue to be vital to encourage GOE [Government of Estonia – LK] efforts to build a constructive bilateral relationship with Russia that remains focused on shared US/EU/NATO goals.”⁴⁵

The years after the Bronze Soldier incident were marked by a continuous stagnating crisis in bilateral relations. The U.S. Embassy in Tallinn’s cables showed that there was both rational restraint and irrational “paranoia” on the part of the Estonian government, while Moscow expected positive signals from Tallinn.

The Prime Minister’s Advisor Sillaste-Elling explained the rationale behind the tempered policy towards Russia pursued by the government of Estonia. She said that taking a more proactive stance with Russia is politically risky for Estonia, both domestically and within the EU. At home, any effort by PM Ansip to engage directly with either Putin or Medvedev would open him up to significant criticism from political rivals, regardless of the outcome. GOE [government of Estonia – LK] officials believe making overtures to Moscow is also risky for Estonia within the EU. The GOE is very concerned that if it reaches out to Moscow, other EU members will use the opportunity to pressure Estonia to make further concessions the country is not willing to make.⁴⁶

Simultaneously, Estonian politicians vowed that they were in favor of an EU and NATO common position towards Russia, regretting that it was not a matter of fact, due to numerous reasons. Head of the International Committee of the Riigikogu (Parliament) Marko Mihkelson lamented the EU’s lack of consistency in its approach to Russia, noting that not isolating Russia appeared to be more important to some countries than supporting new democracies on the Russian belt.⁴⁷

Estonian President Ilves publicly urged NATO to develop a coherent strategy to deal with a “belligerent, aggressive Russia,” but privately he admitted NATO’s inability to do so.⁴⁸ Minister of Defense Jäak Aaviksoo claimed that “real security concerns for NATO members are energy security and managing Russia’s decline.”⁴⁹ Minister of Finance Jurgen Liigi welcomed growing EU activism in energy security, while noting that at the same time Estonia preferred abstaining from too loud a position, being afraid of being perceived just as a “hostile little neighbor of Russia.”⁵⁰

Alongside rational calculations, the negative stereotypes and prejudices affected Estonian political thinking. The U.S. Embassy cables qualified it as “an almost-paranoid perception of an imminent Russian attack.”⁵¹ One of the governmental officials explained the poor relations between Estonia and Russia by referring to Putin’s personal prejudices:

Estonian-Russian relations are decided by Putin, not the Kremlin or MFA [Ministry of Foreign Affairs – LK], and Putin has a personal gripe with Estonia. [...] Putin's probable father parachuted into Estonia during World War II. He was subsequently betrayed to the Germans by Estonian peasants, escaped, but was wounded in the attempt. Therefore while relations can be fine at the working level, they are difficult at the political level.⁵²

The U.S. Embassy tried to sound out the opportunities of improving relations with Russia, suggesting that a common border with it could be an economic advantage for Estonia. Minister of Finance Ligi agreed with that, but noted that “no matter what the GOE [Government of Estonia – LK] does, the Kremlin and its politics controls the relationship.” Furthermore, Ligi believed that the stronger Estonia is militarily, the more confident it is in economic relations with Russia.⁵³ Minister of the Economy and Communications Juhan Parts “agreed with the Ambassador that the proximity of the Russian market provides an excellent opportunity for Estonia, particularly for transit trade, despite ongoing political tensions between the two countries.”⁵⁴ He added, however, that it is the lack of will in Moscow that prevents relations from improving.

Domestic Integration of Russian-Speakers

One of the cables gives a picture of the school reform, which suggests a transition of the Russian-language high schools to partial instruction in the Estonian language (60 percent of the total study load). The diplomats repeat the arguments mostly used by the official authorities in favor of the reform, including increased competitiveness of the graduates on the labor market and access to higher education, which is predominantly in Estonian. Furthermore, it is mentioned that school reform is a part of the integration program, aimed at greater societal cohesion, which is negatively affected by the Russian (and mostly Russia-produced) information space. Simultaneously, it is mentioned that the transition does not meet severe public resistance, and to a growing extent schoolchildren are eager to study in Estonian. Nevertheless, it is recognized that “language remains a sensitive political issue in Estonia.”⁵⁵ Another cable mostly quotes the opinion of the Russian-speakers from Narva (Estonia's third-largest city, 98 percent of the population of which are Russian-speakers), who worry about the outcomes of instruction in the Estonian language, as well as about the opportunities of preserving Russian ethnic identity.⁵⁶

U.S. diplomats welcomed the initiative of Minister of the Interior Marko Pomerants to open a governmental Russian-language newspaper to translate the official position to the Russian-speaking population, which according to the opinion prevailing among

the political elite is influenced by an adversarial Russian media space. The U.S. cable resumes that “while we need to watch carefully how the Russian-speaking community greets the greater involvement in integration of Estonia’s security service, in principle we support Pomerants’ initiative, and we welcome his ideas on creating media alternatives, albeit more private than government ones to enhance their credibility, to the Moscow muckrakers.”⁵⁷ The idea of the minister was not put into action.

Another cable, covering the domestic integration and economic situation in northeast Estonia, mentioned the initiative of the Narva City Council Chairman Mikhail Stalnukhin to erect a small monument to Peter the Great, which was strongly opposed by Prime Minister Andrus Ansip. The U.S. Embassy expressed the opinion that “the GOE [government of Estonia – LK] should make concessions (such as on Peter the Great) to keep the situation calm and avoid any repeat of the April 2007 riots.”⁵⁸

So the concern with domestic integration is expressed in a friendly way towards the state, revealing the U.S. interest in domestic stability rather than a desire to improve the situation with the lower political and economic status of the Russian-speaking minority. An indication of such an attitude is provided by one of the cables, which states that “Russian speakers in Tartu [Estonia’s second-largest city – LK] are few in number and generally well-assimilated.”⁵⁹

Public Influence of the WikiLeaks: Minor Scandals Only

In general, the release of WikiLeaks materials had a minimal impact on public opinion and on foreign and domestic policy. Both U.S. diplomats and Estonian officials did their best to minimize the possible negative consequences for bilateral relations. U.S. Ambassador to Estonia Michael Polt published an article entitled *Estonia and the U.S.: Rock-Solid Allies* in the opinion section of the country’s largest daily newspaper, *Postimees*. In particular, he regretted the disclosure of confidential information, and claimed that “diplomats’ internal reports do not represent a government’s official foreign policy.” At the same time, he said that Estonian diplomats write similar reports about U.S. economic and political life, as well as giving some private assessments. His article finished with the following: “President Obama, Secretary Clinton, and I remain committed to being trusted partners as we seek to build a better, more prosperous world for everyone.”⁶⁰ The Head of Estonia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs Urmas Paet confirmed that “U.S. Embassy representatives in Tallinn turned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and informed us that such a leak is coming.”⁶¹ Former Head of External Intelligence E.-N. Kross commented that “[...] judgments about the profile of some Estonian politician or diplomat [...] are only the personal matters of a few. There is nothing there that would harm bilateral relations.”⁶²

Some telling stories that became subject to public interest could be characterized as “fun facts”. One of them relates to the period of the presidential campaign of 2006, when one of the two candidates, the former Head of Estonia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, T.-H. Ilves, said that he would not like to become president. At the beginning of a meeting with an Embassy officer he announced: “So, I guess you want to know why I want this job. Well, I don’t want it.” According to the cable, “Ilves explained that twice before he has sacrificed a comfortable life to serve his country – once when he gave up his position as head of Radio Free Europe’s Estonian Section to become Ambassador to Washington, and again when he agreed to become Minister of Foreign Affairs. Ilves claimed to have no interest in committing himself to a life of near poverty for his country for a third time, especially for a job that has as little power as that of Estonia’s president.”⁶³ Ilves explained that he had to run because he could not stomach the prospect of five more years of [previous President and the former Head of the Supreme Council of the Estonian SSR – LK] Rüütel and his “kolkhoz [Soviet collective farm – LK] manager mentality.”⁶⁴ Meanwhile, the U.S. Embassy supplied a personal picture of Ilves, citing the widespread opinion of him as an “arrogant and aloof but intellectual”⁶⁵ politician. The leader of the Social Democratic Party (of Ilves), Ivari Padar, commented that Ilves really did not want to become a President.

Another story is connected to the then Minister of Justice Rein Lang, who celebrated his fiftieth birthday in a Nazi uniform and with a performance of the play *Adolf*. After that he was accused of anti-Semitism and was forced to appeal to Rabbi Shmuel Kot for support. Rabbi Kot confirmed this fact, claiming that he likes Lang personally and is not offended by his action.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, he refused to support Lang politically. In public comments Lang tried to explain that *Adolf* is an anti-fascist play. Furthermore, he denied the very suggestion of his asking for the Rabbi’s help, alleging it to have been inflamed by Russian intelligence and carried out at the hands of “foolish opposition.” This story had no negative repercussions for Rein Lang’s political career: he is currently the Minister of Culture.

After the WikiLeaks materials became public at the end of 2010, an anonymous source in the President’s Office expressed concern that some cables could contain sharp personal assessments made by President T.-H. Ilves regarding some prominent politicians, including acting Prime Minister A. Ansip.⁶⁷ This could negatively affect the commitment of the ruling coalition to support the re-election of Ilves in 2011 for a second term. In reality, these worries were unrealistic, and no materials of this type were found in the cables. T.-H. Ilves was easily re-elected by the ruling majority in Parliament.

One of the cables explained the reasons behind the weakness of Russian ethnic parties, which had failed to enter Parliament since the late 1990s. Then the ethnic Russian member of Parliament from the ruling Party of Reforms Sergei Ivanov

alleged that “during the early 1990s, the Estonian security police, KAPO, purposefully ‘destroyed’ the Russian political elite for fear that Russia would use them as a means of influence.”⁶⁸ When asked to comment on this information, Sergei Ivanov called this statement “bullshit,” claiming not to hold this position.⁶⁹

One more story revealed some inconsistency between the rhetoric of Estonian officials and the facts present in U.S. Embassy cables. According to the latter, Estonian officials, including President T.-H. Ilves, promised to help the U.S. in holding one or more detainees from the Guantanamo detention camp. Moreover, the personal files of three persons were submitted to the Estonian government for consideration. According to the leading Estonian newspaper *Postimees*, Minister of Foreign Affairs Paet many times denied the existence of any U.S. address to Estonia. After the WikiLeaks materials became public, Paet alleged that the U.S. appeal was not official. The Head of the Foreign Affairs Committee of Parliament said that Paet did not inform that body that Estonia had received any such personal files. Finally, Estonia refused to accept the detainees. U.S. Ambassador Polt diplomatically recognized the very fact of bilateral consultations on the issue, and expressed respect for the sovereign decision of Estonia.⁷⁰ This story had no implications for the personal career of Minister of Foreign Affairs Paet, and nothing was reported about changes in foreign policy decision-making.

Conclusion

The leaked U.S. cables have not revealed anything substantially new about U.S. interests in relation to Estonia, or about domestic policy and foreign policy thinking there. Although the opposition tried to accuse Estonian diplomacy of being subordinated to the U.S. Embassy, this could not negatively affect its image, since a pro-American orientation is taken for granted. At the same time, the material subjected to analysis here does not allow us to claim that Estonia is a puppet state of the U.S. in the region. Rather, it speaks about a greater degree of compatibility between American and Estonian policies.

Notes

- 1 Cable id. 06TALLINN888, *Scenesetter for EUR DAS Pekala's Visit to Tallinn*, October 3–4, September 27, 2006.
- 2 Cable id. TALLINN000114, *Estonia's Pessimistic Approach to Russia*, April 27, 2009.
- 3 Cable id. 06TALLINN626, *Estonia Rethinking Air Policing Policy*, July 6, 2006.
- 4 Cable id. 10TALLINN25, *Estonian Commitment to Afghanistan Remains High*, February 22, 2010.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Cable id. 06TALLINN888, *Scenesetter for EUR DAS Pekala's Visit to Tallinn*, October 3–4, September 27, 2006.

- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Cable id. 06TALLINN983, *Estonia: Reflections on EU Membership*, February 11, 2006.
- 9 Cable id. 08TALLINN135, *Scenesetter for Estonian President Ilves' April 17–22 Visit*, April 14, 2008.
- 10 Cable id. 06TALLINN1049, *Scenesetter for the Secretary's Travel to Tallinn Nov. 27–28. No 11*, 2006.
- 11 Cable id. 09TALLINN125, *Scenesetter for Estonian PM Ansip's U.S. Visit May 12–15*, May 8, 2009.
- 12 Cable id. 06TALLINN582, *What Makes Toomas Hendrik Run?*, June 19, 2006.
- 13 Cable id. TALLINN000964, *Estonia's New President Part II: A More Assertive Foreign Policy*, October 23, 2006.
- 14 Cable id. 06TALLINN888, *Scenesetter for EUR DAS Pekala's Visit to Tallin, October 3–4*, September 27, 2006.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Cable id. 07TALLINN257, *Cuba: Estonia Critical of Spain's Diplomatic Strategy*, March 20, 2007.
- 17 Cable id. 09TALLINN351, *Estonia with U.S. on Iran*, November 25, 2009.
- 18 Cable id. 09TALLINN223, *Estonia Likely to Accept Gitmo Detainee(s)*, August 3, 2009.
- 19 Cable id. 10TALLINN9, *Estonia on January FAC*, January 22, 2010.
- 20 Cable id. 10TALLINN 56, *Estonia Disagrees with U.S. on Status of Lynx; Supports Other Cities' Priorities*, January 29, 2010.
- 21 Cable id. 09TALLINN323, *China Interested in Estonian Port*, November 6, 2009.
- 22 Cable id. 08TALLINN211, *Estonia Courts Chinese Investment in Ports*, June 17, 2008.
- 23 Cable id. 08TALLINN301, *Estonia: No Direct Threat from Russian Ambassador*, August 29, 2008.
- 24 Cable id. 09TALLINN317, *Estonian FM Visit to Belarus; Lukashenko Goes On (and On and On)*, October 30, 2009.
- 25 Cable id. 08TALLINN301, *Estonia: No Direct Threat from Russian Ambassador*, August 29, 2008.
- 26 Cable id. 06TALLINN888, *Scenesetter for EUR DAS Pekala's Visit to Tallin, October 3–4*, September 27, 2006.
- 27 Cable id. 06TALLINN580, *Estonian Foreign Minister's Report to the Parliament*, June 19, 2006.
- 28 Cable id. 06TALLINN845, *Estonian–Russian Relations: No Longer Hot but Still Potatoes*, September 15, 2006.
- 29 Cable id. 07TALLINN247, *Estonia's New Government (Part III): Foreign and Defense Policy Priorities*, April 17, 2007.
- 30 Cable id. 06TALLINN533, *Estonia: Ethnic Tension over Tallinn's "Bronze Soldier"*, May 6, 2006.
- 31 Cable id. 07TALLINN247, *Estonia's New Government (Part III): Foreign and Defense Policy Priorities*, April 17, 2007.
- 32 Cable id. 07TALLINN276, *Estonia's Bronze Soldier: Excavation Begins*, April 26, 2007.
- 33 Cable id. 07TALLINN280, *Reactions to Removal of Estonia's Bronze Soldier*, April 27, 2007.
- 34 Cable id. 07TALLINN290, *Estonian Ambassador to Moscow Reportedly Attacked*, May 2, 2007.
- 35 Cable id. 07TALLINN297, *Update on Bronze Soldier and Estonian–Russian Relations*, May 3, 2007.
- 36 Cable id. 07MOSCOW 2065, *Estonia: Demonstrators Quit Estonian Embassy as Ambassador Returns to Tallinn*, May 4, 2007.
- 37 Cable id. 07MOSCOW2334, *A/S. Fried's Meeting with DFM Karasin: Estonia, Georgia*, May 18, 2007.
- 38 Cable id. 07TALLINN310, *Estonia: GOE Officials on the Bronze Soldier, Russia and Integration*, May 11, 2007.
- 39 Cable id. 07TALLINN297, *Update on Bronze Soldier and Estonian–Russian Relations*, May 3, 2007.
- 40 Cable id. 07MOSCOW 2065, *Estonia: Demonstrators Quit Estonian Embassy as Ambassador Returns to Tallinn*, May 4, 2007.
- 41 Cable id. 07TALLINN347, *Russian Bear Hug Squeezes Estonian Economy*, May 24, 2007.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Cable id. 07TALLINN366, *World's First Virtual Attack against Nation State*, June 4, 2007.
- 44 Cable id. 07TALLINN347, *Russian Bear Hug Squeezes Estonian Economy*, May 24, 2007.
- 45 Cable id. 09TALLINN114, *Estonia's Pessimistic Approach to Russia*, April 27, 2007.

- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 Cable id. 10TALLINN25, *Estonian Defense Minister Welcomes Increased NATO; Estonian Commitment to Afghanistan Remains High*, February 22, 2010.
- 50 Cable id. 10TALLINN19, *Estonian Finance Minister Bullish on Euro, Skeptical on Russia*, January 27, 2010.
- 51 Cable id. 09TALLINN114, *Estonia's Pessimistic Approach to Russia*, April 27, 2007.
- 52 Cable id. 09TALLINN371, *Estonia: DAS Quanrud Discusses Afghanistan, Russia, the Economy*, December 16, 2009.
- 53 Cable id. 10TALLINN19, *Estonian Finance Minister Bullish on Euro, Skeptical on Russia*, January 27, 2010.
- 54 Cable id. 10TALLINN27, *Estonian Economy Bottomed Out; Russian Market a Huge Opportunity, but the Kremlin Blocks the Way*, February 22, 2010.
- 55 Cable id. 08TALLINN388, *Estonia: Russian Schools Increase Courses Taught in Estonian*, November 5, 2008.
- 56 Cable id. 08TALLINN405, *Snapshot: Growing Up Russian in Estonia*, November 28, 2008.
- 57 Cable id. 10TALLINN23, *Interior Minister Takes Initiative to Integrate Russian Speakers in Estonia; Agrees to More Resources to Fight Digital Piracy*, February 8, 2010.
- 58 Cable id. 09TALLINN305, *Relations with Russia, from Estonia's Russian East*, October 6, 2009.
- 59 Cable id. 09TALLINN311, *Estonia: Local Elections Outlook*, October 5, 2009.
- 60 Michael Polt, "Estonia and the U.S. – Rock Solid Allies," *Postimees*, November 30, 2010. Quoted by the U.S. Embassy Homepage. http://estonia.usembassy.gov/art_eng113010.html. Accessed: July 15, 2012.
- 61 "US–Estonian Relations Unaffected by Wikileaks Documents, Say Officials," ERR News, November 30, 2010. <http://news.err.ee/politics/ff9ed731-a13b-4fa0-aa17-a104e61a6068>. Accessed: July 15, 2012.
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 Cable id. 06TALLINN582, *What Makes Toomas Hendrik Run?*, June 19, 2006.
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 Cable id. 06TALLINN941, *Estonia's New President Part I: Ilves Election Shakes Up Political Landscape*, October 16, 2006.
- 66 Cable id. 07TALLINN594, *Estonian Rabbi Downplays Reports of Anti-Semitism*, September 10, 2007.
- 67 "В документах WikiLeaks президент Ильвес дает оценки политикам Эстонии?" [In WikiLeaks Documents President Ilves Gives Assessments of Estonian Politicians?], *Delfi.ee*, January 27, 2011. <http://rus.delfi.ee/daily/estonia/v-dokumentah-wikileaks-prezident-ilves-daet-ocenki-politikam-estonii.d?id=39219007>. Accessed: July 16, 2012.
- 68 Cable id. 08TALLINN241, *The Decline of Estonia's Ethnic Russian Political Parties*, July 14, 2008.
- 69 "Сергей Иванов: опубликованные Wikileaks заявления – бред собачий!" [Sergei Ivanov – the Published WikiLeaks Statements Is Bullshit], *DzD Online*, August 30, 2011. <http://www.dzd.ee/546264/sergej-ivanov-opublikovannye-wikileaks-zajavlenija-bred-sobachij/>. Accessed: July 16, 2012.
- 70 Argo Ideon, "Паэт: принять заключенных невозможно" [Paet: Detainees Cannot Be Hosted], *Postimees RUS*, February 14, 2011.

The WikiLeaks Cables and Their Impact: the Latvian Case

Raimonds Rublovskis

Altogether 632 cables that were produced by the United States Embassy in Riga were released by WikiLeaks, and so were another 701 documents in which Latvia was mentioned.¹ Out of this number there were 242 Confidential, 53 Confidential Noform, 14 Secret Noform and 9 Secret cables.² The timeframe of the cables covers the period from March 2006 until February 2010.³ According to the cables, the United States Embassy in Latvia used different tactics, techniques and procedures to gather relevant information, such as open source information gathering via media overview, human sources information within the domestic political environment, representatives of different political parties, representatives from the Parliament, government and State President administration, law enforcement agencies, security services and other relevant human sources who were sympathetic to the United States, possessed relevant information and exercised considerable influence within the Latvian political or other relevant environment.⁴

One must also outline the specific situation of the Latvian domestic political landscape between 2006 and 2011. There are some issues that are very specific for Latvia if compared with other Western democracies. One could argue that there are several key issues that determine the internal political developments in Latvia, such as the following:

1. The weak links between political parties and general society within the period between the parliamentary elections;
2. The relatively small number of active members in any given political party;
3. The ideological confusion among political parties represented in Parliament;
4. The ethnically based vote in parliamentary elections;
5. The economic, financial and, subsequently, political impact of particular financial groups on political parties;
6. The dominance of the unions of the political parties versus single political parties in the Latvian domestic political landscape since 2006.

The creation of the unions between political parties and the political struggle of the wider political institutions within domestic policy were especially important before the parliamentary elections in 2006 and 2010, and those internal political developments were subsequently of increased importance for the United States Embassy in Latvia because of the perceived impact of particular economically powerful financial groups on several political parties and unions of parties that received a majority of seats in the parliamentary elections of 2006.⁵ According to the information from the Embassy cables, the domestic political situation before the parliamentary elections of 2006 and the subsequent outcome of the elections, and the creation of the political coalition in the Parliament, which was dominated by political parties presumably closely linked with particular financial groups, represented by Mayor of the Latvian port city of Ventspils Mr. Aivars Lembergs, former Prime Minister and leader of the People's Party Mr. Andris Šķēle, and member of Parliament and the government and leader of the First Party Mr. Ainars Šlesers, all created increasing concerns in the United States Embassy of Latvia.⁶

What were the topics and issues particularly relevant for the United States Embassy in Riga? One could name several important domestic and foreign policy issues that were covered by the cables. According to the WikiLeaks information, the overall strategic interest and concern of the United States Embassy in Latvia were particularly directed towards the state of Latvian internal policy, and challenges to democracy, the rule of law and justice in the Republic of Latvia. One could specify several areas of interest on the part of the Embassy of the United States, such as the following:

1. Assessment of overall internal policy issues in Latvia;
2. Details of the decision-making process of the Latvian political leadership;
3. Relationships among the political parties and politicians, including personal relationships;
4. Relationships between political parties and their financial sponsors;
5. The pressure and impact of particular economic groups on internal policy decisions in Latvia;
6. The impact of particular economic groups on personnel policy within government institutions, law enforcement and security agencies;
7. Unofficial links of particular economic groups in Latvia with Russia;
8. Information on possible criminal cases and prosecution of particular economic groups;
9. The situation with the Russian-speaking minority in Latvia;
10. Possible changes in legislation policy in Latvia;
11. The level and scale of corruption within the institutions of Latvia;
12. Energy security issues and Russian economic influence.

Those were the most significant issues that represented the interest of the Embassy of the United States in Riga concerning Latvian internal policy. One should explain why so many issues were related to particular economic groups and their financial and political impact on several political parties and, subsequently, on the decision-making process within Latvian domestic policy. According to the information from the cables, these economic and financial groups exercised their influence on Latvian domestic policy in order to influence the decision-making process within the Parliament, government, law enforcement and security institutions. As mentioned above, the United States Embassy in Latvia considered the activities and influence of three economic and financial groups to be a direct threat and challenge to the rule of law and democracy in Latvia.⁷ For example, one of the cables outlined an alleged link between former Chairman of the Parliament of Latvia Mr. Indulis Emsis and one of those influential financial groups, which had covered all the expenses of the trip of Mr. Emsis to the Maldives in late 2006, and his situation of alleged corruption due to receiving 10,000 USD as a cash payment in the fall of 2006.⁸ However, even such information did not force Chairman Emsis to step down from his office.⁹ The cables also outlined information that was provided by a relevant source in the government of the Republic of Latvia concerning other financial links between the former Chairman of the Parliament and one particular financial group.¹⁰ This financial group, allegedly headed by the Mayor of the port city of Ventspils, was one of the most financially powerful and politically influential in Latvia. Certainly, bearing in mind the influence of particular financial groups in domestic political life in Latvia, exercised via the Parliament, the government and other state institutions, the cables revealed the deep concerns of the United States Embassy in Riga about the level and scale of corruption in Latvia. Allegedly, three separate financial groups, headed by Mr. Aivars Lembergs, Mr. Andris Šķēle, and Mr. Ainars Šlesers, have exercised a profound influence on the domestic and foreign policy of the Republic of Latvia. As confirmation and proof of deep-rooted corruption in Latvia, the case of Vladimirs Vaškevičš – a former high-ranking official of the Ministry of Finance – was outlined by the cable of November 14, 2008. According to the information from the cables, the permanent rotation of Mr. Vaškevičš (who lost his clearance of access to classified information due to investigation into alleged criminal activity) from one office to another within the Ministry of Finance has proved the level and scale of corruption in the Republic of Latvia. If Mr. Vaškevičš had been sentenced to jail, it would have shown significant progress in combating corruption in Latvia.¹¹

The information from the cables outlined the concerns of the United States Embassy, based on the different local sources, concerning further tactics of the particular financial groups and presumed enablers of their influence within the Parliament and the government of Latvia after the elections of 2006. According to the cables, the presumed tactics and activities of particular financial groups and perceived enablers

of the political influence of those groups in the Parliament and the government included the following activities:

1. Extension of the political influence via political parties presumably linked with influential financial groups over the Constitutional Court, the Prosecutor General, the Chief Justice, several law enforcement and security agencies;¹²
2. Focusing personnel policy in order to substitute and change key personnel within the previously mentioned institutions in order to enhance the political influence of particular powerful financial groups;
3. Several financial groups, through the enablers of their political influence within the Parliament and the government and politically engaged key personnel in the most important state institutions, exercising full control over all decision-making procedures at every level of the legislative, executive and judicial domains.¹³

Certainly, such a development of the internal political situation in Latvia after the parliamentary elections in 2006 concerned the United States – a strategic ally of Latvia.¹⁴ Since 2004 Latvia has been a full member of NATO and the EU, from the geographical point of view, Latvia is a neighbor of the Russian Federation and Belarus, and the external border of NATO and the EU with those countries is that of the Republic of Latvia. All those institutional and geographical issues were of great importance for the United States, because the perceived challenges to and risks for democracy and the rule of law within a member country of NATO and the EU were unacceptable from the point of view of the Embassy of the United States in Latvia.¹⁵

One could mention several cases that occurred in the period 2006–2007, and those cases confirmed both the set of activities and tactics of several financial groups, the Parliament and the government of Latvia and, subsequently, the concern of relevant sources within different Latvian institutions and the United States Embassy in Latvia. In the case of Latvia, the most important issues were related to the security sector of Latvia, and subsequently to the changes of legislation concerning the exchange of classified information within Latvia and with NATO allies. The first case is related to an attempt by the government and the Parliament to amend the set of laws dealing with the exchange and processing of classified information within Latvia and between Latvia and NATO allies. The main goal of this action was to extend the number of officials and institutions that would have access to the classified information. It would have seriously damaged both the effectiveness of law enforcement and intelligence agencies to perform their duties internally and the exchange of the classified information between Latvia and NATO. The information from the cables outlines the point of view of the United States Embassy in Riga on this issue. According to the information, the main objective of those actions was to ensure access to the classified information for those personnel who were unofficially linked

with influential financial groups, in order to inform those concerned about the scope and scale of classified information that could be used against them within criminal investigation cases carried out by several law enforcement agencies.¹⁶ For instance, the cables noted the fact that the Chief Prosecutor of the Republic of Latvia at that time, Jānis Maizītis, mentioned in a conversation with the Ambassador of the United States in Latvia that leading persons of the particular financial groups were posing a clear and direct threat to democracy, state security and the rule of law in Latvia.¹⁷ The same issue of the influence of particular financial groups on the domestic political process in Latvia was addressed by Aleksejs Loskutovs, then Chief of the Corruption Preventing and Combating Bureau.

Although, after serious internal and external pressure on the government, the attempt to amend legislation concerning classified information was abandoned, this case clearly showed the tactics, techniques and procedures used by the Coalition in the Parliament and the government in Latvia, and raised serious concerns in the Embassy of the United States in Latvia.

The second case, which was also related to the security and defense sector of Latvia, occurred on September 27, 2007. On that day Prime Minister Aigars Kalvītis and Minister of the Interior Ivars Godmanis released a public statement concerning security and defense institutions and personnel. According to their statement, powerful clandestine criminal organizations, which encompassed current and former officials of the security, intelligence, law enforcement and defense institutions, represented a clear and direct threat to Latvian legitimate state institutions in order to undermine the democratically elected Parliament and government of the Republic of Latvia.¹⁸ Certainly, this statement received a great deal of attention both internally and externally. The United States offered all necessary assistance in order to solve this issue.¹⁹ However, the government of Latvia was reluctant to accept such help; therefore, in the report concerning this statement the United States Embassy in Riga concluded that this action was the attempt of the government of Latvia to achieve two objectives: firstly to divert public attention from upcoming economic and, subsequently, political problems, and secondly to use this statement as a reason to change key leadership personnel in several law enforcement, intelligence and security agencies, and substitute them with personnel allegedly linked with particular financial groups, in order to exercise full political control over those institutions.²⁰ One could conclude from the cables that the main focus of the Embassy of the United States in Latvia concerning domestic policy issues was related to the situational awareness concerning the issue of democracy and rule of law, and attempts by several financial groups to undermine those values and increase their political influence within law enforcement, intelligence, security and defense institutions. Certainly, such developments were unacceptable for both Latvia, as a NATO and EU member state and trustworthy partner of those organizations, and the United States, as the main strategic ally of Latvia.²¹

What were the topics and issues that were particularly relevant for the United States Embassy in Latvia concerning foreign policy issues of the Republic of Latvia? One could specify several wide areas of the interest, such as the following:

1. Latvia as a NATO ally and the strategic partnership between Latvia and the United States;
2. The full spectrum of relationships between Latvia and Russia.

The first area of interest is based on the membership of Latvia in NATO and the EU, and the strategic partnership between Latvia and the United States. One could name several sub-areas of interest related to NATO, the EU and the United States, which were outlined in the cables:

1. Due to the previously mentioned problems: the exchange of NATO classified information between NATO and Latvia;
2. The NATO Contingency Plan concerning the military defense of Latvia and other Baltic States;
3. The plans and commitment of the Republic of Latvia to NATO-led/United States-led military operations, and the situation with the defense budget of Latvia.

As was mentioned before, the issue concerning the situation with domestic and NATO classified information had both a domestic policy dimension and a foreign policy dimension, and the question of the ability of the Republic of Latvia to remain a solid and trustworthy ally within NATO has been at stake. One could predict serious external consequences if amendments to several laws concerning classified information and exchange of it were approved in the Parliament of Latvia. Therefore, one could conclude that the issue of exchange of NATO classified information and the ability of Latvia to maintain the necessary level of the security of information was one of the important sub-areas that were within the area of interest of the Embassy of the United States in Latvia.²²

Another very important issue revealed by the cables was the existence of a NATO Contingency Plan for the defense of Latvia and other Baltic States.²³ One could argue that leaking this fact was very important for the Baltic States, because it partially removed doubts within the general population of the Baltic States about NATO's commitment to militarily defend the Baltic States in the case of emergency. One should explain the background of the importance of this particular topic concerning the NATO Contingency Plan for the Baltic. The Russian–Georgian military conflict in August 2008 had raised serious concerns among the political leadership and population of Latvia, and the question of NATO's commitment to defending the Baltic States was very high on the agenda.²⁴ Certainly, there was no doubt regarding NATO Article 5 obligations from the political point of view; however, there were serious concerns about

the existence of a NATO military plan for the defense of the Baltic States and available military capabilities to fulfill the plan in the case of urgent need. One could argue that the outcome of the Russian–Georgian conflict of 2008 had triggered activities in order to create the NATO Contingency Plan for the military defense of the Baltic States, but there was no any confirmation of the existence of such a plan until it was mentioned in the cable.²⁵ The information concerning the very existence of the NATO Contingency Plan for the defense of the Baltic States was very important in terms of domestic political use in Latvia.²⁶

Bearing in mind the fact that Latvia is a NATO member state and it has contributed to NATO and the United States-led military operations, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan, the cables revealed the interest of the United States Embassy in Riga to the issue of the defense budget and further plans for deployment of the personnel of Latvian National Armed Forces to international military operations. According to Latvian defense planning documents, the participation of Latvian military personnel in NATO international military operations is one of the top priorities of the Republic of Latvia.²⁷ However, the situation with the Latvian defense budget since 2008 has obviously been problematic. Due to the size of the country, a rather small number of inhabitants, a small economy, and small armed forces with very limited military capabilities, Latvia is very dependent on external factors concerning small state security mentality.²⁸ The severe economic crisis had a devastating effect on the defense spending of Latvia. The three Baltic States are among the militarily weakest members of NATO: only Estonia comes close to spending 2% of GDP on defense. Latvia and Lithuania spend pitifully little on their military, around or below 1% of their GDP.²⁹ Taking into account the fact that Latvia has one of the smallest military budgets in NATO in terms of both the percentage of GDP and the real money investment level, this very fact had raised deep concerns in the United States Embassy in Latvia, and those concerns were subsequently expressed in the cables. The need for a substantial increase in the defense budget of the Republic of Latvia is one of the most important issues outlined by the United States.³⁰

The second area of interest is related to the relationship between the Republic of Latvia and the Russian Federation. One could also name several sub-areas of interest related to the entire spectrum of relations between the two countries:

1. Latvian–Russian relations connected to the situation of the Russian-speaking minority in Latvia;
2. The World War 2 Monument issue of 2007 in Estonia and the reaction of the Latvian leadership to the consequences of the event;
3. The Russian–Georgian military confrontation in August 2008 and the reaction of the Latvian leadership to the consequences of the conflict;
4. Any other sub-area of interest concerning the Latvian–Russian relationship.

Bearing in mind the fact that Latvia has a substantial Russian-speaking minority, this issue has always been at the top of the agenda in the bilateral relationships between Latvia and Russia. Due to the membership of Latvia in NATO and the EU, this question has also gained wider attention. Certainly, the United States Embassy in Latvia has been interested in monitoring the situation concerning the Russian-speaking minority in Latvia, because this issue has always involved Russia itself.

One case of particular interest on the American part was the so-called Bronze Soldier night in April 2007 in Tallinn, Estonia, and the possibility of similar events in Latvia. The second issue of the utmost importance was the Russian–Georgian military confrontation in August 2008 and the reaction of the Latvian political leadership and general public to the consequences of that conflict. The cables from the United States Embassy in Latvia outlined the whole complexity of the discussions in the Latvian Parliament concerning the political support for Estonia and subsequent resolution of the Parliament. According to the cable of May 14, 2007, although the Latvian Parliament voted for the resolution to support Estonia, the final draft of the resolution was milder than previous drafts, due to domestic political difficulties that had a direct impact on the foreign policy of the Republic of Latvia. Those internal political issues that had an impact on the final draft of the resolution were as follows: the political instability of the coalition in Parliament and, subsequently, the instability of the government, the ratification of the Border Treaty between Latvia and Russia, and the upcoming celebrations of May 9 by significant numbers of the Russian-speaking minority in Latvia.³¹ All those issues significantly influenced the language of the resolution, and the cables explain the reason for such behavior on the part of the Parliament of Latvia. It is worth mentioning that the main source of information who outlined the reasons shaping the Parliament resolution on Estonia in 2007 was a high-ranking official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia.³²

Another important issue of the interest of the United States Embassy in Latvia was the reaction of the Latvian political leadership and general public to the Russian–Georgian military conflict in August 2008. Certainly, due to historical reasons and common post-Soviet experience, the Russian–Georgian military conflict had a very emotional impact within the Baltic States. As with the previous case in Estonia in 2007, the Latvian political leadership strongly supported the Georgian side in the military confrontation with Russia; however, cables from the United States Embassy in Latvia showed complicated and complex discussions among political parties concerning the level of commitment in support of Georgia. One of the most interesting pieces of information that came out of the cable from August 15, 2008 (Secret, NoFORN), on this issue was the information concerning the conversation between the Ambassador of the Russian Federation in Latvia and former Minister of Communications Mr. Ainars Šlesers and founder of the People's Party Mr. Andris Šķēle – two leaders of political

parties that were the dominant part of the Parliament coalition in 2008.³³ These two persons were also leading figures in two separate financial groups that had a direct political impact on particular political parties. According to the information, the Ambassador of the Russian Federation explored the possibility of using the political influence of those two persons in order to soften the Latvian Parliament's position and, subsequently, its resolution concerning the Russian–Georgian military conflict. The reason behind such an approach by the Ambassador of the Russian Federation in Latvia was certain business interests of Mr. Šķēle and Mr. Šlesers, and the financial groups that they represented.³⁴ The cable from August 15, 2008, reveals specific details of the decision-making process within the Latvian Parliament and the government concerning the level of the support of the Republic of Latvia to the Republic of Georgia. According to the information from the cable, the main reason that generated political difficulties in supporting Georgia during the military confrontation with Russia in August 2008 was the fact that the most influential and important political actors in Latvia have profitable business ties with Russia and these actors are afraid to seriously damage these business ties by supporting the Georgian cause.³⁵

One should certainly emphasize the direct business ties between several financial groups represented by Mr. Lembergs, Mr. Šlesers and Mr. Šķēle, and, as those financial groups exercised a certain influence over particular political parties in Latvia, it was obviously possible for the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to use this economic tool in order to politically influence those financial groups and, subsequently, particular political parties in the case of the Russian–Georgian military conflict. Two persons concerned – Mr. Andris Šķēle and Mr. Ainars Šlesers – totally denied any conversation between them and the Ambassador of the Russian Federation concerning the Russian–Georgian military conflict and the link between their business interests in Russia and discussions in the Latvian Parliament concerning the events of August 2008.³⁶

Taking into account the fact that Latvia held parliamentary elections in October 2010 and extraordinary parliamentary elections in September 2011, one could argue that the release of cables concerning Latvia had a certain effect on domestic political developments in Latvia, due to the following factors:

1. Open access to the cables providing political parties with additional information for continuation of internal political struggle;
2. Impact on the political survival of several political parties, especially those allegedly linked with particular financial groups;
3. Impact on the further decrease of approval rate of state institutions – Parliament, government, the court system et cetera;
4. Revealing unofficial links of several key personnel of Latvia with the United States Embassy in Latvia;
5. Revealing unofficial links of several key personnel of Latvia with Russia.

As was mentioned before, the years 2010–2011 were a politically active period in Latvian domestic politics; therefore, information that became available by the leaks was used within the internal political struggles in Latvia. One could argue that information from the cables significantly contributed to a negative impact on the survival of several political parties. Certainly, this information did not play a decisive role in the loss of popularity of a number of political parties; however, it contributed to this process. One can compare the political landscape of the Latvian Parliament in the period 2006–2010 and conclude that two out of the three political parties – the People's Party and the First Party – that formed a coalition and a government suffered a substantial setback in the 2010 parliamentary elections, and decisively lost the extraordinary parliamentary elections in 2011. It was mentioned before that all those political parties were allegedly linked with particular economic and financial groups, and the loss of political power by particular political parties certainly significantly decreased the influence of those financial groups in the domestic policy of Latvia within the period 2010–2011. Subsequently, one could argue that WikiLeaks information contributed to the collapse of several political parties in 2010–2011, which possessed powerful political influence in the Parliament and the government of the Republic of Latvia during the period 2006–2010.

However, one could argue that the WikiLeaks releases also contributed to a further decrease of the approval ratings of several institutions such as the Parliament, the government et cetera. This trend has been one of concern, because the general public still has a rather negative attitude towards the Parliament and the government of Latvia as legislative and executive power institutions. One very important issue that had a substantial impact on domestic politics in Latvia was related to information that confirmed the unofficial links of several key persons within the political and executive power leadership with the Embassy of the United States in Riga and the Russian Federation.³⁷

One could argue that the media involvement in Latvia was rather substantial in order to highlight information from the cables concerning the Republic of Latvia and the reaction of different persons mentioned or involved in the releases. As was mentioned before, several political parties were allegedly linked to particular financial groups, and this case directly applies to the media, where several media had alleged links to the same financial groups. Against this background one could analyze the particular discourse used by different media in Latvia in order to describe the information released by WikiLeaks.

One should distinguish the particular discourse used by that segment of the media that has been alleged to be linked with several financial groups in Latvia. This segment of the media used information from the cables to identify Latvian politicians and security sector and law enforcement officials who had alleged links with the United

States Embassy in Latvia. This segment of the media called those officials the main providers of information, including national classified information, to the United States Embassy in Riga. These particular media bodies accused key leadership members of the Constitution Protection Bureau (Mr. Jānis Kažociņš) and the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau (Mr. Aleksejs Loskutovs), Chief Prosecutor General (Mr. Jānis Maizītis) and other law enforcement institutions of providing the United States' side with sensitive and classified information concerning domestic political issues and the information concerning criminal investigation against particular persons linked with particular financial groups.³⁸ For example, according to the information, Chief Prosecutor General Jānis Maizītis had provided the United States Embassy in Latvia with top classified information concerning the status of the criminal investigation against Aivars Lembergs, allegedly one of the leading persons of a particularly powerful financial group. The media note that the Chief Prosecutor General has reported the abovementioned information only to three persons and institutions – the President of the Republic of Latvia, the Prime Minister and the United States Embassy in Riga.³⁹ Subsequently, all officials allegedly linked with the United States Embassy in Latvia were accused by particular segments of the media of being agents of the influence of the United States in Latvia, and not independent officials of the sovereign state of Latvia.⁴⁰ In some cases, particular media accused some officials of receiving a list of tasks from the United States Embassy and reporting back to the Embassy.⁴¹ Subsequently, the question of national sovereignty was raised by certain media bodies, as was the possibility of clandestine gathering of information by the United States Embassy.⁴²

On the other hand, different segments of the media praised the release of the cables as being an additional confirmation of the fact that particular political parties and media groups are financed, resourced and, subsequently, controlled by particular financial groups.⁴³ This segment of the media reinforced the point that democracy and the rule of law in Latvia are endangered by particular financial groups and the enablers of their influence in the Parliament, the government and media.

Concerning the impact of the WikiLeaks cables on the foreign policy of Latvia, one could argue that there were no significant changes in the official foreign policy of the Republic of Latvia towards NATO, the United States or Russia. The Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was informed in advance about the release of the cables, and subsequently Latvian officials received timely warning from the State Department of the United States. This situation gave the necessary time for Latvian officials to prepare politically correct statements for domestic use after the cables were released. Overall, one could conclude that the Latvian internal political situation was affected by the releases due to the fact that the parliamentary elections took place in the period 2010–2011, but at the same time there were no significant changes in the official foreign policy of the Republic of Latvia.

Conclusions

One must conclude that open access and information from the cables provided political parties with an additional source of information for their internal political struggle, especially between the parliamentary elections in October 2010 and the extraordinary parliamentary elections in September 2011. The releases had an impact on the political survival of several political parties allegedly associated with particular financial groups, and the overall institutional approval ratings of the Parliament and the government of the Republic of Latvia. The releases also revealed unofficial links of several persons of the key leadership of Latvia with both the United States and the Russian Federation. Tactics, techniques and procedures used by the United States Embassy in Latvia allowed it to gather substantial information regarding the domestic and foreign policy of the Republic of Latvia from the network of particular personnel, and represented an example of effective diplomatic effort within a small allied country of geographical significance. One could conclude that the releases considerably influenced the internal political landscape in Latvia; however, there was no significant impact on the foreign policy of the Republic of Latvia.

Notes

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- 13 Cable id. 07RIGA411, *Latvia's Presidential Election – a Tragic-Comedy in Three Acts*, May 29, 2007.

- 14 "Valsts Aizsardzības Konceptija" [The State Defense Concept of the Republic of Latvia], *Latvijas Republikas Aizsardzības Ministrija*, 2008, p. 2.
- 15 Cable id. 07RIGA731, *Preventing Further Latvian Backsliding on Rule of Law*, September 28, 2007.
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- 17 "WikiLeaks atmasko latviešu netikumus" [WikiLeaks Reveals the Wrongful Behavior of Latvians], *nra.lv*, September 30, 2011. <http://nra.lv/latvija/politika/56832-wikileaks-atmasko-latviesu-netikumus.htm>. Accessed: July 17, 2012.
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Lithuania in the U.S. Foreign and Security Policy: A Version of the WikiLeaks “CableGate” Archive

Gediminas Vitkus

Introduction

Without any doubt, the publicizing of the WikiLeaks “CableGate” archive is not an ordinary event for researchers of international relations and foreign policy. It is common that documents of diplomatic correspondence become accessible to researchers and society considerably later, when persons mentioned in them have already resigned from active politics, when the facts mentioned have retained only historical but not actual political significance. Meanwhile, researchers of current politics have to content themselves with official statements, press releases and other open sources, since documents capable of revealing many interesting facts remain classified. Therefore it often remains both possible and fair to speculate and to attempt to model a possible reasoning logic and principles of the diplomats who have prepared decisions, and of the politicians who have taken decisions.

Thus, despite all the controversy, fuelled by the publicizing of the documents, we can enjoy a unique opportunity to look around the backstage of foreign policy (or, to be more exact, look at a small part of it) of that great player of world politics, the USA. In this text we will survey those cables that are related to Lithuania.

All in all, the name of Lithuania was mentioned in 2,377 cables. This makes up 0.95% of the total of 251,287 cables. Among them are also 903 cables of the U.S. Embassy in Vilnius, which make up 0.36% of all the cables held in the archive. There is nothing to be surprised at here – Lithuania is a small state; therefore its place in the policy of the super-state completely corresponds to its real political weight.

The name of Lithuania was first mentioned in the “CableGate” archive in the cable dated January 3, 1991,¹ when the U.S. Embassy in Moscow tried to inform Washington of the attempts of the Soviet military to restore the control of Moscow over the Baltic States. There is nothing surprising in this either. Lithuania was the leader of the forces destroying the Soviet Union; therefore the attention is understandable.

Rather stranger and less clear is the fact that the first cable from the U.S. Embassy in Vilnius is dated April 9, 2004.² This is a slightly odd circumstance, as the U.S. Embassy in Vilnius has been functioning since 1992, yet the publicized cables cover only the period after Lithuania actually became a member of NATO and the EU. Therefore, based on the publicized data, it is possible to get an idea of what the U.S. Embassy in Vilnius was doing only at the end of 2004, throughout the entire years of 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009, and the very beginning of 2010. The last publicized cable from the U.S. Embassy in Vilnius was dated February 26, 2010.³

True, it should immediately be pointed out that we have not expected to find great surprises in this archive and actually we have not managed to find any. It is no secret that Lithuania, like all the other new members of NATO and the European Union from Central and Eastern Europe, being sufficiently faithful allies of the USA, has always tended to support the major principles and goals of the USA's foreign policy. The publicized documents do not contain any sensational material that could somehow contradict this and thus in some way ruin the established relations.

First of all, the content itself of the publicized cables testifies to this. However, a still more distinct indicator of the absence of "sensations" is the fact that mass media attention paid to this archive has rapidly waned. It was journalists who were truly inclined not to miss the opportunity and attempt to "drain" from the WikiLeaks "CableGate" archive everything possible in order to attract the readers' attention. In the case of Lithuania, the media reacted to the gradual publications of cables referring to Lithuania sufficiently promptly.

In the Lithuanian mass media, apart from individual publications that generated no broader discussions, in essence three themes were explored more comprehensively. First of all, in Lithuania, at the end of 2010, it was the documents related to NATO's decision to develop Contingency Plans for the Baltic States⁴ that received a broader response. The attention of the media was certainly drawn by the plan itself, but still more by the fact that such matters are usually not for public discussion. Within the internal political context of Lithuania, the attention to this theme was further strengthened by Lithuania's new President Dalia Grybauskaitė's public voicing of the ideas, in the middle of the year 2009, that NATO should have such plans and not limit itself to sheer declarations that Russia is no longer an enemy of NATO. Therefore the confirmation of the existence of such plans granted the President and the entire NATO alliance additional political dividends. However, eventually this whole "discussion" did not generate any more serious consequences. Russia gave practically no response to the emergence of such plans. Therefore the discussions soon died away.

The other two cases that have been paid exceptional attention by Lithuania's media were associated with domestic politics. In June 2011, a discussion on the corruption in Lithuania's mass media surfaced.⁵ The excitement of the journalists' community was triggered by the cable that, apart from other matters, read as follows:

[...] some media outlets in Lithuania, newspapers especially, extort politicians and businessmen using rewards of positive coverage and the threat of negative coverage. Media corruption damages media credibility, undermines Lithuania's democratic institutions, and intimidates politicians, businesses, and civil society. It also hurts U.S. businesses, who are less apt to "play the game" than their local counterparts [...]⁶

Since the cable mentioned specific mass media and specific persons, the prosecutor's office became interested in the cable,⁷ while the editor of the daily *Respublika*, Vytautas Tomkus, even wanted to sue the U.S. Embassy. However, all these deeds had no consequences and the scandal soon died away.

Finally, there is the third case, which was mostly discussed in September 2011 and referred to the now almost historical events of 2005, when the then governing coalition began to fall apart due to internal tensions between the leaders of the Social Democratic and Labor Parties – or, to be more exact, due to the forced resignation of the Labor Party leader Viktor Uspaskich from the post of Minister of the Economy, because of violations in coordinating his public and his private interests. The cable of the U.S. Embassy recorded the fact that one of the leaders of the Social Democrats, the then Minister of Defense Gediminas Kirkilas, attempted to initiate a coup in the Labor Party and to remove Viktor Uspaskich from the position of party leader.⁸

Although Viktor Uspaskich's further political career did not fare too poorly – he remained the leader of the Labor Party and became a member of the European Parliament in 2009 – the pre-trial investigation into the fact that both he and his party avoided taxes and conducted other illegal financial operations has not been cancelled. At the request of Lithuania's prosecutors, the European Parliament suspended Uspaskich's immunity. When the information available to U.S. diplomats about the backstage activities of the leaders of the Social Democratic and Labor Parties became public, Viktor Uspaskich and his supporters tried to appeal to the Committee of Legal Affairs of the European Parliament requesting the cancellation of the suspension of his immunity.⁹ However, Uspaskich's arguments, based on the data of the WikiLeaks cables, did not make any impression on the members of the European Parliament. Thus it is possible to say that this scandal triggered by WikiLeaks publicizing had no real consequences either and was soon forgotten.

Therefore it is best to agree with the opinion of the Lithuanian political weekly *Veidas* that "from the subjective point of view, perhaps nothing new was said during this scandal: the secret documents just confirmed whatever had always been alluded to, but, certainly, these allusions came neither from diplomats nor from politicians."¹⁰

This opinion was also reiterated by the political leaders of Lithuania. When the Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius was asked during an interview on December 5, 2010,

by a journalist from the Polish daily *Rzeczpospolita* "What has Lithuania found out about itself from WikiLeaks?" he replied "Not much. The leaks have not been a great topic of discussion in Lithuania."¹¹ Finally, even the President of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė, when asked to comment on how she treats the information presented on the website of WikiLeaks, said that she simply treated it as "fun."¹²

Thus, in spite of the first impression, it turned out that the publicizing of the U.S. diplomatic correspondence did not equate to an exploded bomb and was shortly forgotten and replaced by other "sensations" and "scandals". Perhaps this can also explain the fact that at the beginning it never occurred to anyone to look through this archive from the academic point of view. But right now we have an opportunity to bridge this gap.

So, what interesting facts can the WikiLeaks "CableGate" archive present to those that are interested in the U.S. foreign, security and defense policy and its relations with Lithuania? It is obvious that we have a unique opportunity to find out what the diplomats, residing in Lithuania and continually rubbing shoulders with the political elite of the country, think about Lithuania. In a broader sense, we have a unique opportunity to see what role Lithuania, just like other states of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), has in the USA's policy, and what the attitude of that great powerful state in terms of relations with its allies is. And finally, having familiarized ourselves with the available material, we will be able not only to learn more about how this high policy is actually carried out but also to see how this Great Power practically manages its relations with pro-American, friendly but at the same time weak and relatively less important allies. In the case of relations between the USA and Lithuania, it is just the latter aspect that seems particularly interesting and worthy of special attention for us.

From the theoretical point of view, the behavior of a major superpower and the management of its relations with smaller allies can develop and be realized in at least three ways or modalities:

1. *Dictation and criticism* (since the ally is weak, it is possible to dictate to it and direct it and show how it should live);
2. *Protection and nurturance* (the ally is weak and of little importance; nevertheless, it is valued);
3. *Neutrality and even off-handedness* (since the ally is weak and of little importance, it is possible not to take its matters into closer consideration or even to ignore the ally outright).

Naturally, it is difficult to detect these management modalities in a pure form. Sometimes the margin between them is hardly palpable. These are truly ideal types. However, estimating the material held in the archive, we decided to use these specifically first and foremost as a background. Certainly, in this context, we had a serious basis

to put forward the hypothesis that U.S. officials and diplomats – not only officially but also in documents and cables not intended for the public – will, in principle, follow the second option, i.e. the management of “nurturing” small allies.

On the other hand, we still wanted to test this hypothesis, for several reasons:

1. No matter how idealistic and well-meaning the Americans were for their allies, this would still not do away with objectively existing differences in sizes and possibilities – this unavoidably affects practical diplomacy;
2. It should be kept in mind that these documents were not written for the public; consequently, it was possible to allow oneself to convey in them a little more than in the official rhetoric. The probability that these cables could “reveal” more and more openly was sufficiently high;
3. During the period between the first (April 9, 2004) and the last (February 26, 2010) publicized cables from the U.S. Embassy in Vilnius, three U.S. ambassadors were replaced – Stephen D. Mull (2003–2006), John A. Claud (2006–2009) and Anne E. Derse (2009–2012). As most of the cables were signed by the ambassadors themselves or their deputies, it would be worthwhile to try to detect certain differences that might have been left due to the features of their personal characters.

Therefore we will further analyze the aspects of the relations between the USA and Lithuania that were most widely commented on in the cables, and will attempt to determine to which management modality they could be attributed. The greatest attention will be paid to the systematic, generalized-nature estimations, prepared on different occasions, of Lithuania and its relations with the USA. It should be pointed out that there are relatively few of them in the entire archive, but they clearly stand out among the cables of a routine and most often purely informational or even technical nature. Most frequently they are “scenesters” for visits of high-ranking statesmen and congressmen’s delegations to Lithuania. Several questionnaires that had to be filled in by the Embassy in order to grant Lithuania permission to obtain modern American armaments should be also attributed to this group. We will discuss them more comprehensively after dividing them chronologically into two groups:

1. The first group covers the cables prepared by the Embassy headed by Ambassador Stephen D. Mull (2003–2006);
2. The second comprises the cables prepared by the teams of Ambassadors John A. Claud (2006–2009) and Anne E. Derse (2009–2012). It is not possible to split and separately discuss the terms of these two Ambassadors, since we have access to the cables of only the first four months of Derse’s term in office, in which we have failed to detect essential changes of the rhetoric.

“Halcyon Years for the U.S.–Lithuanian Relationship...”

It was thus that the cooperation of the years 2002–2005 between the USA and Lithuania was defined in one of the Embassy cables released in the middle of 2007.¹³ The very use of such a wording clearly indicates that the situation in 2007 was already different. But this will be discussed later. Before that, let us survey the cables of 2004–2005 that are accessible to us, and analyze how they reflected those “halcyon years for the U.S.–Lithuanian relationship...”.

The first more exhaustive cable presenting a generalized and systematic estimation of Lithuania as a participant in world politics and an ally of the USA is the document of January 18, 2005, *Embassy Vilnius Work Plan for New Government*.¹⁴

In the cable, which was prepared while planning the work of the Embassy with the newly formed Algirdas Brazauskas government after the elections to the Seimas in the fall of 2004 and signed by the then Head of the U.S. Embassy Stephen D. Mull, we find comprehensively presented tasks of the Embassy activity, among which the most important task is singled out: to encourage Lithuania to remain an active ally in the global war on terrorism, particularly by maintaining its significant participation in military operations abroad. At the end of the document, the following generalized assessment of Lithuania is presented:

[...] Lithuania, since regaining independence in 1991, has proven itself *one of America's best friends and partners in the world* [emphasis: GV]. We have accomplished a great deal, yet we believe that an even more productive bilateral relationship is within our grasp. While Lithuania's new government brings many new faces to the political scene, some of which may be of concern [...], we remain optimistic that our constructive cooperation with the GOL will intensify in 2005.¹⁵

Keeping in mind the fact that the cable was confidential, we have no reason to believe that the authors of the cable had a different picture in their heads and minds. Later documents of 2005 also abound in confirmations of such reasoning. We will supply several examples.

This is what was entered into a confidential and very comprehensive presentation on Lithuania addressed to the then U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, which was written as scenesetter for the then new Minister of Defense of Lithuania Gediminas Kirkilas's visit to Washington:

[...] Lithuania's military and diplomatic activism give it *a much higher profile than its small size would suggest* [emphasis: GV], and its coincidence of views with ours on political-military issues make it *a valuable amplifier for U.S. interests* [emphasis: GV]. [...]

[...] Lithuania is a small country, but its extraordinary diplomatic and military activism in recent years and strong affinity for the U.S. make it a *valuable advocate of our interests in European security questions* [emphasis: GV].¹⁶

Another case is the scenesetter for the U.S. State Secretary Madeleine Albright's visit to the informal meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of NATO countries held in Vilnius on April 20–21, 2005. The very title of the Embassy cable – *Your Vilnius Visit: Rewarding the Loyal and Calming the Waters* – speaks for itself: a proposal is made to appropriately reward Lithuania for its loyalty. In the cable by Ambassador Mull, the following is emphasized:

[...] Lithuania's internal political acrimony sometimes obscures the broad political consensus that has guided its foreign policy since regaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Its tenets are simple: strong support for the transatlantic bond; integration with western political and economic institutions; and promotion of democracy throughout the former Soviet Union. In recent years, that consensus has powered an ambitious foreign policy that consistently projects *beyond Lithuania's diminutive size* [emphasis: GV] [...]

[...] Although increasingly focused on the requirements of European Union membership, a special relationship with the United States remains Lithuania's most prized foreign policy asset. It maintains an extraordinarily close intelligence liaison relationship with us, has been completely responsive to our requests in the Global War on Terrorism, and *is careful to coordinate all of its foreign policy initiatives with us* [emphasis: GV].¹⁷

A particularly exhaustive description of the relations between the USA and Lithuania was submitted to the delegation headed by Congressman Jim Kolbe that visited Lithuania on October 10–12, 2005:

[...] *Lithuania is a reliable transatlantic partner and a strong advocate of NATO's central role in ensuring security in the Euro-Atlantic area* [emphasis: GV]. As a new member of NATO, Lithuania has politically and materially supported the alliance's international missions. Lithuania currently has boots on the ground in Afghanistan in support of ISAF, and is leading a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Chaghcharan in Afghanistan's remote Ghowr province. In Iraq, Lithuanian soldiers serving under Danish and Polish command conduct patrols, assist in maintaining public order, and are involved with rebuilding and reconstruction efforts. British, Danish, and Polish commanders have all commended Lithuanian soldiers' skills and professionalism. The Lithuanian Parliament has already authorized these international deployments through the end of 2007. Lithuanian soldiers have

also performed admirably as peacekeepers in the Balkans and in 2006 will begin serving with Polish and Ukrainian personnel in a joint peacekeeping battalion in Kosovo...¹⁸

We could supply more examples of such cables,¹⁹ but similar formulations are usually repeated in them. Therefore there is no reason to present more of them.

From such estimations completely logical recommendations for visiting politicians ensue. For example, in March 2005, for the meeting of the then U.S. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld with the then Prime Minister of Lithuania Kirkilas, Ambassador Mull recommended the following:

[...] I encourage you to pay warm tribute to Kirkilas's leadership on Iraq, Afghanistan and other issues of importance to us, while encouraging him and his colleagues in government to adopt a higher profile in European discussions of these issues. I also encourage you to offer all appropriate support and encouragement for Lithuania's brave volunteer effort in Afghanistan, and for its continuing outreach to Russia and other former Soviet states. *Investing support and encouragement in this friendliest of allies will continue to pay rich dividends for our interests from Brussels to Kabul* [emphasis: GV].²⁰

When State Secretary Albright was on a visit in Vilnius in April 2005, the Ambassador first of all recommended to her to show "[...] Gratitude for Lithuania's ambitious activism on our common interests, especially in standing up [sic! – GV] a PRT in Afghanistan and committing to keep troops in Iraq in 2006 [...]"²¹

In general it should be pointed out that during Ambassador Mull's term in Vilnius (i.e. until the fall of 2006), we failed to find in the publicized cables even the slightest signs of criticism, let alone any direct dictate concerning the attitude of Lithuania towards the interests of America. Certainly, this was determined by the "superloyalty" of Lithuania towards America. However, even the documents not intended for the public reflect the fact that the Americans valued that and were determined to nurture these relations. We may consider the presented evidence below from the cable by Ambassador Mull, dated October 19, 2005, scenesetter for the visit of Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, as a clear proof of this "nurturing" attitude: "[...] We have already planted the seeds for this close relationship to grow in future generations. For example, Lithuania has 10 students currently enrolled in the four U.S. service academies and 11 alumni – *one of the highest per capita representations in the world* [emphasis: GV]."²²

It is interesting to point out that such "superloyalty" on the part of Lithuanian authorities and the "nurturing" attitude of U.S. diplomats essentially leaves the question of why the political elite of Lithuania is actually exceptionally friendly to America in the periphery of their attention. It may be that the only explanation can be found in the

cable as scenesetter for the visit of the delegation headed by Congressman Jim Kolbe on October 10–12, 2005:

[...] Common values, a history of mutual support, and common goals for regional security bind Lithuania and the United States. Lithuania continues to recognize a debt of gratitude to the United States for having maintained a policy of non-recognition of Baltic annexation throughout the years of Soviet occupation. Following the restoration of Lithuania's independence, the U.S. cemented the friendship, providing political and financial support to Lithuania, welcoming the country into the transatlantic alliance, and supporting Lithuanian membership in NATO and the European Union.²³

As one can see, this is essentially a rather historical-geopolitical but not sociological-economic grounding and understanding of the commonality of interests between the USA and Lithuania. It should not be stated that the Embassy completely ignored broader circles of Lithuania's society, as in the cables rather frequent tours of ambassadors to provincial Lithuanian towns are reflected. On the other hand, it is interesting to emphasize the point that we succeeded in finding only a single cable dealing with the opinion of the general public of Lithuania about America and its relations with Lithuania. We shall quote the summary presented at the beginning of this document:

An Embassy-commissioned poll funded by EUR/PPD showed that a strong majority of Lithuanians continue to view the United States favorably. The survey also showed a positive correlation between knowing an American and having a positive image of the United States. *Not all the news was good – 82 percent of Lithuanians are opposed to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which feature the participation of Lithuanian troops* [emphasis: GV]. Our findings are leading us to focus on targeted outreach to non-elites while continuing to emphasize policy outreach to elites.²⁴

This quotation, as well as the whole document, clearly reflects a rather ambiguous – double-edged and contradictory – attitude of Lithuanian society to the USA and a resolute support of the attitudes of Lithuanian authorities towards America. The same document also presents specific recommendations that could improve the image of the USA and the understanding of their policy goals within the “non-elite” part of Lithuania's society. However, it should be pointed out that we failed to detect any proof that that work was systematically continued in the same direction. This cable is only an exception confirming the fact that the nearly undivided attention of the Embassy was paid to the country's tumultuous domestic policy and to its creator – the opposition-torn political class.

“The Lithuanians Are in Need of Some Alliance Management...”

We have chosen one more quotation from the same document²⁵ as the title of this chapter. We have done it not just randomly but thinking that it is this phrase that best reflects the changes that have taken place. Certainly, a large contribution to the change in the atmosphere of bilateral relations was stimulated by the fact that in the Seimas of the 2004–2008 term no stable majority was formed; therefore the country experienced more than one political crisis and governance by a minority government. Despite a broad political consensus regarding the foreign, security and defense policy of Lithuania, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defense, i.e. the most important politicians in terms of relations with the USA, did change. It is obvious that diplomats had to constantly establish and renew contacts with relatively frequently changing politicians in government posts.

It is possible that for a certain time the greatest “headache” for USA diplomats working in Lithuania was the new Minister of Defense, Juozas Olekas, who, at the beginning of 2007, tried to initiate the withdrawal of a contingent of Lithuanian military personnel from Iraq and correspondingly to increase the number of military personnel participating in the mission in Afghanistan.²⁶ This did not comply with the plans of President George Bush’s administration, because it was precisely a considerable increase in the number of military personnel that was desired in order to finally solve the remaining problems and to accomplish the mission in Iraq more quickly. Under the circumstances, when a part of the major allies also began to seriously plan a withdrawal, each soldier participating in the mission became important. Consequently, the U.S. Embassy in Vilnius apparently received instructions to seek to persuade Lithuania to renounce its plans for the withdrawal of its small 53-person-strong contingent under the pretext that military units of the United Kingdom and Denmark, alongside which Lithuanians also served, were withdrawing.

Eventually, the Americans achieved their aim. Minister of Defense Olekas was not supported by other politicians, including President Valdas Adamkus, Prime Minister Gediminas Kirkilas and Minister of Foreign Affairs Petras Vaitiekūnas. President Adamkus delegated Vaitiekūnas and Olekas to go to Washington and discuss ways of further cooperation, including the extension of the mission of the Lithuanian military personnel in Iraq. Although after the return of the Lithuanian military contingent from the mission in Iraq at the beginning of August 2007 the military participation of Lithuania there became rather symbolic, it was still decided in April 2008 to resume the mission of the Lithuanian contingent in Iraq.

It is obvious that this mini-conflict had no more significant consequences; however, it is still important to note that under these circumstances the estimations of Lithuania kept changing in terms of how U.S. diplomats, who until then had been used to

practically ideal relations between the USA and Lithuania on issues of security and defense policy, perceived Lithuania and the problems related to it.

In our opinion, the clearest reflection of these changes was a confidential cable of August 1, 2007, signed by the U.S. Ambassador, entitled *Scenesetter for the Visit of the Lithuanian Foreign and Defense Ministers*,²⁷ which was addressed not only to the key addressees' institutions in Washington, but also to the U.S. Embassies in Riga, Tallinn, Warsaw and NATO. Some parts of this cable speak for themselves; therefore we will quote them as comprehensively as possible.

First of all it notes that the Lithuanians, having joined NATO and the EU, do not thoroughly understand the difference between these two institutions, and in general have no accord concerning the "new national goal":

Lithuania finds itself in the midst of multiple transitions each of which sows self-doubt and angst. After having achieved its twin goals of membership in NATO and the EU in 2004, *Lithuania has not developed a consensus on a new national goal* [emphasis: GV]. Instead, they are finding that membership in both institutions contains obligations as well as opportunities. At the same time, they have not completely internalized that these are very different institutions and that *the trading culture of the EU is inappropriate for NATO and for dealing with us* [emphasis: GV].²⁸

The cable also defines how the relations between the USA and Lithuania have changed qualitatively:

2002–2005 were halcyon years for the U.S.–Lithuanian relationship. President Bush visited in 2002. The Lithuanians were part of Secretary Rumsfeld's "New Europe" in 2003, and they acceded to NATO in 2004. *Now Lithuania's relationship with the U.S. is also changing* [emphasis: GV]. With the expansion of NATO and the EU, the relationship has become less about Lithuania and more about what we can do together globally. While we continue to want Lithuanian partnership, we now expect them to carry more of the costs (e.g., operating costs for the PRT in Afghanistan which we paid at first). Lithuanians found the old relationship with its high level visits and extensive financial support much more comfortable and less demanding, particularly on their budget.²⁹

Finally, there is a recommendation resulting from this to politicians in Washington: *The Lithuanians are in need of some alliance management* [emphasis: GV]. They have gone from being one of our darlings in the 2003–2005 period to being a trusted and important ally. This transition is natural and appropriate from our perspective, but a little daunting from theirs. I appreciate your willingness to spend some time *helping the Lithuanians understand the important role they play as a friend and ally of the United States with both the privileges and expectations that go with that* [emphasis: GV]. [...] ³⁰

As one can see, there is nothing to comment on here. It is obvious that the Americans already desire a different attitude from Lithuania and are inclined to rather more critically estimate their hitherto “best friend”, who still does not clearly realize where he has found himself and how he should behave.

It is worth noting that this defined change in the relationship between the USA and Lithuania may or may not have been intentional, but it coincided with the replacement of the U.S. Embassy Head. In the fall of 2006, the U.S. Ambassador’s position was occupied by John A. Claud. In any event, the tone of the cables of the U.S. Embassy in Vilnius changed perceptibly. We will supply an example from the cable of January 31, 2008, as scenesetter for the meeting of the U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates with Lithuanian politicians:

[...] As you know, Lithuania has been a staunch ally in both Afghanistan and Iraq, and *Lithuanian officials do not tire of hearing our appreciation for this* [emphasis: GV]. [...] While our hopes are slim for future Iraq combat commitments, we believe it important that you thank Olekas for Lithuania’s current deployment and remind him that there is still a need and an open request for forces in OIF. Without offending Lithuanian sensibilities about making “*sovereign*” decisions [emphasis: GV], he needs to hear that a decision not to redeploy will not be greeted warmly by Washington.³¹

The fact that these were confidential documents notwithstanding, such recommendations, smelling of a certain irony, were not detected in previous reports, particularly those of the years 2005–2006. True, we also failed to find anything similar in later cables either. Thus it would be too daring to interpret this change as a turning point in the attitude of the USA in terms of relations with Lithuania, moving from the “nurturing” to the “dictatorial”. It is rather the opposite. A “decline” in the relations, determined by the “individual opinion” of the Minister of National Defense of Lithuania Olekas concerning the Lithuanian military contingent in Iraq, was soon replaced by more substantiated yet still more critical (in comparison with the years 2005–2006) estimations of Lithuania as an ally. Here is an extract from the cable dated June 25, 2008, as scenesetter for the visit of Prime Minister of Lithuania Kirkilas to Washington:

In less than a generation, the country has gone from the yoke of Soviet authoritarianism to being an EU and NATO member, *punching above its weight in out of area missions* [emphasis: GV]. However, having achieved its twin goals of membership in the Western institutions, *the country at times seems rudderless, unsure of where it wants to go next, or what it wants to be* [emphasis: GV]. It remains and wants to remain a staunch U.S. ally, but as it moves increasingly deeper into the EU’s institutions, *we sometimes find less willingness to support U.S. interests* [emphasis: GV].³²

This passage is a particularly obvious example of the essence of the problem. As one can see, America has to work with a quite diligent ally that so far has been doing more than its capabilities permit. However, the ever-more apparent internal confusion and lack of leadership are beginning to generate what might be called “less willingness to support U.S. interests”.

The aforementioned problem notwithstanding, a sufficiently optimistic mood and conviction that, in spite of the emerging problems, Lithuania will remain a loyal ally of America dominates further in the document. However, the document presents the following recommendation concerning Kirkilas’s visit to Washington: “Your meeting is an opportunity to reinforce our friendship, and to encourage this small ally to keep up the good work where appropriate and to continue transforming into a modern state with values-based policies where work remains to be done.”³³

A similar tone pervades later cables as well. It is a little surprising, but a major impact on the voiced estimations was made neither by the Russian–Georgian war of 2008, nor elections to the Seimas in 2008, nor the 2009 presidential elections in Lithuania.

In November 2009, Anne E. Derse became the Head of the U.S. Embassy in Vilnius. And since then, until the end of February 2010, when the publicized data finished, there has been a noticeable increase in cables from the Embassy in Vilnius, yet they contain quite a lot of information on the energetic activity of the new Ambassador in getting acquainted with the Lithuanian political class but rather few estimations. A specific interesting exception in this respect is the cable *Lithuanian President Grybauskaitė's First Six Months*, dated January 4, 2010, and signed by the Charge d’Affaires of the Embassy, Damian Leader.

This cable emphasizes the differences that the new President, Dalia Grybauskaitė, introduced into the foreign policy of Lithuania:

She has sought to orient Lithuanian foreign policy more towards relations with Europe, and has cultivated a more pragmatic relationship with Russia that could enhance Lithuania’s reputation among its Western allies. She wants better coordination among the three Baltic countries to push forward energy projects, but at the same time has irritated Baltic counterparts by publicly speaking on their behalf about NATO contingency planning for the Baltic region.³⁴

According to the Embassy cable, Grybauskaitė’s standpoint towards the USA is considerably different from that of her predecessor Valdas Adamkus:

Unlike many senior Lithuanian officials (including her predecessor), Grybauskaitė *is not instinctively pro-American* [emphasis: GV] [...] Grybauskaitė’s Washington experience, and her dealings with the United States on trade issues, did not leave her as pro-American as her predecessor Valdas Adamkus. Nor is she as openly anti-Russian as Adamkus, believing that inflammatory anti-Russian rhetoric damages

Lithuania's standing in EU councils. She has sought to reorient Lithuanian foreign policy towards greater cooperation with the EU.³⁵

The fact that Grybauskaitė is not resolutely pro-American was certainly not news. Her decisions to demand investigation into whether secret CIA prisons functioned in Lithuania and the fact that she essentially blocked the giving of refuge to Guantanamo detainees in Lithuania were rather extensively commented on.³⁶ Without any doubt, had Valdas Adamkus been the President of Lithuania at the time, such decisions would have been hard to imagine.

A real diplomatic and mass media confusion was also caused by her later decision (i.e. in April 2010) not to go to the meeting of Central and Eastern European leaders in Prague, organized on the initiative of President Barack Obama, and to send the Prime Minister, Andrius Kubilius, instead.³⁷ Unfortunately, WikiLeaks does not supply the reaction of the Americans to this decision by the President.

In any case, to judge from the cable of January 4, 2010, as early as the beginning of the year, the Embassy was not inclined to dramatize "un-pro-American" elements of Grybauskaitė's approach and treated further cooperation rather optimistically:

[...] *The absence of an instinctive pro-American attitude does not mean Grybauskaitė is anti-American* [emphasis: GV]. The Ambassador's meetings with her reflect Grybauskaitė's understanding that the U.S. is an important ally, and the key ally to address her concerns on Lithuania's security. She has been an unwavering supporter of Lithuania's continued presence in Afghanistan, seeing it as a direct quid pro quo for strong NATO support for Lithuania. [...]

Future support for issues of concern to the U.S. require *careful cultivation of Grybauskaitė now* [emphasis: GV]. [...] Grybauskaitė could well be president until 2019 and showing that we take her seriously, value Lithuania's support in Afghanistan, appreciate its support for our Russia policy, and want it to play a constructive role in the EuroAtlantic community, *could pay dividends for many years to come* [emphasis: GV].³⁸

So we may be convinced that the standpoint of some Lithuanian politicians, one that came to light already at the end of 2006 and aimed at treating relations with the USA a little more pragmatically, has now established itself at the highest political level as well. However, we managed to find very few manifestations of anxiety or discontent in the cables of the archive. U.S. diplomats were not disposed to dramatize the situation and recommended further keeping to the "nurturing" strategy, believing that such a policy "will pay dividends for many years to come."

Conclusions

Certainly, in a short article it is impossible to cover all the agenda of the bilateral relations between the USA and Lithuania. Such issues, also important for the USA's foreign policy and diplomacy, as Lithuania's complicated relations with Russia, or the common efforts of Lithuania and the USA to contribute to the development of democracy in other republics of the former Soviet Union, have remained beyond the scope of our attention. We have not discussed more extensively those cables that reflect Lithuania's internal political fighting, the lack of discipline and responsibility in the mass media, the consistent standpoint of the USA in promoting the formation of a more open and tolerant society, and the exceptional attention of the U.S. government and the Embassy to the issue of the restitution of the property of Jews that was confiscated during the occupation. Finally, it should be stated that in the publicized archive the data about the fact that the USA had allegedly tried, with the help of Lithuania, to substantially influence the European common foreign and security policy are very scarce. Although the documents testify that the USA and Lithuania constantly exchanged information, we failed to find any manifestations of serious diplomatic actions.

Thus it is necessary to point out that, although all the mentioned topics are interesting and informative in their own right, we had to leave them out in order to avoid a "cherry-picking of curiosities" approach. Seeking to find the answer to the more significant question of how the attitude of the great powerful state manifested itself and perhaps changed in its relations with an ally that is friendly, yet weak and of relatively little significance, we concentrated first of all on the issues that are most sensitive for America, those of security and defense policy, related to Lithuania's participation in the global war against terrorism.

A close look at the cables publicized in the archive confirmed beyond any doubt the proposed hypothesis that at least in the case of Lithuania the Americans largely followed their strategy of the "nurturance" of the small ally. We have managed to capture a few certain individual relapses of "criticality" but have failed to detect anything similar to what could be attributed to dictation or indifference or offhandedness to the interests of the ally.

On the other hand, we still had a basis to single out two phases of the bilateral relations between the USA and Lithuania – the first one (2004–2006) as more idealistic, more harmonious, and the second (2007–2010) as more realistic, more pragmatic and more critical. Therefore we are not afraid to claim that this small WikiLeaks archive does reflect a certain fragment of the evolution in American reasoning about Lithuania, and probably about other new allies from Central and Eastern Europe also. In our opinion, the evolution of this approach is unavoidable, although its further trajectory remains unclear.

We think that the key reason for this vagueness lies in the fact that, to judge from the archive cables, the American reasoning about Lithuania and probably about Central and Eastern Europe lacks consistency to some degree. On the one hand, in the cables the Americans were repeatedly inclined to note that Lithuania operates “out of its league in terms of its weight” both in supporting the policy of America, in particular its war on terrorism, and in trying to contribute to the development of democracy in Eastern Europe. On the other hand, at the same time, they miss a more substantial role of Lithuania in the discussions of the European Union institutions on security and human rights issues in a broader or global context, which, in their opinion, means that Lithuania is “not using its potential” to the full. The lack of this definiteness is sufficiently significant because it reflects the hesitations of the Americans themselves and not a completely clear self-determination as to what role in the policy of the USA such countries as Lithuania should play in the future.

Vilnius-Druskininkai, August, 2012

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Poland and the WikiLeaks

Wojciech Borodziej-Smoliński

The mass publication of U.S. diplomatic cables on the WikiLeaks webpage caused worldwide consternation and embarrassment. Officially this is because it is hard to comment on state-owned secret or confidential letters, but on the other hand it is also hard not to resist the feeling of discovering something new. This is especially true if such cables belong to a country that we, the Eastern Europeans, basically trust – the United States of America.

The WikiLeaks portal began to publish cables on November 28, 2010. In total WikiLeaks publicized 251,287 reports / letters / messages. Some of them go back to 1966. All of them came from U.S. governmental institutions around the world: mainly embassies, but also local offices, consulates etc.

The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs never made any official comment on the WikiLeaks reports, claiming that Polish diplomats should not be required to explain the rumors or to comment on documents prepared by diplomatic services other than the Polish one.¹

The cables released by WikiLeaks, however, provide an interesting – although not a comprehensive – view of how Americans see us, what their policies are and what they want to achieve. But why should we be surprised? Should we be surprised at the news that diplomats lobby for the interests of their countries? Or at the news that diplomats describe and report meetings that they took part in or draw conclusions from their interviews? Finally, at the news that from time to time, they indulge themselves in presenting their personal assessment of their interlocutors? Of course not. This is the normal activity of any diplomatic service – even when it is carried out by as friendly a country as the United States of America.

A close reading of the cables, however, gives us the opportunity to evaluate what is and what was of great interest to our partners and how successful they were in convincing us to help them fulfill their goals. In the perspective of 5–10 years we can determine the effectiveness of our foreign policy, strategic plans and goals. However, when analyzing the cables we should not forget that they are one-sided, present the interest of one party only, and describe historical events.

A Few Words about Statistics

WikiLeaks is known mainly for making public more than 250,000 diplomatic cables from U.S. diplomatic posts around the world. But WikiLeaks also reveals documents originating from other sources: banks, analytical agencies, corporations and international institutions. WikiLeaks is ready to share all the material submitted by anonymous sources. This analysis is based primarily on the U.S. diplomatic cables mentioned above.

From out of 250,000 messages, the word “Poland” appears in roughly 4,170 dispatches, of which the oldest is dated October 7, 1987.² The American Embassy and consulates in Poland created 972 messages (970 for the Embassy in Warsaw, and 2 for the Consulate in Krakow). The earliest correspondence is from January 3, 2005,³ while the most recent is from February 24, 2010.⁴

However, those who are looking for sensation will be surprised. The words ‘Poland’ and ‘Warsaw’ appear most often in the context of the description of international agreements and commitments. In many cases ‘Poland’ is only on the quoted list of the countries involved in the agreement. Sometimes the cables include biographies of the newly appointed ministers, MPs, and so on: in many of those cases, Poland simply appears only as the country where a person served earlier as a diplomat.

In Poland the WikiLeaks messages were not widely covered by the media. Only the juiciest quotations could attract public opinion. The main topics were related to the following: aspects of public life; the Polish military; security questions; energy issues; the possible greater presence of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) on the Polish market; relations with neighbors (Germany, Russia and Lithuania).

Politicians and the Political Sphere in the Cables

For the Polish foreign policy, the years covered by the leaked U.S. cables (2005–2010) were a period of great political redefinitions. This special situation was caused by the political turmoil of 2004–2005, when Poles witnessed first their great political crisis. The crisis was caused by the so-called Rywin-gate, which engendered mistrust not only of the politicians and political class but also of the state institutions such as Parliament and the Prosecutor’s Office. As a result of the Rywin-gate the left-centrist majority government of Leszek Miller was replaced by a minority government led by Prof. Marek Belka. The newly established cabinet was only to administer the country till the results of the early elections. Poles are tired of both the Social Democrats and the Liberals. Also, they have a sense of a total corruption within the political sphere. The political concept for the election campaign in 2005 was marked by the idea of the return

to power of post-Solidarity reconciled parties (Civic Platform and Law and Justice), which after the election would form a long-awaited coalition. Presidential elections were also scheduled for the end of 2005.

Parliamentary elections took place at the end of September, while the presidential elections were held a month later (October 2005).⁵ The U.S. Embassy tracked and analyzed the main party leaders quite accurately, and described their potential and experience in politics. Almost 33 cables are dedicated to the election and post-electoral situation in 2005. Content analysis shows that diplomats tried to describe the Polish political scene based on their own experience rather than on media articles. Messages concerning the elections in Poland show that the U.S. Embassy sought to keep a balance between contacts with key players from different parties. The cables also describe discussions and the characters of candidates for various positions in the government. Of interest is the fact that U.S. diplomacy met, for example, with candidates for the post of Minister of National Defense from two competing parties. It transpired that despite being from different parties they proposed almost the same policy recommendations in the case of their nomination to the post. This certainly shows how important policy objective consistency is, when it comes to strategic issues such as foreign policy or defense policy.

In many cases, the authors of the cables also presented their personal assessments; these, however, were in line with reality. Some high-level politicians could read the private opinions of diplomats about themselves, for example Anna Fotyga, Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Law and Justice government, and Antoni Macierewicz, Deputy Minister of Defense, responsible for the transformation of Military Intelligence.⁶

In cables regarding Polish external relations it is also hard to discern revelations that significantly alter the picture of Polish–U.S. relations. In most cases, we are dealing with one-sided assessments and conclusions of the meetings held at various diplomatic levels.

During the years 2008–2010 the largest share of messages describe the Polish position on Iraq, the Polish contribution to the Afghanistan mission and the missile defense system. These messages do not reveal any news that would be hard to guess, given the rather broad coverage of these topics in the media and in think-tank activity. Of interest, however, is the fact that the people who took part in the meetings with U.S. diplomats are the ‘usual suspects’.⁷ In the majority of meetings Embassy staff focused on a group of 15 to 20 people, who are easy to identify. This detail is interesting, as it turns out that even in a country of 37 million inhabitants one needs to get in touch with only a few people to know the main future outlines of foreign and defense policy.

However, this argument can be interpreted either positively (as the country’s structures have a clear division of competences), or negatively (as a small number of experts and a fairly limited number of interviewees suggest that influencing the decisions of the country was relatively easy).

Out of a great number of different cables, there are some topics that can be presented as being particularly interesting from the perspective of the current research. The first series of cables concerns the planned purchase of new passenger aircraft for LOT Polish Airlines.⁸ The second series tackles Polish–U.S. relations concerning Polish participation in the Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) program, and the third is the security cooperation between Warsaw and Washington. Questions of regional cooperation, energy security and GMOs are also briefly studied.

Procurement of a New Passenger Airplane

The first-mentioned series of messages⁹ describes the course of the talks on the purchase of the new passenger aircraft model Boeing 787 Dreamliner. The messages that leaked through WikiLeaks put much more emphasis on the procedural issues of a tender. Boeing was sure that its offer was the best; however, both company management and diplomats had concerns as to whether the tender would be shaped only by business issues and qualitative factors. The American concerns were related to Boeing's European rival: Airbus, with its construction A350.¹⁰ Airbus, as a Europe-based company,¹¹ sought to apply political pressure on the government and Lot Polish Airlines by adding not only objective factors but also political considerations. The indicated example, however, gives grounds to believe that the Polish government and the management board of LOT were resistant to any political pressure exerted. Statements in the WikiLeaks messages indicate that both the Polish government and LOT took a firm stand to ensure that during the tender only economic and business aspects would be considered. It was also pointed out that the challenge may not be the tender itself but elections in Poland and changes in ministries and possible changes in the management board of LOT.

The particularity of these cables lies in their lack of continuity. After the tender, when it was known that Boeing was the winner, the U.S. Embassy did not make any follow-up regarding this topic. There was not even any mention of the fact that a positive outcome of the tender for Boeing was already in place in the second half of 2005. Aircraft deliveries originally planned for the summer of 2008 were delayed. Either the U.S. Embassy did not report about the situation of LOT and the situation with the delays in delivery of the first plane, or at least those cables did not come out. Finally the first of eight Dreamliners would be delivered in November 2012. Unfortunately, either the Embassy was no longer interested in the further fate of the contract, or the companies started to communicate directly and not through the Embassy. The other possible assessment that one can make is that WikiLeaks did not publish, or did not want to publish, all the cables from the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw.

Poland and the BMD in the Cables

The second series of cables concerns Polish–U.S. relations regarding Polish participation in the Ballistic Missile Defense program.¹² The first signals and preliminary talks on the possible localization of BMD in Central Europe took place in 2002.¹³ However, only after the successful tests of the missile interception system in 2004 did they accelerate. Moreover, the BMD got introduced only in the new defense strategy of the U.S. published in 2005. In parallel with the new defense strategy, a special chapter for the BMD elements abroad was provided in the U.S. budget.

The U.S. elements of the BMD in Poland were a part of the Ground Base Midcourse Defense. The BMD system consists of 3 phases (Boost Phase Defense, Midcourse Phase Defense and Terminal Phase Defense). 10 rockets placed in underground silos would have been responsible for destroying targets in their middle phase of flight. Furthermore, the United States also planned to build an early warning radar system in the Czech Republic. In the years 2005–2006 the Polish government established special committees in the Prime Minister's Chancellery, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense. These committees were responsible for negotiations with the U.S., but also for solving many legal problems of BMD installation in Poland. The committees led a fairly active discussion with the U.S., which overlapped with the negotiations on an agreement on the legal status of U.S. troops on Polish soil (this latter agreement is called SOFA – Status of Forces Agreement¹⁴).

From the point of view of the Polish defense strategy, arrangements with the U.S. served to strengthen the defense system in Poland, especially through improvement of the capabilities of air defense. This kind of cooperation with the U.S. was aimed at strengthening strategic relations with the U.S., while the Polish government also sought some opportunities for the Polish military industry during the construction elements of the system in Poland. However, since 1989 Poland has wanted to build its security based on three pillars: NATO, the European Union and the United States. The general positive consensus, meaning acceptance, among all political forces about the deployment of the U.S. system in Poland has caused tensions not only in relations with Russia – the reaction of which was easy to foresee – but also in Polish–NATO relations. It was not known whether these systems would complement already existing NATO defense capabilities and to what extent they would only work in favor of the U.S. and the host of the installations.

For the record, it should be pointed out that the two documents regulating military cooperation and deployment of antiballistic interceptor missiles on the territory of Poland were signed in Warsaw on August 20, 2008, by Condoleezza Rice. Only a year later President Barack Obama phoned Donald Tusk to inform him that United States had revised their plans and installation of BMD elements in Poland was no

longer valid. The call was made on September 17, 2009. This day is a special one in Polish history.¹⁵ By making this call on this precise day the Obama administration could not have chosen a worse date. This allowed the media and experts to speculate on diminishing U.S. presence in this region and lack of interest in the Central European Region. An important additional factor is the fact that the Polish Prime Minister knew about the planned U.S. withdrawal. Tusk was prepared for this development of the situation. World media and reports from different agencies¹⁶ gave many hints predicting that there would be a change in U.S. policy. Moreover, as early as September 16 Obama called the Czech Prime Minister, who spoke with Donald Tusk later on the same day.

The WikiLeaks cables covering this special period in U.S.–Polish relations do not bring any special news. From the very beginning of the negotiations (launched in May 2007) the Polish side made it very clear what it wanted from the U.S.¹⁷ In the cable from this period U.S. diplomats clearly state that the Polish team wanted to negotiate three issues: missile interceptor base status, special military cooperation and the Status of Army Agreement (SOFA). The content of this cryptogram seems to be important for two reasons. Firstly, it shows that even in May 2007 the Polish government suspected that the U.S. might change its decision about the BMD in Eastern Europe. Secondly, it indicates that the strategy of negotiation was to get as much as possible from the U.S. in order to secure Polish interests. As a result, we may say that all three negotiation aims were achieved. On August 20, 2008, Poland and U.S. signed two important documents: the contract for the deployment of missile defense interceptors¹⁸ and the Declaration on Strategic Partnership. Additionally, SOFA was signed in December 2009.¹⁹

Shared dispatches from the period covering the negotiations over these three contracts give a fairly positive picture of Polish diplomacy. Poland was very skeptical about the future and was more realistic about the possible consequences of the economic hardships of that time. The Americans continually assured Poles that the economic crisis would not affect the policy on this issue. From the cables one may also draw the conclusion that the representatives of the U.S. administration who were visiting Poland and resident U.S. diplomats did not know anything certain about the change in U.S. policy; however, they could expect some shifts. Symptomatic is a message of U.S. Ambassador Victor Ashe from March 2009 entitled *Are We Sincere?*²⁰ In a few cables U.S. diplomats pointed out comments made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland and his advisers, in which they signaled to the Americans that a policy change in the case of BMD would put both the Polish leadership and the U.S. as a reliable partner in a bad light.

It seems that the Polish side knew about the informal talks held between the Russian and the American diplomacy. In March 2009 Russian President Dmitry Medvedev offered to build missile defense in partnership with Russia only. At the same time Russian diplomacy tried to convince U.S. policy-makers to change their position on

the BMD through informal talks. The cables present the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov,²¹ who said that a possible change in the U.S. policy towards BMD cannot be linked with possible Russian help to the U.S. in its policy towards Iran. The same cable indicates a suspected reason why Russia was against BMD location in Poland and the Czech Republic. Lavrov was concerned that these sites could negatively affect Russian nuclear capabilities and the nuclear balance between the U.S. and Russia. The Russian minister suggested that if the U.S. wanted BMD sites in Europe, they should be deployed further west and south.²²

Probably already having received the informal messages from the U.S. administration, at the beginning of September 2009 Minister Radosław Sikorski gave an interview in which he tried to prepare public opinion for the decision of the Obama administration. Sikorski indicated that the possible Iranian threat had changed its nature over the past years and said that the final decision about the location of the BMD elements in Poland “may surprise both critics and supporters.”²³

Bilateral U.S.–Poland Security Cooperation

U.S.–Polish talks on security and cooperation form another important aspect. The wording used in discussions is of great importance, especially when two languages are used by partners. As early as February 2009, the U.S. Embassy sent a letter to the Department of State with a clarification as to how it happened that Poles and the U.S. had different expectations. The U.S. Embassy tried to explain such differences and indicate the importance of this difference in the light of a lively discussion about the U.S. and its lack of interest in this part of Europe. The cable²⁴ indicated three major misunderstandings. It should be noted, however, that those misunderstandings were a result of the negotiation strategy and the lack of a deeper understanding, rather than a result of lack of will. The first element indicated was the issue of whether the deployment of Patriot missiles in Poland was dependent on the decision to deploy missile defense elements or not. For the Americans, the answer to that question was yes, since this was due to the operational objectives of the system. For the Polish side, the deployment of Patriot missiles was a matter that was separate from the BMD system, since it was not covered by the agreement on the localization of BMD. Moreover, the declaration of strategic cooperation and partnership with the U.S. said that batteries of Patriot missiles would be located in Poland. In this particular cable U.S. diplomats recognized that they had put too little energy and effort into agreeing on the wording at the beginning of negotiations.

The second element logically connected to the first issue was that concerning what kind of Patriots would be stationed in Poland. The Polish side argued that they should

be fully operational and interoperable with the Polish defense systems, thus improving the defense capabilities of Poland. For the U.S., however, it was obvious that Poles could not be granted “live” missiles, because of special U.S. export regulations. The U.S. diplomats interpreted the declaration on strategic partnership as meaning that the battery of Patriots would be a training set without operational capabilities. Also in this context, during one of the meetings Deputy Minister of National Defense Stanisław Komorowski said that Poland expected real rockets and not “potted plants.”

The third issue that caused confusion among U.S. and Polish negotiators was the different interpretation of the words in the agreements and declaration. The Declaration on Strategic Cooperation stated that besides the Patriot missiles the U.S. would also deploy a garrison to help the Polish army in training and prepare the ground for the permanent base. The problem was the meaning of the words “garrison” and “joint training opportunities”. For the Polish negotiators “garrison” meant the placement of a permanent staff of about 110 people, while for the Americans a “garrison” was just to handle the rotation of the battery, thus involving only 20–30 people. In addition, Poland would have only limited access to the Patriot battery, due to internal American rules. Another mistake was the broad interpretation of points in the agreement: “joint training opportunities” was understood by Poland as meaning Poles getting wider access to the battery of Patriot missiles.

These negotiations may be also perceived as a good example of the Polish negotiations strategy, which was aimed at maximizing possible concessions and based on the notion of interpreting the agreements extensively. Although the U.S. backed away from the installation of BMD in Poland, they took steps to limit the negative results of this decision. Additional ideas presented in the declaration of a strategic partnership are constantly being implemented.²⁵

Regional Security Cooperation

One of the widely commented issues in the cables was that of the NATO contingency plans for Poland and the Baltic States. After the NATO summit and a visit by Barack Obama to Prague, the U.S. State Department recognized the need to finally draw up and implement contingency plans for the Baltic States.

In one of the cables from the State Department to the U.S. Embassies, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton ordered embassies in Poland and the Baltic States to study the opinions of politicians and policy-makers on the development of contingency plans for the Baltic countries. The State Department decided that the best and the fastest way to prepare projects of contingency plans would be to build on already existing ones.²⁶ The State Department wanted to broaden the scope of contingency plans for

Poland and add the three Baltic States. The State Department urged embassies that the talks on the plan should be carried out without publicity, media or typical activities of public diplomacy. As a reason, it was pointed out that any public debate might undermine the transfer of documents and cause unnecessary irritation to Russia as well. The U.S. was originally not sure about the Polish position regarding the extension of contingency plans for Poland to the Baltic States. However, the cables reveal that that American doubts were unjustified. Poland replied positively to the initiative to develop contingency plans for the Baltic States, and made a reservation only to indicate that the extension of the existing plan should not end up simply adding three new countries to it without improving defense capabilities: rather, additional resources needed to be allocated. Poland needed assurances that contingency planning for the Baltic States would not hinder or weaken the contingency plan for Poland.²⁷

Issues of Energy Security

It is obvious that American diplomats were interested in the development of Polish energy security. They especially widely covered all issues associated with this process of diversification of energy sources. This included the negotiations with Gazprom, Polish investments in oil and gas fields, transportation policy, etc. U.S. diplomats were also interested in developments of shale gas extraction. Also in the spectrum of their interest was Polish energy policy towards the Baltic States. In the dispatches U.S. officials wrote that Poland supported the construction of electricity and gas connections with the Baltic countries and also supported the construction of a nuclear power plant in Visaginas, Lithuania. All these steps were taken with the purpose of limiting the influence of Russia on the Baltic States and solving the challenge of the 'Baltic energy island': in other words, ensuring that the Baltic States were detached from European energy supply systems.

The U.S. diplomacy noted also that in many comments Poles did not see any economic benefit from the investments in energy links with the Baltic countries; however, they were ready to support the projects for the sake of solidarity and extension of the energy security sphere. However, as noted in the dispatches, this support had a purely political character: Poland did not intend to invest its own money in these projects and was looking to the EU for help.²⁸

The U.S. diplomacy watched with interest the growing discussion on diversification of Polish energy sources and in this regard the developments around the shale gas investments. The U.S. Ambassador noticed that there were a number of U.S. companies already making investments in Poland and seeking to open their own branches in shale gas production. However, he advised that the administration should not be

extensively involved, because this could bring about adverse results. In the same dispatch it was noted that the Polish government was not ready to maximize the benefits from the interest in shale gas. They claimed that the Polish legal environment was not ready to benefit from the shale gas.

However, the most interesting dispatch in the field of energy security was one covering quite an interesting conversation between President Lech Kaczyński and Prime Minister of the Czech Republic Mirek Topolánek during a meeting at the end of January 2009 in Wrocław. The conversation took place in a triangle made up of L. Kaczyński, M. Topolánek and President of Ukraine Viktor Yushchenko. The information from this conversation and subsequent declarations by the President's Office's staff and the Czech Prime Minister gave a very good insight into the situation in Ukraine and the detention of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko. The fall of 2008 and beginning of 2009 was a hot time in relations between Ukraine and Russia and, as a result, also between Ukraine and the EU. The energy crises, frequently called a 'gas war' by journalists, emerged when Gazprom accused Ukraine of stealing the gas flowing from Russia to the EU. As a response, Russia stopped pumping the gas through the pipeline, which caused gas shortages in 16 countries in Western Europe.²⁹ The 'gas war' undermined not only the reputation of Ukraine, but that of Russia too.

However, the role of the Western European countries may also raise some doubts. In the leaked message the reader may find some indirect proof that the EU and some member states could impose informal pressure on the Ukrainian government to end the conflict with Russia as soon as possible. Western Europe did not care how Ukrainians would solve the problem and to what extent the agreement between Ukraine and Russia would be in line with Ukrainian law. This fact is visible in the discussion between the Polish President and the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic when they convinced Yushchenko that putting an end to the conflict was a matter of prestige. The arguments that they used were "it is important for Ukraine to regain its credibility in Europe," and "Kiev should redouble its efforts to be seen as a responsible partner." The dispatch, however, reveals that Yushchenko himself had serious doubts about the ambiguity of the gas contract signed by Prime Minister Tymoshenko. During the meeting Yushchenko said that "the agreement Ukrainian Prime Minister Tymoshenko negotiated would 'economically ruin' Ukraine due to the lost transit revenues."

However, Yushchenko said that he would respect the agreement precisely because of the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of Ukraine. In addition, Prime Minister Topolánek had warned against "breaking the contract" and President Kaczyński asked about the fate of the Polish gas supply provided by RosUkrEnergo. The U.S. cable put forward the thesis that in this particular case Yushchenko was probably not aware that by signing the agreement with Gazprom Yulia Tymoshenko had actually bought RosUkrEnergo's debt, to ensure the continued delivery and transfer of gas to the West.³⁰ This message

casts a negative light on the whole EU, which has pushed Ukraine and applauded the agreement signed by Prime Minister Timoshenko.³¹

Poland and the GMOs

Another group of cables that excited public opinion in Poland comprised the messages conveying the fact that the U.S. tried to lobby for the implementation of a more liberal law that would favor genetically modified organisms (GMO). The aim of the U.S. administration was to prevent the introduction of the provisions of the two-year moratorium on genetically modified seeds and maximum liberalization of planned provisions on GMOs in Poland. The media in Poland covered the topic widely. The cables revealed that U.S. diplomacy tried to lobby for changes in the Polish law by using the methods of organizing seminars, meetings with scientists, study visits for academics and journalists, study visits of American specialists to Poland, etc. One should note, however, that these methods are legal, acceptable and in fact quite common for representatives of various organizations, no matter whether it is a company or an embassy. One cannot blame the U.S. administration for the fact that they wanted to take advantage of the weaknesses of the Polish government and mass media.

These weaknesses include insufficient loyalty of the officials to the policy line adopted by the government. The media widely discussed a statement of a senior official of the Ministry of Agriculture, in which it was said that the Polish government was opposed to GMOs but personally the official did not agree with this approach.³² Another weakness of the Polish state that was pointed out by the U.S. ambassador was the fact that Poles are apparently thrilled about Polish agriculture but lack any sense of patriotism when buying food in shops.³³

The example of GMOs showed the gaps in the negotiations both on the American side and on the Polish one. The Polish negotiation strategy consisted of a maximum extension of points written in the signed documents and aiming at obtaining the greatest possible concessions in all fields. Conversely, the U.S. approach was much less extensive, and insisted on the words written. The positive result for Poland was that right after the U.S. diplomacy changed its position on the missile defense system in Poland special steps were taken to ensure that Poland would be provided with an adequate level of satisfaction.

Conclusions

The WikiLeaks dispatches did not awaken a media storm in Poland. In the majority of cases they raised only a one- to two-day-long interest on the part of the Polish media and public opinion. The government was also very careful, and did not pay too much attention to them. Officials were not keen to comment on the WikiLeaks, although for journalists some topics were quite attractive.

The issues concerning state policy and politicians in Poland disclosed in the WikiLeaks cables confirmed only what public opinion already knew about them. Moreover, they did not have an influence on the electoral choices of Poles, because the cables commented on events that had taken place up to five years earlier. Between 2005 and 2010 Poland had four governments in different political formations.

Most political commentators and experts downplayed the importance of the reports, stating that they did not reveal unknown facts, and only confirmed those already known. The general consensus as shown in comments was that backstage conversations and meetings conducted by diplomats were part of their daily work and would continue to take place. WikiLeaks has indeed given an insight into the diplomatic 'kitchen', but not much more. However, to some extent, in the long run the leaks may make the interlocutors more reluctant to share in-depth knowledge with their U.S. partners, and it will require considerably more time to build trust.

The WikiLeaks cables show only a portion of reality, and only one side of it. To what extent would it be more interesting to read cables prepared by diplomatic services such as the Russian, Belarussian, Ukrainian or Chinese ones?

All in all, the publication of the cables has not influenced Polish policy towards the U.S. or other partners. The cables reveal that although U.S. diplomats tried in some case to push Polish bodies towards making changes in the law (*vide* the GMO discussion), they were unsuccessful. In general, however, the WikiLeaks material confirmed that the direction of Polish foreign policy has been in line with U.S. expectations.

Notes

- 1 "Sikorski o depeszy ujawnionej przez WikiLeaks" [Sikorski about the Messages Disclosed by WikiLeaks], *Gazeta.pl*, September 19, 2011. http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/1,114873,10315365,Sikorski_o_depeszy_ujawnionej_przez_WikiLeaks.html. Accessed: September 17, 2012.
- 2 Cable id. 87TUNIS11327, *Reaction to and Background on Tunisia's New Prime Minister and Party Leader*, October 7, 1987.
- 3 Cable id. 05WARSAW13, *Further Press Stories on Alleged Polish Bribery Case*, January 3, 2005.
- 4 Cable id. 10WARSAW121, *Poles Agree with U.S. Approach on Tehran Research Reactor*, February 24, 2010.
- 5 September 25, 2005: parliamentary elections, October 9 and 23: first and second round of presidential elections.

- 6 Cable id. 06WARSAW1798, *New Deputy Defmins: Macierewicz Stirs up Controversy, While Winid Gets to Work*, August 26, 2006; Cable id. 06WARSAW2312, *MFA Demoralized and Weakened under FM Fotyga*, November 2, 2006.
- 7 Among the 'usual suspects' are Adam D. Rotfeld, Radosław Sikorski, Paweł Kowal, Bogdan Klich and Aleksander Kwaśniewski.
- 8 LOT Polish Airlines is a Polish national carrier. 67% of the share belongs to the state budget, while the rest is divided among employees and an investment fund.
- 9 Cable id. 05WARSAW985, *Boeing CEO Meets with Polish Minister of Treasury*, February 24, 2005; cable id. 05WARSAW1369, *LOT Airlines CEO Discusses Boeing's Offer*, March 10, 2005; Cable id. 07WARSAW1843, *LOT Airline Management on Challenging Polish Aviation Outlook*, August 28, 2007.
- 10 "Boeing i Airbus walczą o zamówienie LOT" [Boeing and Airbus Compete for the LOT Contract], *Gazeta.pl*, September 7, 2005. <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/1,114873,2903323.html>. Accessed: September 20, 2012.
- 11 Airbus assembles planes in several factories around the world, but mainly in Europe (Germany, Spain and France) as well as China.
- 12 BMD in Poland was widely known as 'Missile Shield'.
- 13 "American Missile Shield – Polish National Interest." Discussion held on August 7, 2006, Batory Foundation. <http://www.batory.org.pl/doc/tarcza-antyrakietowa.pdf>. Accessed: September 18, 2012.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 The day of September 17, 1939, was the date when the Red Army invaded the eastern territories of Poland, in accordance with the Ribbentrop–Molotov agreement.
- 16 The *Wall Street Journal* and *Weekly Standard* were among the first magazines that gave information about a possible change in U.S. Policy towards BMD location.
- 17 Cable id. 07WARSAW1218, *Start of Missile Defense Negotiations in Poland: the Right Stuff*, May 25, 2007.
- 18 Full title of the document: *Agreement between the Government of Republic of Poland and the Government of the United States of America on Locating on the Territory of Republic of Poland Antiballistic Intercept Defense Missiles*.
- 19 "Polska polega na USA. SOFA podpisana" [Poland Is in the USA. SOFA has Been Signed], *Gazeta Wyborcza.pl*, http://wyborcza.pl/1,93610,7355269,Polska_polega_na_USA__SOFA_podpisana.html. Accessed: September 18, 2012.
- 20 Cable id. 09WARSAW298, *Poland: Are We Sincere?*, March 20, 2009.
- 21 Cable id. 09MOSCOW1111, *FM Lavrov Discusses Missile Defense and Iran with Codel Levin*, April 29, 2009.
- 22 Ibid. "Lavrov said Russia was interested in developing an MD system with the U.S., but the U.S. proposals for an MD system in Poland and the Czech Republic ('3rd Site'), disrupted the balance between the U.S. and Russia's nuclear potential."
- 23 Cable id. 09WARSAW940, *Polish Formin Outlines Evolving Relations with U.S.*, September 12, 2009.
- 24 Cable id. 02WARSAW170, *Poland Wants Live Patriots, "Not Potted Plants"*, February 13, 2009.
- 25 The Declaration consists of certain ideas on how to support the defense capabilities of Poland: deploying the F16 squadron, extending intelligence cooperation, and deploying and transferring C130 transport planes. The majority of these issues are under a certain implementation level in 2012.
- 26 Cable id. 09STATE127892, *NATO Contingency Planning for Our Baltic Allies*, December 15, 2009.
- 27 Cable id. 09WARSAW1228, *Poland Could Accept "Complementary" Contingency Planning for Poland and Baltic States*, December 18, 2009; Cable id. 09USNATO597, *Poles Request Short Delay on Contingency Planning Roll-Out*, December 22, 2009; Cable id. 10USNATO11, *Polish Non-Paper on Baltic Contingency Planning*, January 11, 2009.
- 28 Cable id. 09WARSAW298, *Poland: Are We Sincere?*, March 20, 2009.
- 29 Gas pressure in the pipeline dropped in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Greece, Hungary, Macedonia, Austria, Croatia, Turkey, Italy, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Romania, France and Poland.

- 30 Cable id. 09WARSAW122, *Ukraine, Poland, Czech Republic Summit on Gas, Belarus and Euro-Aspirations*, February 4, 2009.
- 31 In the light of this cable, it is worth asking whether the EU has done enough to achieve the release of Yulia Timoshenko.
- 32 "Depesze Wikileaks o GMO w Polsce" [About WikiLeaks and the GMOs in Poland], *Free i Soft. pl*, August 29, 2011. <http://freeisoft.pl/2011/08/depesze-WikiLeaks-o-gmo-w-polsce>. Accessed: September 19, 2012.
- 33 "Dokumenty WikiLeaks o Polsce. Minister: 'To przekłamanie'" [WikiLeaks Documents on Poland. Minister: "This Is Bias"], *WP.PL*, September 13, 2011. <http://wiadomosci.wp.pl/kat,1356,title,Dokumenty-WikiLeaks-o-Polsce-Minister-To-przeklamanie,wid,13780495,wiadomosc.html?ticaid=110128>. Accessed: September 19, 2012.

The Czech Republic and the WikiLeaks Cables

Ondřej Ditrych

But you'll be secret?

Hamlet I.v

When the “CableGate” affair broke out in November 2010, the excited reactions by states and their representatives may have suggested that Julian Assange and his gang, the self-styled freedom fighters assaulting the weak spots of the global conspiratorial power management apparatus, had hit the target. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton spoke about an attack on the international community. Franco Frattini, Italy’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, went as far as to call the initial release the 9/11 of world diplomacy. And an unnamed senior French diplomat complained in *Le Monde* (November 28, 2010) that “we will never be able to do diplomacy as we used to.” While the primary target of this guerrilla attack was meant to be the United States, the ultimate victim seemed to have been the very institution of diplomacy, managing conflict under the conditions of international anarchy. Indeed, in the WikiLeaks ideology diplomacy – defined still to a large extent by practices outside public control – was seen as a manifestation of the (global) invisible government and conspiracy. While the advocates of the status quo would securitize the institution of diplomacy, painting the dark futures of conflict when estrangement among political communities fails to be mediated through diplomatic means,¹ Assange’s utopia seemed to have been “a brave new world with no diplomats in it.”

With the benefit of hindsight, it may be safely observed that the effect of “CableGate” on the global standing of the United States, international relations and the institution of diplomacy has been rather limited. The United States was certainly embarrassed – by the leakage as such, demonstrating its limited ability to secure its intelligence systems after internal sharing became a response of choice to the challenge of managing increasingly complex and multidimensional global politics, by often rather too candid (if not necessarily correct) statements about other countries’ statesmen, or by the emergence of the fact that the State Department tasked its diplomats with espionage in the United Nations. But this did little to shake the firm position of the U.S. as a

global superpower. Nor did the expectable loss of some confidential contacts around the world significantly affect its ability to collect intelligence.

As for international relations and diplomacy as an institution, the limited impact on these has been primarily due to the cables' nature. The 250,000 cables downloaded by the U.S. army intelligence analyst Bradley Manning from the SIPRNET network do not constitute some authoritative truth about an alternative and hitherto skillfully concealed reality. They contain views of the international politics through thousands of American diplomats' eyes. That is all: some facts, but many more subjective assessments, reflections, speculations and rumors, sent from all over the world to the Washington headquarters (the cables originating in the State Department make up only 3 percent of the collection). It would be too cavalier to dismiss the cables' content as simply "nothing new under the sun". But indeed, leaving aside personal rumors, few substantive facts emerged from the cables that had not been known to students of international relations – and hence also to the practitioners – before. (A discomfiting thought is that the reason why we as analysts are unimpressed is that we are somehow a part of the global conspiratorial apparatus ourselves.) Hence the ironic reference at the beginning of this chapter to Hamlet's inquiring of Horatio and Marcellus whether they can keep a secret. Both expect Hamlet to share with them what he learned from the ghost (his dead father) wandering the ramparts of Elsinor. But while he in fact learned the founding secret of the play – that his father was murdered by his uncle – after imploring them to secrecy Hamlet only shares with them a banal adage ("There's ne'er a villain dwelling in all Denmark but he's an arrant knave"), forcing his friend Horatio to respond with "There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave to tell us this."²

Secondly, the institution of diplomacy has proven remarkably resilient throughout its modern history,³ and while it is currently undergoing a crisis due to the processes related to the information revolution (of which "CableGate" is only one consequence) and the flourishing of transnational relations and global governance, there are signs that it is adapting to this new environment rather well.⁴ Furthermore, "CableGate" failed to create substantial pressure from the global public to which the data was disseminated through leading world media outlets. It is safe to say that in contrast to students of international relations the public was more likely to be scandalized, but overall it did not accept WikiLeaks' interpretation that the cables revealed the existence of some particularly malevolent conspiratorial practices.

Against this background, a limited impact of "CableGate" on the Czech Republic from the international perspective could only be expected. In no way did it damage relations between the Czech Republic and the United States or influence the strong Atlanticist outlook of Czech foreign policy. Domestically, while the cables show that the American diplomats had a fair insight into Czech politics, they at the same time contain no explosive information the publication of which would cause a scandal with real

political consequences in terms of loss of public support for the government, parties or individuals, or criminal indictments. For the intelligence services, the leakage was seen as the problem of the U.S. government, and hence no special security measures, such as a review of the clearance policy, were undertaken. In the public sphere, after “CableGate” WikiLeaks were turned into a label and, under the facilitating condition of the absence of a law protecting whistleblowing, a Czech version of WikiLeaks was launched. The site has failed to produce any original and reliable confidential materials of public interest, however, and has turned, by and large, into a conspiracy theorists’ forum.

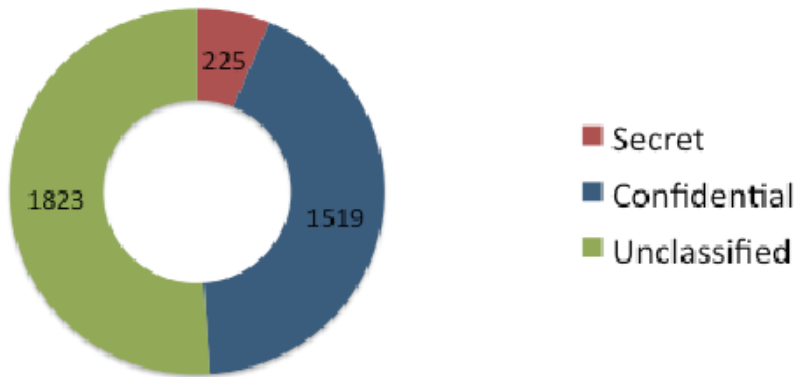
That said, the case of the Czech Republic is not without interest altogether, particularly in the comparative perspective. This chapter seeks to answer the following questions: What were the core issues of interest on the part of the U.S. diplomats? How insightful was their reporting? What is the picture that the cables drew of the Czech political elite? Who were their sources of choice? Were they successful in forecasting future political developments? Was Czech foreign policy affected by “CableGate” at all, even in subtle ways? And what were “CableGate”’s domestic echoes?

The Cables in Numbers

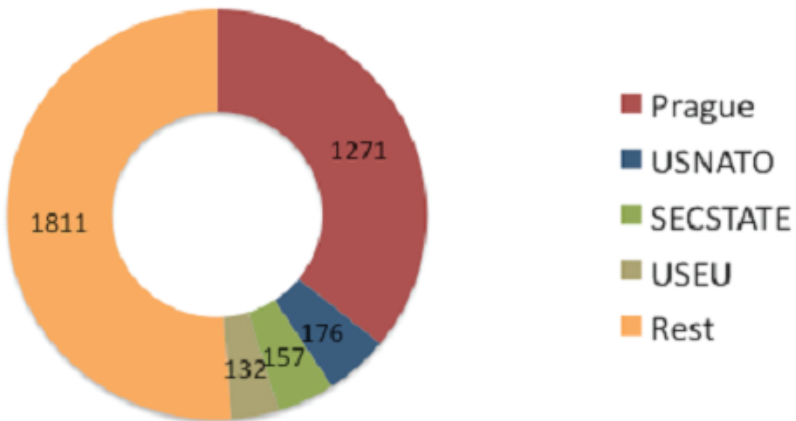
Before addressing these questions a short formal overview of the cables related to the Czech Republic should be made. There is a total of 3,547 cables mentioning the Czech Republic (1.4 percent) in the released collection (*not* including, needless to say, all the cables that were sent). Breaking them down by the level of secrecy, there are 225 secret cables (1.4 percent of the total number of cables classified at this level), of which 76 are NOFORN, 1,519 confidential cables (also 1.4 percent of all classified cables released), of which 194 are NOFORN, and 1,823 unclassified ones, of which 823 are labeled for official use only (again, 1.4 percent).

The cables were sent between November 13, 1989, and February 26, 2010. By monthly comparison, the single largest number of cables in the collection dated March 2009. The explanation is that in the first half of that year, the Czech Republic held the EU rotating presidency. Hence its relative importance grew. It fell under a particular spotlight in March, as at that point of time a governmental crisis emerged, which ultimately led to the government being issued with a vote of no confidence, an unprecedented political development in a presiding member state. The previous peak in the number of cables is dated March 2007. At that time, the Czech government was about to agree to launch formal negotiations on a U.S. BMD (Ballistic Missile Defense) installation, an X-Band radar, in the country.

Cables mentioning the Czech Republic (Secrecy)



Cables mentioning the Czech Republic (Origin)



The greatest number, 1,271, were sent from the Prague Embassy; 157 came from the Secretary of State (1.95 percent of the total cables sent from the Secretary of State's office), 176 from USNATO, 132 from USEU and the rest from various embassies around the world. The Prague cables include 69 that were classified as secret (5.5 percent of the total), 600 confidential ones (47.2 percent) and 602 unclassified (47.3 percent).

In what follows, it is *only* the cables sent from Prague (as opposed to the corpus of all the cables mentioning the Czech Republic) that are subjected to analysis, since methodologically, this seems to be the most appropriate way to answer the research questions set above.

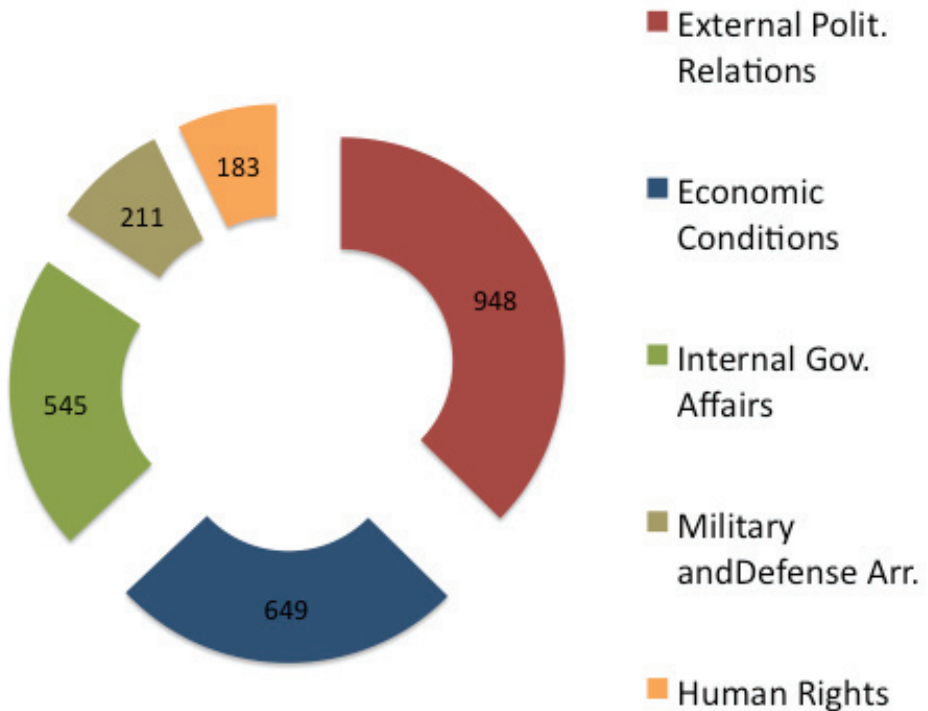
Core Issues of Interest

The simplest way of determining the content of the cables that the U.S. Embassy in Prague produced is to look at the distribution of the content tags assigned to those cables (with multiple tags often attached to one cable):

Tag	Category	Cables	Tag	Category	Cables
AMGT	<i>Management Operations</i>	13	MCAP	<i>Military Capabilities</i>	14
AORC	<i>Int. Organizations / Conf.</i>	35	MNUC	<i>Military Nucl. Applic.</i>	29
APER	<i>Personnel</i>	10	MOPS	<i>Military Operations</i>	57
ASEC	<i>Security</i>	25	OTRA	<i>Travel</i>	24
BEXP	<i>Trade Expansion / Prom.</i>	12	OVIP	<i>Visits of Prom. Individ.</i>	29
CMGT	<i>Consular Admin. / Manag.</i>	13	PARM	<i>Arms Control and Dis.</i>	112
CVIS	<i>Visas</i>	34	PGOV	<i>Internal Gov. Affairs</i>	545
EAGR	<i>Agriculture and Forestry</i>	33	PHUM	<i>Human Rights</i>	183
EAID	<i>Foreign Economic Assist.</i>	73	PINR	<i>Intelligence</i>	38
EAIR	<i>Civil Aviation</i>	15	PINS	<i>National Security</i>	12
ECON	<i>Economic Conditions</i>	649	PREF	<i>Refugees</i>	145
EFIN	<i>Financial and Mon. Affairs</i>	92	PREL	<i>External Polit. Relations</i>	948
EINV	<i>Foreign Investments</i>	39	PTER	<i>Terrorists and Terrorism</i>	67
ELAB	<i>Labor Sector Affairs</i>	33	SCUL	<i>Cultural Affairs</i>	11
ENRG	<i>Energy and Power</i>	59	SENV	<i>Environm. Affairs</i>	29
EPET	<i>Petrol. and Natural Gas</i>	11	SMIG	<i>Migration</i>	68
ETRD	<i>Foreign Trade</i>	119	SNAR	<i>Narcotics</i>	12
ETTC	<i>Trade and Tech. Controls</i>	78	SOCI	<i>Social Conditions</i>	15
MARR	<i>Military and Defense Arr.</i>	211	TBIO	<i>Bio. and Med. Science</i>	20
MASS	<i>Military Assist. and Sales</i>	109	TRGY	<i>Energy Technology</i>	12

Note: Only categories with more than 10 cables are listed.

Cable Tags (Main Categories)



The analysis of the released cables' codes serves as a useful point of departure insofar as it shows that most of the cables were tagged PREL (external political relations), ECON (economic conditions), PGOV (internal government affairs), MARR (military and defense arrangements) and PHUM (human rights). Admittedly, the first three categories could only be expected to score highly due to the basic diplomatic *modus operandi*. Given the emphasis on bilateral security and defense relations, the Czech Republic's participation in NATO ISAF and the Enduring Freedom operations in Afghanistan (and previously also in military operations in Iraq), as well as its identity of the state conducting normative foreign policy – easily aligned with the “normative power” of the United States – neither was it a surprising finding that security and defense (MARR, but also other categories such as PARM, MASS, PTER and MOPS) and human rights were strongly represented. It does demonstrate, however, that the

framework of bilateral relations internalized by both countries, of which security relations and human rights form two central pillars, has been substantiated by actual diplomatic practices.

The limitations of this approach are obvious. It is useful to ascertain the general scope of the Embassy's activity (including consular activity) rather than necessarily the issues of its interest in the Czech Republic, and in terms of these issues, the perspective that it yields is rather vague. The more represented a given category is – such as the obviously *catch-all* category of PREL (a tag on no less than 75 percent of all the cables) – the more abstract it is likely to be. Therefore, to identify the core issues of U.S. interest in more detail, it is necessary to conduct a content analysis that can draw on these preliminary conclusions.

What emerges from this analysis is that the domestic issues of interest (naturally emphasized in the Embassy's communications) included, first of all, descriptions, evaluations and forecasts of political development, particularly at times of uncertainty (with the cables commenting on Czech domestic politics usually being awarded confidential status). Since missile defense was a major issue in the bilateral relations in the period 2006–2009 (the first consultations being held in 2002, it was only then that the foreseen radar installation was politicized and entered public discourse), attention was paid not only to the intergovernmental negotiations, but also to responses in the political circles and society at large. For example, in a rather animated cable the Embassy issued an urgent call not to publish the results of the missile defense review conducted by the Obama administration in 2009 (which ultimately resulted in scrapping the third site plans and the introduction of the EPAA [European Phased Adaptive Approach – OD]) before the scheduled general election in the Czech Republic, as this would, in its opinion, undermine the position of the parties with Atlanticist inclinations and empower their opponents.⁵ (The administration did not heed those recommendations, which interestingly seem to have been based on exclamations by Czech Atlanticists in the bureaucratic apparatus.⁶ In the end, the extraordinary election was delayed by the decision of the Supreme Court, which declared the procedure of calling it unconstitutional.)

The Embassy also showed a keen interest in corruption and lack of transparency, assuming a rather critical position towards the Czech government on those issues.⁷ Often, the criticism would be voiced in recurrent but rather abstract patterns. Defense procurements received most detailed reviews, so that in addition to vague statements⁸ some scandals were reported in detail – an example would be the procurement of Pandur APCs from the Austrian manufacturer Steyr. It is worth noting that the affair was described in a completely detached and neutral manner, with the cable commenting only that “the episode highlights the susceptibility of Czech government procurement procedures to corruption due to a lack of transparency.”⁹ This despite the fact that Steyr

was an affiliate of General Dynamics and the U.S. government had been lobbying for the deal.

Other domestic issues that were of interest to the Embassy not only on an *ad hoc* basis include the following: violent extremism (with cases documented and government policies critically evaluated); intellectual property rights (a sore point in economic relations, as the Czech Republic appeared for several years on the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative's watch list *Special 301*, listing countries in which these rights were not fully respected, due to the limited control over pirate copies of copyrighted merchandise marketed along the Czech Republic's borders); property restitutions (with a special focus on Jewish property); the end use of items on the U.S. munitions list, monitored under the Blue Lantern program.

Outside the domestic context, the Embassy showed an interest in the Czech position on Afghanistan – most of all on the levels of its commitment to NATO ISAF and Enduring Freedom, but also on political matters – issues discussed in NATO generally (consistently depicting the Czech Republic as a member that converges in most areas with the U.S. government's views), Visegrad cooperation (of which the United States has historically been a strong proponent, but about which it was hearing rather skeptical comments from the Czech government in the period covered in the cables), Eastern Europe or – perhaps not so intuitively – the Middle East and specifically Iran (the cables also hint at some intelligence cooperation in this respect). The U.S. diplomats would frequently meet with Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials ahead of EU meetings (GAERC [General Affairs and External Relations Council – OD], Gymnich, etc.) and receive thorough information on their agenda and on the Czech positions. More generally, the Embassy would inquire on Czech preferences in the areas of EU policies in which the United States showed particular interest, such as the genetically modified and biotech agricultural products.

The Ways of America's Diplomacy

The cables produced by the Embassy generally show that the U.S. diplomats had a good insight into the political situation in the Czech Republic. In some cases this insight went far beyond what could be gathered from open sources. For example, the Embassy was aware about lobbying by the Czech government of the then owner of a major media publishing house, *Ekonomia*, trying to convince him not to sell to what was a suspected Russian government front registered in Dominica.¹⁰ In another instance, when there was a standoff in the Czech Parliament regarding the mandate for the Czech forces' deployment in Afghanistan (2008) and there was a risk that the forces would have to be withdrawn from their theaters, the Embassy received information from its contacts in

the Czech Army General Staff that secret contingency plans were being prepared for a mass redeployment, to be used in the worst-case scenario.¹¹

This insight was due not least to their impressive ability to talk to key people in the areas of interest, and very often to make them share their views openly. The assemblage of those personalities comprised politicians both in and outside government, journalists, academics (mostly of an Atlanticist persuasion) and public servants at all levels, from first deputy ministers to political directors, department directors and desk officers, particularly at the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which the Embassy once recognized as “especially open and collegial.”¹² The Embassy’s choice of commentators of Czech politics would generally include trustworthy and knowledgeable interlocutors, although occasionally it seemed to have fallen for some pundits’ celebrity glitter. Among politicians, the Embassy worked both with governments and the opposition, including ČSSD (Czech Social Democrat Party) leader Jiří Paroubek, whom it considered a difficult actor who “epitomizes opportunism at its worst” due to his past record of withdrawing initial support for the missile defense because of unfavorable opinion polls once in opposition, conditioning consent on the continuing troop deployment on minor concessions in healthcare reform (medical fees) and initiating the vote of confidence that brought about the fall of the Topolánek government during the EU presidency¹³ – as long as he was considered an important voice in the political debate on the radar issue.

To some extent, the Embassy could and did exploit the divisions inside Czech politics. It received, for example, advice from Czech Atlanticists on how to most effectively approach Paroubek and the ČSSD on the matter of missile defense. Despite its intimate relations with the Atlanticists, occasionally resulting in internalizing their concerns (such as in the urgent calls not to publish the missile defense review prior to the scheduled election, mentioned above), it was usually able to achieve balanced assessment. In the area of missile defense, to take one example, once the review was made public, the Embassy correctly concluded that the public did not feel insecure as a result, in spite of the Atlanticists’ claims – those who did feel insecure were rather the “professional public” of politicians and journalists supportive of the project.¹⁴

The cables indicate that the Embassy achieved mixed success in forecasting the political development. While usually in possession of good information and developing scenarios on the basis of sound assumptions, it underestimated, for example, the level of popular support for the new party *Věci veřejné* [Public Affairs] ahead of the 2010 general election (the party then became a junior coalition partner) – in contrast to TOP09, another new party to which it seems to have paid closer attention due to its Atlanticist outlook and the fact that Minister of Foreign Affairs Schwarzenberg was its chair; it also failed to predict the (positive) result of the parliamentary vote on the deployment of Czech troops in Afghanistan (2009), being skeptical of the possibility

that the Parliament would vote on the proposal by the caretaker government before the general election took place.

Finally, it is worth making a brief comment on the cables' style. There was a marked change in this respect from a technical (and often negligent) style that took place under *chargé d'affaires* Mary Thompson-Jones, who headed the Embassy in 2009–2010. As a former journalist who had previously held a number of public affairs posts in the diplomatic service, she made the cables sent from Prague much more eloquent, lively and readable, often resorting to the use of catchy headlines and subtitles such as *To Russia with Love* (on President Klaus)¹⁵ or *Pandura's Box* (on the procurement of Steyr armored vehicles).¹⁶

Effects on Czech Foreign Policy

To gauge the effects of "CableGate" on Czech foreign policy is a daunting task. In terms of the Czech Republic's activity revealed in the cables, potentially most damaging to its diplomacy was an episode that took place during the time when it held the EU rotating presidency (2009). In March, it convened a meeting of the EU-27 Iran and non-proliferation experts to receive a classified briefing from a U.S. interagency delegation on Iran sanctions. In a way, this was a bold move, since EU-3, together with Italy, were not in favor of similar meetings, as they enjoyed privileged access to U.S. intelligence on the issue. Moreover, in the EU there was still some opposition to the U.S. participation in internal deliberations. But the heart of the matter was something else. In a private conversation, it emerged, the Czech representative at EU PSC [Political and Security Committee – OD] called on the United States to provide an "urgently needed" impetus to move the EU on the issue of sanctions. And it was further suggested that the United States should "single out" and "isolate" those in the EU-27 who resisted the sanctions in order to achieve consensus.¹⁷ Especially for a presiding country, this call for "friendly assistance" by an external power was, to put it mildly, something rather uncommon. Since before "CableGate" this episode was not widely known, it could have a shaming effect for the Czech Republic. Yet as the Czech Republic has enjoyed a reputation of a somewhat problematic EU member anyway – with its Euroskeptic outlook, unpredictable foreign policy and the past record of delaying the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty – revealing its activities during the presidency must have only reinforced this perception; it could not have been a significant intervention in its own right.

Nor did Czech relations with the United States change following the cables' release.¹⁸ These relations indeed suffered a severe blow with the decision by the Obama administration to review the plans on the deployment of the third site of

the U.S. missile defense in Poland and the Czech Republic in September 2009. The illusion of having enjoyed a special relationship with the United States on the part of the Czech foreign policy elite was thus shattered, and the move was discursively linked to the strategic rebalancing of the U.S. foreign and security policy and interpreted as “withdrawal” from Central and Eastern Europe (the CEE), leaving a security vacuum here while *de facto* inviting Russia (in the context of the reset policy) to exercise more influence. A certain bitterness coupled with cognitive dissonance and uncertainty as to how to relate constructively to the Obama administration (an appeaser lacking in political realism) on the part of the Atlanticists (the most dominant persuasion among the makers of Czech foreign policy) has since defined the Czech position towards the United States, problematizing the relationship particularly in the security domain. At the same time, this tension is conditioned on the continuing conviction about the importance of the transatlantic link, and the Czech Republic has continued to be a faithful NATO “servant” in Afghanistan¹⁹ with the clear if implicit aim of ingratiating itself with the United States. Therefore, while relations with the United States have been somewhat thorny over the last few years – since a normalization after the shock caused by the decision to scrap a project that had been reified discursively by the Czech foreign policy establishment as a symbol of the special relationship and the lasting protection of the Czech Republic against malevolent interventions from Russia is yet to take place – there is no sign that “CableGate” would in any way harm relations further.

In this context it is not without interest to point to another WikiLeaks release – one that somewhat loftily it termed *Global Intelligence Files*, but that is in fact a collection of some five million emails exchanged by the employees of a U.S. intelligence advisory company, Stratfor (a company that WikiLeaks apparently sees as being in cahoots with the U.S. government and all the other global conspiracists). Among those emails released is one dated September 2, 2011, which claims, based on a Stratfor analyst’s interviews at the Czech Embassy in Washington (including the then deputy ambassador), that the Czech Republic intended to procure F-16 fighters as a substitute for the JAS-39 Gripen supersonic jets that it currently leases, but since their price for them was too steep (“exorbitant”), it devised a plan to join in with other CEE states (Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, and possibly Poland) and get a discount on the total of approximately 85 planes. This was not meant to be just another smart defense project, as the explicit rationale for it was to anchor the U.S. in the CEE at a time when it was pivoting towards Asia. The fact that the Czech Republic was said to “be determined to have U.S. military on its soil” (and this would include instructors as part of the F-16 deal) was not what was most interesting about this (alleged) conversation. It was rather that two years after the missile defense review, one year after the EPAA (with foreseen installations in Romania and Poland) was integrated into NATO structures as a key component of NATO BMD at the Lisbon summit (2010) and several months after the

Czech Republic decided to finally decline the offer to host a monitoring center (SEW) to the EPAA, Czech diplomats seem to have cherished a hope that the U.S. missile defense plans could be reviewed once more, as they claimed that the Czech Republic would “agree immediately” to host the radar station originally envisioned as a component of the third site.²⁰

Therefore, while the WikiLeaks material was not likely to have produced any tangible effect on Czech foreign policy, its releases indicate a remarkable stability in the strategic thought of Czech diplomacy, even as, given its Atlanticist outlook, it is currently problematized by the challenge to its ontological security. The key to the country’s security, despite the grudge held against the Obama administration and the tacit understanding that from the U.S. perspective, America’s strategic rebalancing, including turning its attention away from the CEE, where it has limited strategic interests, now makes perfect sense, remains to maintain a U.S. military presence in the Czech Republic (a reason why the monitoring center, funded but not manned by the U.S. military, was only considered a “consolation prize”²¹) and the administration is being attracted to that through various pet projects (F-16s, or a more recent project of a multinational air training center, MATC).

The Czech Political Elite in the Cables’ Mirror

The Embassy, as the cables show, adopted a rather critical perspective on Czech politics, pointing in numerous communications not only to the lack of transparency and traces of corrupt behavior, but also to personal animosities, opportunism and quarrels about petty issues. It was candid in personal sketches of the leading politicians such as Václav Klaus (calling him an instinctive Atlanticist despite relations with Moscow, a self-styled intellectual and rebel), Mirek Topolánek (calling him arrogant and full of bravado) and Jiří Paroubek (calling him an opportunist). But what image of the political elites emerges from the cables in addition to these assessments?

The clearest image emerges of the group from which the most frequent interlocutors of U.S. diplomats were recruited – senior Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials and several politicians with Atlanticist leanings. (No bias is intended here. It is merely the intensity of interactions with this segment of the policy-making establishment that makes it possible to draw reliable conclusions in this respect.) What defines this group is

1. The pervasive framing of Russia as a major security problem;
2. Candidness in relaying their opinions, recommendations, past activities etc. related to Russia to the Embassy staff and; at the same time
3. Criticism shared of the Obama administration and its strategic decisions.

Regarding the first point, a number of cables note that the topic of Russia was or in all likelihood would be brought up by Czech officials and politicians during meetings either with the Embassy staff or with visiting U.S. politicians and diplomats. The Czech officials would be very frank in this respect. For example, the ambassador-at-large for energy security spoke openly about his mistrust of both Russians and Ukrainians during the 2009 winter gas crisis (in which the Czech Republic became involved during its EU presidency).²² He would also tell the U.S. diplomats that he had lobbied an U.S. company Conoco-Phillips to sell its shares in a major Czech refining company (Česká rafinérská) to Unipetrol, a firm owned by Polish PKN-Orlen, rather than Russia's Lukoil (2007), or that he was lobbying against the Russian consortium Atomstroyexport, which participates in the Temelín tender "on security grounds."²³

The ambassador as well as the first Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs or a minister of defense in the Fischer caretaker government all advised the Embassy that Westinghouse should be more active in the Temelín tender. At the same time, Czech Atlanticists would not hesitate to criticize the Obama administration in meetings with the diplomats. Generally their criticism would be aimed at the administration (allegedly) neglecting Central Europe – a region with which, as they would point out, Obama had no experience – and specifically for "conceding" to Russia on missile defense (which is how they interpreted the EPAA).

Domestic Echoes

Predictably, the media coverage of "CableGate" was sensational in nature. It generally replicated the way that global media covered the event, reporting selectively and with limited overall analysis the same "most revealing" issues. It also reproduced its voyeuristic quality. It was this quality that, in absence of truly explosive evidence that would expose the practices of the United States or global invisible government or, as the editors of *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *Le Monde* or *Der Spiegel* may have hoped, sensational material about the conduct of the relations among states in particular cases, sold the affair to the public. The same can be said of the Czech media. The cases that were deemed most explosive in the local context were generally selected for reporting. Yet as no truly shocking revelations emerged from the cables, it was the voyeuristic tenor of (allegedly) providing a unique *insight* – with the authenticity and reliability of the observer uncontested – not only into international, but also into domestic politics, that pervaded the reporting.

Therefore, what made it into the news, both as the initial batch of cables was released and over the course of the following months, were the issues reported by the global media (but here without the context that often accompanied their publication in serious

outlets abroad), and the issues specifically related to the Czech Republic. These included mostly those deemed by the journalists themselves to be likely to impress their readers (rather than to be in the public interest). The radar issue was apparently assumed to resonate with the audience, and as a consequence several, however unsubstantial, cables on that issue – regarding a cable on the response to the review of the original plans, or the course of the negotiations (where Americans “had to yield significantly,”²⁴ while in fact, as the relevant cable made clear, there was a trade-off between the scope of the SOFA agreement, unusually limited in order to facilitate ratification of the deal in the Czech Parliament, and the tax exemption regime, where Czech negotiators in turn accepted U.S. propositions²⁵) – received media attention.

Similarly, as the 2008 Russian–Georgian War was a rather controversial issue in the Czech political debate, with President Klaus taking a manifestly different view from the government’s, it was likely assumed that the audience would be interested to know that prior to the NATO North Atlantic Council meeting on August 13, 2008, the Czech Republic had proposed sending a NATO mission to Georgia. (It knew that the proposal was unrealistic, and it was willing to agree to the CSDP [Common Security and Defense Policy – OD] mission project that had been discussed with the Russian leadership by the French presidency, but according to the cable it used the proposal as leverage to block, ultimately successfully, the licensing of the Russian cruiser *Ladny* for participation in NATO Active Endeavor.)²⁶ In the Czech milieu it could be expected that ringing the bells of “energy security” would not pass unnoticed, which may explain why a rather mundane warning by Vice-President Biden that the Czech Republic was too dependent on Russia, routinely reported by the Prague Embassy,²⁷ would become news a year later. While the Czech press agency that first published the cable’s content noted that during the talks with Czech officials Biden mentioned a foreseen tender on building two new blocks in the Temelín nuclear power plant (now ongoing competition, the largest public contract to be awarded in Czech history and one to which Westinghouse submitted an application), it failed to interpret the warning as an overture to patent lobbying on the part of the U.S. administration (also ongoing) in favor of a U.S. company.²⁸

While the concern for the audience’s attention seems to underlie the choice of issues reported in the Czech media to a great extent, in some cases the selection seems to have been purely incidental. For example, it was reported that according to one cable Israeli Ambassador to Turkey Levy complained to U.S. diplomats about the deteriorating relations between the two countries, attributing them to Prime Minister Erdoğan, and mentioned that Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs Schwarzenberg had passed him a message from Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Davutoğlu saying that “things will get better.”²⁹

It may be concluded that the reported content of the WikiLeaks cables related to the Czech Republic verged on banality, a perception of which on the part of the audience

was eschewed by the voyeuristic tenor of the reporting and facilitated by the generally limited knowledge by the public of international affairs and how diplomatic relations are conducted. "CableGate" also did not leave a significant mark on the Czech public discourse. Several public debates were organized immediately after the initial release,³⁰ the issue of whistleblowing (and the absence of adequate protection for whistleblowers under Czech law) was raised, and a local offshoot of WikiLeaks was founded (only to turn into a conspiracy theorists' forum). Yet it would be an overstatement to speak about forceful interventions in these cases, spurring public action and/or creating a more substantial feedback for the political system.

Conclusion

The cables released by WikiLeaks that were sent from the U.S. Embassy in Prague contain no explosive information, and led to no shocking revelations. Hence they did not produce any significant feedback for the political system, and nor did they bring about any trimming of the sails of Czech foreign policy. Some relevant (particularly in a comparative perspective) and reliable conclusions may nonetheless be drawn from their analysis.

First, the cables show that the declared content of the bilateral relations (emphasizing security relations and human rights) was substantiated by actual diplomatic practices. Domestically, the Embassy showed a particular interest, in addition to actual political developments, in transparency and the rule of law, usually assuming a critical position towards the Czech government and focusing in particular on defense procurements. Internationally, in addition to the predictable areas of interest in Czech positions (Afghanistan, Eastern Europe) the Middle East played a rather prominent role. Furthermore, the Embassy staff was regularly briefed on the agenda and Czech positions prior to EU Council of Ministers' meetings. Second, it may be concluded that U.S. diplomats generally had a fair insight into Czech politics, and showed a remarkable ability to approach key figures in selected issue areas. However, their record in predicting future developments is one of mixed success. Third, "CableGate"'s effects on Czech foreign policy were limited. No shaming effect is likely to have occurred even in the most precarious leaked case – suggesting venues for "friendly assistance" during the EU presidency (2009) – and the leakage did not lead to deterioration of bilateral relations with the United States, which in recent years have been problematized for other reasons, namely the U.S. "withdrawal" from the CEE and "appeasement" of Russia, manifested, above all, in the review of the missile defense plans. Fourth, the part of the elite of which it is possible to draw the clearest picture based on the cables is made up of Czech Atlanticists. Their dominant characteristics were a pervasive characterization

of Russia as a security problem in discussions, their candidness regarding opinions, recommendations and relaying their past activities in this respect (including lobbying against Russian investment in the Czech Republic), and at the same time, open criticism of the Obama administration for its lack of realism in its dealings with Moscow. Fifth, in terms of domestic echoes “CableGate” had no lasting effect on the country’s political discourse. The local media coverage was sensational – betraying a voyeuristic quality and selectiveness in reporting issues based on the criterion not of public interest, but rather of the assumed impact on the target audiences.

Notes

- 1 On the concept of diplomacy as mediating estrangement, see James Der Derian, *On Diplomacy* (London: Blackwell, 1987).
- 2 *Hamlet*, I.v, 866–871.
- 3 Harold Nicolson, *Diplomacy* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1939); Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (London: Cape, 1955).
- 4 Jozef Bátora, *Foreign Ministries and the Information Revolution: Going Virtual?* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2008).
- 5 Cable id. 09PRAGUE444, *The Impact of a Pre-Election MD Announcement*, August 3, 2009.
- 6 Cable id. 09PRAGUE432, *Release of Missile Defense Policy Review: Timing Implications*, July 24, 2009.
- 7 For example, in a cable reviewing the political development in the Czech Republic over the two decades since the Velvet Revolution, the Embassy stated that “in addition to political pettiness, corruption and lack of transparency have also undermined faith in the political system.” Cable id. 09PRAGUE677, *20 Years after the Velvet Revolution: Politics Not So Plush*, November 19, 2009.
- 8 The Embassy would report, for instance, that “Czech Defense Ministry procurement is plagued by lack of transparency and remains an arena for shady business deals.” Cable id. 09PRAGUE147, *Defense Procurement in the Czech Republic: Shady Deals and Big Dollars*, March 16, 2009.
- 9 Cable id. 10PRAGUE117, *Pandura’s Box: Corruption Scandal Lifts the Lid on Czech Defense Procurement*, February 24, 2010.
- 10 Cable id. 09PRAGUE475, *Open Letter Reaction Part II: Czech Political and Economic Leaders Closely Watch How Russia Wields Influence*, August 14, 2009.
- 11 Cable id. 08PRAGUE792, *Standoff Continues as Czech Parliament Votes Down Afghan Deployment Bill*, December 22, 2008.
- 12 Cable id. 09PRAGUE708, *Czech Republic Planning to Run in 2011 for UN Human Rights Council*, December 4, 2009.
- 13 Cable id. 09PRAGUE677, op. cit.
- 14 Cable id. 09PRAGUE696, *Czechs Host National Seminar on NATO Strategic Concept – All about Russia*, November 25, 2009.
- 15 Cable id. 09PRAGUE672, *What Lisbon Reminds Us about President Klaus*, November 13, 2009.
- 16 Cable id. 10PRAGUE117, op. cit.
- 17 Cable id. 09BRUSSELS537, *Iran Sanctions: AA/S Glaser Consults Key Ambassadors in Brussels*, April 8, 2009.
- 18 Immediately in the aftermath of the first release the Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasized the point that relations with the U.S. are a long-term priority of Czech foreign policy. It further noted that it had been informed of the upcoming release beforehand by the U.S. Embassy in Prague, and given that its (alleged) content was U.S. diplomacy’s internal communication, it would not comment on it. MFA Press Release, November 29, 2010.

- 19 Nik Hynek and Péter Marton, eds., *Statebuilding in Afghanistan: Multinational Contributions to Reconstruction* (London: Routledge, 2011).
- 20 Email id. 117802, September 2, 2011.
- 21 Judy Dempsey and Dan Bilefsky, "Czechs, Disliking Role, Pull out of U.S. Missile Defense Project," *New York Times*, June 16, 2011.
- 22 Cable id. 08PRAGUE809, *Czech Comments on Gas Disputes between Russia and Ukraine*, December 30, 2008.
- 23 Cable id. 09PRAGUE475, *Open Letter Reaction Part II: Czech Political and Economic Leaders Closely Watch How Russia Wields Influence*, August 14, 2009.
- 24 CTK [Czech Press Agency], June 26, 2011.
- 25 Cable id. 08PRAGUE264, *Czech Republic: Eighth Visit of the Status of Forces Negotiating Team*, April 29, 2008.
- 26 Cable id. 08PRAGUE535, *Czechs Engaged on Situation in South Ossetia*, August 12, 2008.
- 27 Cable id. 09PRAGUE640, *Vice-President Biden Discusses Defense Issues with Czechs*, October 29, 2009.
- 28 CTK [Czech Press Agency], August 26, 2011.
- 29 *Hospodarske noviny*, November 29, 2010. The newspaper moreover translated the cable incorrectly, and the version of the cable printed read that the ambassador complained to, rather than about, Prime Minister Erdoğan. Cable id. 09ANKARA1549, *Israeli Ambassador Traces His Problems to Erdogan*, October 27, 2009.
- 30 Two were hosted by the author of this chapter and featured, among other, the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and a senior adviser to the Minister of Foreign Affairs among the speakers.

Hungary and the WikiLeaks Cables

*András Rácz*¹

Introduction

Compared to the other states of Central Europe, the WikiLeaks incident provided moderately thorough coverage of Hungary in the period 2006–2010. Altogether, 734 cables originating from the U.S. Embassy in Budapest became public. Regarding their level of secrecy, 283, or approximately one third of them, were Unclassified, out of which 148 were labeled for official use only. There were 408 Confidential and 7 Confidential Nofofn cables. In addition to these, only 32 Secret cables were published from the Budapest U.S. Embassy. Only four cables belonged to the most secretive category of Secret Nofofn.

The published cables cover a relatively narrow period of contemporary Hungarian history. The first one is from March 14, 2006, covering the spring parliamentary elections.² The last cable is dated to February 25, 2010, and addresses the preparations made by the city of Pécs before becoming the Cultural Capital of Europe for a year.³

The cables are extremely unevenly distributed in this four-year-long period. The best-covered time is spring 2009, when Socialist Party Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány was replaced by then Minister of the Economy and National Development Gordon Bajnai as an interim “crisis manager” Prime Minister for the period of one year. From this period 32 cables altogether came out. Conversely, there are some months from which no cables were published at all, or only a very few, for example the summer of 2006.

This uneven distribution makes it obvious that the cables published through WikiLeaks do not give a full picture of the activities of the U.S. Embassy in Budapest in the examined period. For example, the large-scale riots in September–October 2006 are covered only very briefly in the cables, even though some of the events took place right in the direct neighborhood of the U.S. Embassy: the building of the Hungarian Television that was captured and partially burnt by the rioters in September 2006 is right opposite the Embassy building on the same square. It is hard to imagine that the U.S. diplomatic staff did not write a single report on the events that took place right next door, and could in fact have endangered the Embassy building itself as well. Hence the

methodological particularities mentioned in the introductory chapter again need to be taken into consideration.

Core Issues of Interest for U.S. Diplomacy in Hungary

According to the cables published, the U.S. Embassy in Budapest was successful in following all important issues and aspects of Hungarian foreign policy and domestic politics. However, following the domestic politics of any given country is a normal, everyday task of every well-functioning embassy. In any case, this research project is aimed at primarily studying the foreign policy-related aspects of the WikiLeaks. Hence only these issues are covered herein on. The most important topics related to foreign and security policy were as follows:

1. Russia and the regional energy security question;
2. NATO-related issues, particularly Hungary's participation in the Afghanistan operations;
3. Hungary's policies towards Iran.

In addition to these things, the U.S. Embassy also closely followed the extreme rightist movements and tendencies in Hungary, which it perceived as a clear concern from the point of view of both values and stability.

Russia and Regional Energy Security

From the foreign policy-related topics covered by the WikiLeaks cables from Hungary, clearly Russia was the most important issue. Russia was mentioned in 185 cables from Hungary, out of which only 36 were unclassified. The high number and the high rate of classified and secret cables very well demonstrate the priorities of the U.S. Embassy in Budapest.

Both the political side of Hungarian–Russian ties and the energy security-related aspects of this relationship were closely monitored by the U.S. Embassy in Budapest. The Embassy was concerned about the pro-Russian direction of the Gyurcsány government. A secret cable from June 2007 urged that “high-level officials traveling to Europe to add Hungary to their itineraries in order to keep the GoH [Government of Hungary – AR] informed ... and on board.”⁴ According to the cable, Gyurcsány said that Hungary wanted to avoid getting “caught in the middle” of the deteriorating US–Russia relationship. However, this explanation did not relieve U.S. concerns, and the same cable openly spoke about the U.S. intention “to prevent further drift in Hungary’s foreign policy.” In order to do so, the Embassy was very effective in collecting

information about the Russia-related policies of the government. Concerning a meeting of Hungarian MFA [Ministry of Foreign Affairs – AR] officials in Moscow held in October 2007, the Embassy could report in detail in November, by quoting an “MFA’s read-out and a GoH memo provided to us by staff of the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee (please protect).”⁵ Seemingly, certain members of the Hungarian foreign policy administration leaked governmental information to U.S. diplomats. One may well presume that the aforementioned staff member was from the opposition rather than from the government.

A litmus test of the Gyurcsány government’s Russia policy was the August 2008 war in Georgia. The Embassy followed the reactions of the government very closely. As early as August 11, and thus before the end of the war, the Embassy delivered talking points to the government in preparation for the upcoming North Atlantic Council meeting on August 12⁶ and additional talking points for the extraordinary session of the EU GAERC [General Affairs and External Relations Council – AR].⁷ According to a cable from August 14, U.S. diplomats were not fully satisfied with Hungary’s performance in the NAC and GAERC or with the moderate position taken by Budapest, and were particularly dissatisfied with the fact that the government did not address Russia directly, even though this had been requested in the earlier U.S. demarche. The cable also attests that the Embassy was aware of Russian Ambassador to Budapest Igor Savolsky’s visit to the Hungarian MFA on the same day.⁸ A cable from August 21, 2008, analyzes Hungary’s position on Georgia and notes with dissatisfaction that “the Hungarian Government has been reluctant to go further in its criticism of Russia than the EU–NATO consensus statements supporting Georgia.”⁹ The cable also points out that Prime Minister Gyurcsány remained silent about Georgia. This was in sharp contrast to opposition party Fidesz and its leader, Viktor Orbán:

In contrast to official government statements, Fidesz President Viktor Orbán has been outspoken in his criticism of the Russian action in Georgia, as well as the current Hungarian Government leaders, calling on Prime Minister Gyurcsany and the Government to reassess ‘their special track’ (become firmer in their public statements) as Hungary cannot obstruct EU and NATO united measures.¹⁰

By studying the Russia policy of the Gyurcsány government, the Embassy could easily rely on information coming from the then opposition Fidesz party. Fidesz held a strongly anti-Russian position in the period covered in the cables, and certain members of the party were eager to supply the Embassy with concrete and detailed information, supposedly due to domestic political motivations. For example, a cable from February 2007 reports that “Orbán also claimed that Russia has intervened to keep the forint artificially strong through an agreement between PM Gyurcsany and President Putin, thus providing a safety net during the government’s austerity program.”¹¹

At any rate, a year later, a cable from July 2008 noted that the Government of Hungary seemed to have changed its tune regarding Russia.¹²

Increasingly, their approach appears to be one which admits Hungary's economic interest in expanding trade but which underscores Budapest's enduring commitment to the West. This attempt to distinguish between trading partners and strategic allies represents a new approach but not necessarily a real change, especially when the traded commodity is energy.

However, the cable expressed doubt as to whether this turn was a real one, or was just rephrasing. The Georgia crisis, analyzed above, proved that the concerns were well-grounded, and also demonstrated the analytical capabilities of U.S. diplomats working in Budapest.

The energy policy and Hungary's approach to the Nabucco and South Stream pipeline projects remained a key priority for the U.S. Embassy in Budapest in the whole period covered by the cables. The U.S. was clearly in favor of the Nabucco pipeline, as it was perceived as improving Hungary's energy security. The Embassy was very supportive of the Nabucco Summit held in Budapest in January 2009.¹³ However, a confidential cable from March 2009 requested "that Washington issue a strong statement in support of Nabucco in the light of this latest agreement between Hungary and Russia on South Stream"¹⁴ following Gyurcsány's negotiations in Moscow about Hungary's participation in the South Stream project.¹⁵ The arguments used by the government for participating in both projects, for example the idea that "Hungary's interest is in having as many pipelines as possible," were not received well either by U.S. diplomats or by opposition representatives. The cable noted that Gyurcsány did not inform the Nabucco committee of the Hungarian Parliament on the agreement. It also quoted Fidesz MP Zsolt Németh, who accused the Prime Minister of making non-transparent deals with Russia and increasing Hungary's gas dependency via the South Stream.¹⁶

Another aspect of energy security and Russian-Hungarian relations also covered by the Embassy according to the cables was the future extension of Hungary's Paks nuclear power plant. A cable from December 2008 noted that "Russian firms, however, dominate Hungary's nuclear sector."¹⁷ A confidential cable from October 2009¹⁸ reported that the U.S. company Westinghouse would have to face strong competition for the tender from Russia's Atomstroyeksport and from the French-German AREVA consortium. It was also noted that "Atomstroyexport's advantage lies in the close relationship between the Hungarian and Russian governments, as well as the fact that engineers at Paks are already familiar with Russian reactor technology. Also helpful to the Russian bidder is that it will be able to offer the option to store spent fuel in Russia." In a comment appended to the cable, a senior U.S. diplomat concluded that the forthcoming October 15-16, 2009, Russian-Hungarian intergovernmental

consultations would almost certainly touch upon the question of Paks as well. However, the issue of Paks disappeared from the published cables after November 2009.

Hungary in the NATO and in Afghanistan

Perhaps naturally, Hungary's participation in the Afghanistan operations enjoyed particular attention from the U.S. Embassy in Budapest. Afghanistan was mentioned in 97 cables altogether. The ones with higher classification mostly dealt with the troop contribution of the Hungarian government and also with financial and personnel-related hardships.

In contrast to the issue of Russia, the cables on Afghanistan demonstrate practical, honest cooperation between the U.S. and Hungarian governments. The Embassy noted many times that there was a full consensus among the main government and opposition parties (except the rightist-radical Jobbik) about the need to keep up the Hungarian engagement in Afghanistan, and only technical differences emerged.

U.S. diplomats received in-depth, up-to-date information from Hungarian government officials about the financial hardship and budgetary constraints that Hungary had to face regarding the Afghanistan operation.¹⁹ However, the Embassy did not miss the opportunity to cleverly utilize inter-agency rivalries inside the Hungarian state administration as well, in order to get more information on various governmental activities. In one of the total of four Secret/NoFORN cables, the Embassy heavily criticized the performance of the Hungarian PRT [Provincial Reconstruction Team – AR] in Baghlan Province.²⁰ The cable cited a high-ranking representative of the Hungarian MFA, who spoke about the deteriorating security situation, and blamed the Hungarian Ministry of Defense and Minister Imre Szekeres for not ordering the PRT to take more action and to be more active in providing security. The source also criticized the uncoordinated and ineffective Hungarian development activities in the province. He suggested that the presence of a State Department official could do some good in terms of increasing the efficiency of the development activities. This latter topic emerged in several other cables as well.²¹

Another Secret/NoFORN cable about the planned increase of the Hungarian troop contribution to Afghanistan by 200 soldiers²² showed how high-ranking the sources that U.S. diplomats had in Hungary were. The cable reported that “a senior MOD interlocutor provided PolOff with a background paper prepared for the Prime Minister's meeting with the Vice-President, outlining current commitments and plans to meet the 200 troop plus-up. The contact stated that the briefing document was being provided without MOD knowledge.” The cable also noted the problems

that Prime Minister Bajnai had with the opposition party Fidesz in Parliament when he announced the troop increase. However, the Embassy was strongly supportive of Bajnai's commitment, and reported to the State Department that "Embassy will continue efforts to support the Prime Minister's plans on all fronts."²³

The fact that Hungary accepted a Guantanamo detainee was also mentioned positively in many cables. For example, the scenesetter for Prime Minister Gordon Bajnai's meeting with Vice-President Joe Biden in November 2009 particularly pointed out the acceptance of the Guantanamo detainee, and the personal efforts that Bajnai made to overcome bureaucratic hardships.²⁴

Hungary's Policies towards Iran

The U.S. Embassy in Budapest closely followed the Hungarian policies adopted towards Iran, and Hungary's steps and efforts related to the Iran crisis. Iran is mentioned in 64 cables originating from Budapest, and most of them are confidential or secret in terms of classification, while only 15 are unclassified.

The Embassy paid particular attention to Hungary's attitude to the U.N. Security Council resolutions on Iran, and to what extent Budapest was ready to cooperate with Washington. Moreover, they were ready to take action as well, when it became necessary. For example, in February 2007 Iran raised the idea of organizing a conference in Budapest for Iranian ambassadors accredited to Europe. A source from the Hungarian MFA informed the Embassy about the initiative, and stated that the government was ready to support the idea. He emphasized, however, the point that the "sole intention of any contacts with Iranian officials would be to underscore the GoH's [Government of Hungary – AR] support for the pertinent UNSCRs [UN Security Council Resolutions – AR]" However, the Embassy felt that the Hungarian side was informing them rather than consulting with them, and noted that "neither PM Gyurcsany nor FM Goncz raised this issue despite the opportunity afforded by private meetings with Ambassador Foley February 25. We believe engagement may be required both in Budapest and in Washington on this issue, and request Department's guidance re a response to the GoH."²⁵

Not much later, the conference was cancelled. In a Secret cable from March 2007 the Embassy reported that "Post appreciates Department's rapid provision of guidance in response to GoH approaches, which was instrumental in turning around both the working and senior levels of the MFA and securing the right result."²⁶ This latter cable clearly showed that the Embassy, with the guidance received from the State Department, was ready and effective in putting pressure on – that is, "turning around" – the Hungarian government in order to prevent the unwanted conference from happening.

The Embassy also worked actively on ensuring that Hungary obeyed the UN Security Council resolutions Nos. 1737 and 1747 on Iran,²⁷ and also with the trade restrictions imposed on Iranian companies.²⁸ It was noted very positively that Budapest was fully supportive of efforts aimed at preventing Iran from acquiring enriched uranium from abroad.²⁹ A cable from September 2009 reported that Hungary was fully supportive of the U.S. multilateral engagement efforts,³⁰ including the sanctions regime, as reported a month later.³¹ The cable quoted a senior Hungarian MFA official: "We are ready to do our part."

Movements and Tendencies of the Extreme Right

In addition to the foreign policy issues discussed above, the U.S. Embassy in Budapest had an additional, very specific topic to follow, and this was the emergence of anti-Roma and anti-Semitic sentiments, and the rise of the rightist-extremist movements, including the opposition party Jobbik.

Jobbik was mentioned in 54 cables altogether. The Embassy noted that "the far right seems to be making the greatest gains among those most negatively impacted by the current economic situation."³² Coverage of Jobbik became particularly strong after the party gained 3 seats in the June 2009 European Parliament elections. In a cable reporting on Jobbik lead MEP candidate Krisztina Morvai's breakfast with the international press corps, the Embassy noted that "the far-right has found a capable figurehead who cannot be easily categorized and should not be underestimated."³³

The Embassy also closely followed the popular support for extremist, anti-Roma ideologies. A confidential cable from May 21, 2009,³⁴ referred to public opinion polls when analyzing society's attitude to the Roma and to anti-Roma movements. The cable dismissed the commentaries that reported the "dramatic rise" of anti-Roma sentiments in society, and pointed out that although support for Jobbik and the *Gárda* was growing, this did not mean that anti-Roma sentiments were becoming stronger in the broader society as well. However, another cable clearly called anti-Roma sentiments a "troubling trend."³⁵

From among the various rightist-extremist groups, the paramilitary organization *Magyar Gárda* (Hungarian Guard) caused the greatest concern for the Embassy. In total, 40 cables dealt with the *Gárda*. Many cables addressed the leitmotifs of the *Gárda*, and U.S. diplomats rightly concluded that anti-Roma motivation played a key role. A cable from September 2007³⁶ covered the then-opposition Fidesz's attitude to the *Gárda*. It positively noted the "clear recognition of international concerns regarding the *Gárda* and a concerted effort to respond accordingly," so that Orbán and Fidesz clearly distanced themselves from the group. Thus the Embassy welcomed with

relief the decision of the Hungarian Court in December 2008 to disband the *Magyar Gárda*.³⁷ However, half a year later U.S. diplomats realized that the formal banning of the organization did not mean the end of the sentiments behind it, and noted with concern that Jobbik did its best to keep the *Gárda* active.³⁸ In August 2009 the Embassy reported that the *Gárda* had held another rally, defying the authorities, and had 620 new members sworn in: thus the organization reached the strength of some 3,000.

Furthermore, the U.S. Embassy paid close attention to concrete cases of anti-Roma violence as well. In 2008–2009 a series of armed attacks against Roma people took place in Hungary, committed by a small, clandestine group of well-organized extremists. The attacks resulted in six death cases in total, all from gunfire, besides wounding several Roma by guns and Molotov cocktails. As the Embassy reported in August 2009, in the arrest of the “Gang of Four” a key role was played by two FBI profilers, who assisted the work of the Hungarian police.³⁹ Earlier, in her comment to a cable from July 2008, Ambassador April Foley stated that “We will continue to monitor events carefully over the summer and restate our tolerance message⁴⁰ at every opportunity.”⁴¹ However, in August 2008 another cable noted that the new anti-Roma attacks “have not triggered strong public condemnation.”⁴² A month later, in September 2008, the Embassy quoted political scientist Zoltán Kiszelly, and reported that “we should not dismiss the appeal of JOBBIK/Magyar Garda in rural communities where non-Roma feel ‘threatened’ by Roma.”⁴³

Domestic Echoes and Effects of “CableGate”

The “CableGate” affair induced only moderate reactions in the Hungarian public. Following the outbreak of the scandal, the Hungarian media started to cover the issue, but no systematic analysis was done at all. Most media channels only engaged in “cherry-picking”: they looked only for such information in the cables as could be used for current domestic political purposes, or such information as could be assumed to be of great interest to the readers.

The intention of using the “CableGate” affair for domestic political purposes had the result that basically two parallel, equally biased discourses emerged about the WikiLeaks. The political left – already in opposition since early 2010 – used the cables to attack Prime Minister Viktor Orbán for the discrepancies in his rhetoric about political issues, comparing his opposition and his government declarations. The daily *Népszabadság* quoted foreign politicians, whose negative statements about Orbán were leaked by WikiLeaks cables from Bucharest,⁴⁴ and published cables that were negative about certain politicians of the ruling party Fidesz.⁴⁵

At the same time, the political right used the cables to attack politicians and officials of the previously governing Socialist Party, and primarily former Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány. The important rightist-conservative blog *mandiner.hu* published articles on Gyurcsány's alleged links with Russia and his energy policy,⁴⁶ while the rightist-radical *kuruc.info* website quoted cables that discussed Gyurcsány's incompetence in foreign policy.⁴⁷

So far, no systematic, comprehensive analysis of the cables has been conducted in Hungary. The popular news website *origo.hu* published a long series of articles on the Hungary-related aspects of the WikiLeaks case, but these articles were basically only descriptive. In addition to this, an NGO-run foreign policy website, *kitekinto.hu*, analyzed many foreign policy-related cables, for example on Russia, Afghanistan and Iran, but not much was said on issues of domestic politics.

The generally limited public interest in "CableGate" was confirmed by the fact that even though *Inside WikiLeaks*, the book by Daniel Domscheit-Berg, was translated into Hungarian under the title *WikiLeaks – A leleplezés* [WikiLeaks – Uncovered], it did not manage to generate any considerable sales. This was probably also due to the negative reviews of the book that were published.⁴⁸

However, the WikiLeaks cables had an interesting effect on non-official political discourse. Journalists, intellectuals and people interested in politics have started to use a phrase that emerged from the WikiLeaks materials. According to a cable dating from April 2008, Orbán once told EU Ambassadors during the electoral campaign for the 2006 parliamentary elections, "Pay no attention to what I say to get elected,"⁴⁹ meaning that they should ignore the promises made in the campaign. Since then, the Hungarian translation of the phrase ("Ne arra figyeljenek, amit mondok") has become a frequently used element in the leftist-oppositionist public discourse.

Regarding the official discourse on and about the WikiLeaks, the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was informed about the coming releases by the U.S. in advance.⁵⁰ Thus complete surprise could be successfully avoided. Almost immediately after the first cables on Hungary were released, the MFA made a Statement according to which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Hungary will not comment on their content. Hungary's relations with the United States are an important priority of our foreign policy and we will remain committed to productive cooperation with our partners. In the meantime the Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemns any unauthorized release of classified information, because the necessary discretion, necessary confidentiality of diplomatic relations has been violated.⁵¹

During his visit to Washington, D.C. in December 2010, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Zsolt Németh strongly condemned the releases, and while addressing the damage done by them, called the "CableGate" affair "the Lehman Brothers of

American diplomacy.”⁵² A spokesperson for the Prime Minister, Péter Szijjártó, also condemned the WikiLeaks, calling the cables the “products of the American entertainment industry.”⁵³

By analyzing the governmental discourse that followed the releases, one may conclude that the Hungarian government adopted a thoughtful, dual communication strategy regarding the cables. Budapest was quick to condemn the releases in general, but refrained from commenting on any concrete cable in particular. This approach was fully in accord with the official U.S. position on the cables. The new Hungarian government did not intend to spoil relations with the U.S. right at the beginning of their new term. Another motivation was the fact that the releases obviously did not change either the geostrategic position or the political-economic interests of Budapest.

As was explained by a senior Hungarian diplomat, Budapest realized that in theory there were two main options as to how to react to the releases. The first one was to become outraged, and create a serious scandal out of the WikiLeaks, demanding detailed explanations from the U.S., and so on. This approach could have granted the government certain short-term domestic political benefits; however, in the long run any payoff would have been questionable to say the least. The second option was that the Hungarian government could make good use of the opportunity offered by the “CableGate” affair, and actually use it as a means of strengthening ties with the U.S. in times of the crisis of trust created by the releases. Hence, instead of picking the low-hanging fruits and acquiring short-term benefits, this option offered the possibility of long-term trust-building.⁵⁴

Inside the Orbán government there is a strongly Atlanticist bloc of decision-makers and senior politicians present. One could name, for example, Minister of Foreign Affairs János Martonyi, State Secretary Zsolt Németh, Political Director of the MFA Péter Sztáray, and Chief Advisor to the Prime Minister Réka Szemerényi. Although there are no open sources available on how the official reactions to the WikiLeaks scandals were planned, one may well suppose that these committed Atlanticists were strongly in favor of the second, cooperative option.

Another factor that may have influenced the government’s attitude was the immediate and harsh reaction of the rightist-radical opposition party Jobbik. In line with the strong anti-American sentiments of the party, Jobbik MP János Volner called the U.S. diplomatic activities revealed by the cables “spying against Hungary,” and called upon the police to act against the alleged foreign agents.⁵⁵ Distancing itself from Jobbik was in the best interests of the Fidesz government, and thus domestic political motivations may have also played a role in taking the decision mentioned above.

The “CableGate” affair had practically no effect on the foreign policy of Hungary, concerning either the policy line or the administration itself. Hungary has been maintaining its commitment to the NATO operation in the country, and will probably

do so until 2014. In the matter of Iran, Budapest still follows the same cautious, cooperative policy as it did before the releases.

Regarding relations with Russia, in practice not much has changed either. The Orbán government has basically similar priorities regarding Russia to those that their Socialist predecessors had. However, in terms of discourse, the earlier harsh anti-Russian rhetoric of Fidesz and Orbán has disappeared. Instead, the 2010 government program voiced the intention of opening up the Hungarian economy towards the East, including Russia. The importance of developing the transport infrastructure towards Russia was particularly emphasized in the government program, together with opening up new markets for Hungarian agriculture, the processing industry and tourism.⁵⁶ A strategic document on foreign policy, prepared in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and released in December 2011, entitled “Hungarian Foreign Policy after the EU Presidency,”⁵⁷ further elaborated these priorities.

In the field of energy security, diversification remained the main objective of Hungarian foreign policy. The government program openly aims at achieving “energy independence.”⁵⁸ Hence Budapest remains committed to the construction of Central European gas interconnectors, to the extension and modernization of the Paks nuclear power plant, and keeps up support both to the Nabucco and to the South Stream pipeline project. The National Energy Strategy released in 2012 confirms the same priorities.⁵⁹ The new National Security Strategy of Hungary, adopted on February 21, 2012, again guarantees both the gas supply diversification intentions mentioned above and the lasting role of nuclear energy in fulfilling Hungary’s electricity needs.⁶⁰

Regarding pipeline politics, while in opposition Orbán accused then-Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány of attempting a *coup d’état* against Hungary, when Gyurcsány signed the South Stream agreement with Vladimir Putin.⁶¹ However, according to a WikiLeaks cable, in 2010 behind closed doors Orbán admitted to American diplomats that “he would pursue a similar policy on South Stream” to the ones that the Gyurcsány and Bajnai governments followed.⁶² In fact, this was what he did: the Orbán government has continued the multi-track, diversification-oriented policies of its predecessors, defined by the geostrategic position of the country.

All in all, one could summarize the effects of the WikiLeaks on Hungarian foreign policy as follows: although the “CableGate” affair revealed some background motivations and internal controversies, it did not change the course of that policy at all. Hungarian foreign policy is still primarily defined by the country’s geopolitical position and strategic interests, which remained unchanged by the releases.

Conclusions

The WikiLeaks cables studied above provide the readers with a comprehensive picture of the topics that were surely important for U.S. diplomacy in and about Hungary. One needs to remember, however, the particularities laid down in the introductory chapter. Based on the cables one cannot define *all* priority issues, but one can indeed define certain topics that were prioritized.

Following the domestic politics of any given country is the natural task of every foreign embassy functioning there. As this chapter focuses mostly on foreign policy matters, details of domestic politics are not discussed here, even though the period covered by most of the cables was quite turbulent in Hungary.

However, there is one element of domestic politics that indeed deserved very close and constant U.S. attention, and this is the situation of the radical right and rightist extremist forces in Hungary. According to the cables, U.S. diplomats closely followed the anti-Roma and anti-Semitic moves of radical political groups, and were concerned over the increasing strength and public support of these groups.

Regarding foreign policy, U.S. diplomats were greatly interested in Hungary's relations with Russia, which was clearly the most important topic for them. In this respect, particular attention was paid to questions of energy security, Ferenc Gyurcsány's frequent meetings with Vladimir Putin, and the Hungarian position on the war in Georgia. Another very important topic was Hungary's participation in NATO in general, and in the Afghanistan operation in particular. U.S. diplomats for the most part recognized the performance of Hungarian soldiers in the Afghanistan operation, despite the seriously underfinanced situation of the Hungarian defense forces. The third prioritized foreign policy topic, according to the WikiLeaks cables, was Hungarian policy towards Iran.

It is clearly visible from all three priority foreign policy topics that U.S. diplomacy perceived Hungary in the country's regional or institutional membership context, and mostly studied those issues that had clear such relevance. In other words, in terms of foreign policy Hungary *per se* attracted much less attention than Hungary as a member of NATO and the EU did.

Besides the topics, one may also draw three main conclusions from the cables regarding the very functioning of U.S. diplomacy in Hungary. First, the leaked cables clearly demonstrate the fact that American diplomats were very well informed about all the important developments of Hungarian domestic, foreign and economic policies. They had a very wide information network in Hungary, both horizontally and vertically. They had high-level sources even in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the Ministry of Defense, and so on. For example, on one occasion a Political Officer of the U.S. Embassy managed to get the background notes prepared for Prime Minister

Bajnai for his meeting with U.S. Vice-President Joe Biden. The cables also show that U.S. diplomats were cleverly taking advantage of the inter-agency rivalries inside the Hungarian state administration, particularly when it came to issues of security and defense. Occasionally they were also effective in acquiring confidential government documents from – supposedly opposition – members of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Parliament, as happened with the aforementioned governmental memo on the consultations in Moscow.

One particular element that contributed to the deep knowledge of U.S. diplomacy on Hungarian politics was the fact that most information sources were actually very glad to speak to U.S. diplomats. From certain cables the reader may gain the impression that sources were actually extremely pleased to answer all the questions asked by U.S. diplomats.

The second main conclusion is that diplomats and analysts of the U.S. Embassy in Budapest were remarkably successful in forecasting the developments and zigzags of Hungarian politics, including both domestic and foreign policy. According to the cables, they did not make any significant mistakes and were not guilty of any serious underestimations or overestimations. In other words, U.S. diplomats were good not only at collecting information, but also at processing it, and developing proper policy forecasts.

Third, they were very effective in getting U.S. interests realized in Hungary, particularly regarding security and defense policy issues. The constantly increasing Hungarian contribution to the Afghanistan operation is a good example, and so is the maintained Hungarian commitment to the Nabucco pipeline. The only exception was again the radical right: despite all open and confidential declarations and policy steps, U.S. diplomacy could not prevent the Hungarian radical right from becoming stronger in the period covered by the WikiLeaks cables. Jobbik managed to get 49 mandates out of 386 in the Hungarian Parliament in the 2010 elections, which is the highest-ever result achieved by any rightist-radical group in contemporary Hungarian political history.

All in all, from the WikiLeaks cables on Hungary one may certainly gain an insight into a well-functioning great power diplomacy that operates in a friendly, open, peaceful and generally supportive environment. Considering the close relations between the U.S. and Hungary, based not only on common interests but also on common values, one may come to the conclusion that the overall good performance of U.S. diplomacy in Budapest is actually a factor in stability and predictability. As a senior Hungarian diplomat commented on the WikiLeaks scandal, *"Well, seemingly our most important ally understands us well. This is good – and indeed much better than the opposite."*

Notes

- 1 The views presented here are the author's own, and they in no way represent the official position of either the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs or the International Visegrad Fund.
- 2 Cable id. 06BUDAPEST541, *Hungary's Elections: That's Zala, Folks*, March 14, 2006.
- 3 Cable id. 10BUDAPEST113, *Pecs – A Window on Hungarian Politics?*, February 25, 2010.
- 4 Cable id. 07BUDAPEST986, *Opening Doors and Opening Eyes: PM Gyurcsany on Relations with the U.S. and Russia*, June 18, 2007.
- 5 Cable id. 07BUDAPEST1879, *Triangulation under Fire: A Step Back toward the East?*, November 23, 2007.
- 6 Cable id. 08BUDAPEST807, *Demarche Delivered: U.S. Proposal for Strong Nac Statement Condemning Russian Actions in Georgia*, August 11, 2008.
- 7 Cable id. 08BUDAPEST813, *Tfgg01: Demarche Delivered to Hungary Regarding Georgia prior to August 13 Gaerc*, August 13, 2008.
- 8 Cable id. 08BUDAPEST821, *Tfgg01: Demarche Delivered: Russia Responsibilities*, August 14, 2008.
- 9 Cable id. 08BUDAPEST837, *Tfgg01: Hungary – Where They Stand on Russia–Georgia Crisis*, August 22, 2008.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Cable id. 07BUDAPEST135, *Best Served Cold: Orban on Reform, Energy Security, and Relations with the Gyurcsany Government*, February 1, 2007.
- 12 Cable id. 08BUDAPEST720, *Hungary's Russia Policy: Rethinking ... Or Rephrasing?*, July 22, 2008.
- 13 Cable id. 09BUDAPEST39, *Rebutting Efforts to Undermine the Nabucco Summit*, January 13, 2009.
- 14 Cable id. 09BUDAPEST195, *GoH Matches Progress on Nabucco with Next Moves on South Stream*, March 13, 2009.
- 15 On the meeting itself, see Cable id. 09BUDAPEST186, *Hungarian Prime Minister's Visit to Moscow*, March 10, March 9, 2009.
- 16 Cable id. 09BUDAPEST195, *GoH Matches Progress on Nabucco with Next Moves on South Stream*, March 13, 2009.
- 17 Cable id. 08BUDAPEST1227, *Hungary Planning Expansion of Nuclear Energy Capacity*, December 23, 2008.
- 18 Cable id. 09BUDAPEST725, *Preparations Underway for Paks Nuclear Expansion*, October 2, 2009.
- 19 Cable id. 09BUDAPEST834, *Hungary in Afghanistan – Past, Present, Future*, November 20, 2009.
- 20 Cable id. 09BUDAPEST771, *Hungarian PRT – How (In)effective?*, October 21, 2009.
- 21 See, for example, Cable id. 09BUDAPEST866, *Hungarian Views on USD Offer to Ember Civilian Experts in Hungarian PRT*, December 4, 2009.
- 22 Cable id. 09BUDAPEST876, *Hungarian Plans to Supplement Afghanistan Contribution*, December 9, 2009.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Cable id. 09BUDAPEST847, *Scenesetter for Prime Minister Bajnai's Meeting with Vice President Biden*, November 25, 2009.
- 25 Cable id. 07BUDAPEST275, *Iranian Ambassadors' Conference in Budapest*, February 26, 2007.
- 26 Cable id. 07BUDAPEST359, *Iran Cancels Proposed Ambassadors Conference in Budapest*, March 9, 2007.
- 27 See, for example, Cable id. 07BUDAPEST466, *Information Regarding the Adoption of Unscr 1747 and Imposition of Sanctions on Iran*, March 26, 2007.
- 28 Cable id. 07BUDAPEST1766, *Hungary Receives Demarche on Designations of Iranian Entities and Individuals*, October 25, 2007.
- 29 Cable id. 08BUDAPEST854, *Demarche Delivered: Hungary Supportive of Continued Efforts to Prevent Iran's Acquisition of New Supplies of Uranium*, August 29, 2008.
- 30 Cable id. 09BUDAPEST709, *Demarche Response: Hungary Supports U.S. Position on Iran*, September 28, 2009.
- 31 Cable id. 09BUDAPEST734, *Briefing the Hungarians on P5+1 Talks with Iran*, October 7, 2009.

- 32 Cable id. 09BUDAPEST871, *New Economic Reality for Hungary's Northwest*, December 7, 2009.
- 33 Cable id. 09BUDAPEST429, *Hungarian Extremist Headed to the European Parliament*, June 16, 2009.
- 34 Cable id. 09BUDAPEST376, *Anti-Roma Public Opinion in Hungary: Out of Control or Status Quo?*, May 21, 2009.
- 35 Cable id. 09BUDAPEST361, *Gauging the Hungarian Public's Tolerance of Intolerance*, May 14, 2009.
- 36 Cable id. 07BUDAPEST1474, *"A Stupid Answer" ... And a Smart Statement: Fidesz on the Magyar Garda*, September 10, 2007.
- 37 Cable id. 08BUDAPEST1209, *Magyar Garda – The Long-Awaited Court Ruling*, December 18, 2008.
- 38 Cable id. 09BUDAPEST500, *Magyar Garda Banned – but Not Yet Gone*, July 10, 2009.
- 39 Cable id. 09BUDAPEST616, *The "Gang of Four" Arrested for Serial Murders of Roma*, August 25, 2009.
- 40 In the framework of this tolerance project, in September 2009 a successful multicultural policing workshop was organized in Budapest by the Hungarian Ministry of Justice (MOJ), and the FBI's International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) jointly conducted a two-day workshop in Budapest for senior police officials, prosecutors and judges, and addressed anti-Roma violence. Cable id. 09BUDAPEST881, *Multicultural Policing Workshop Addresses Anti-Roma Violence*, December 11, 2009.
- 41 Cable id. 08BUDAPEST663, *Cocktails for the Roma – Molotov Style*, July 2, 2008.
- 42 Cable id. 08BUDAPEST814, *Anti-Roma Incidents Continue through the Summer*, August 13, 2008.
- 43 Cable id. 08BUDAPEST904, *Response to Questions Re Hungarian Politics (c-re8-01748)*, September 15, 2008.
- 44 "WikiLeaks: 'Orbán az utolsó szélsőséges Európában'" [WikiLeaks: "Orbán Is the Last Extremist in Europe], *Népszabadság*, May 25, 2011. http://nol.hu/archivum/wikileaks___orban_az_utolso_szelsosages_europaban_. Accessed: September 3, 2012.
- 45 "WikiLeaks: Mr. 20 százalék, Debrecen hűbérura" [WikiLeaks: Mr. 20 Per Cent, Lord of Debrecen], *Népszabadság*, September 21, 2011. http://nol.hu/belfold/huberurnak_nevezte_kosa_lajost_debrecen_volt_alpolgarmestere. Accessed: September 3, 2012.
- 46 "WL: Elbizonytalanította Gyurcsány az EU-t Nabucco-ügyben" [WL: Gyurcsány Made the EU Uncertain about Nabucco], *mandiner.hu*, September 12, 2011. http://mandiner.hu/cikk/20110912_wl_gyurcsany_nabucco_taktikai_elbizonytalanitoak_voltak. Accessed: September 2, 2012.
- 47 "Gyurcsány 'reménytelen felkészületlenségéről' küldött távirat a WikiLeaks birtokába került" [WikiLeaks Also Acquired Telegram on the "Hopelessly Unprepared" Gyurcsány], *Kuruc.info*, September 1, 2011. <http://kuruc.info/r/6/84382/>. Accessed: September 2, 2012.
- 48 See, for example, "WikiLeaks: Leleplezik a görkorigó bugyit" [WikiLeaks: Roller-Skating Panties Uncovered], *origo.hu*, February 22, 2011. <http://www.origo.hu/kotvefuzve/blog/20110222-danieldomscsheitberg-wikileaks-a-leleplezes-cimu-konyvjenek-kritikaja.html>. Accessed: September 2, 2012.
- 49 Cable id. 06BUDAPEST1953, *Budapest Demonstrations: Fidesz Out for a Spin*, September 26, 2006.
- 50 "Magyarország is tudott a WikiLeaks kiszivárogtatásokról" [Hungary Was Also Informed about the WikiLeaks Leaks], *origo.hu*, November 30, 2010. <http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20101130-az-usa-kormanya-magyarorszagot-is-tajekoztatta-a-wikileaks-kiszivarogtatasokrol.html>. Accessed: September 2, 2012.
- 51 Hungarian MFA Press Release, December 2, 2010.
- 52 "Hungary's Dept. FM: WikiLeaks Is a 'Serious Crime' that Affects the 'Security of the NATO Alliance,'" *Atlantic Council*, December 6, 2010. <http://www.acus.org/natosource/hungarys-dept-fm-wikileaks-serious-crime-affects-security-nato-alliance>. Accessed: September 5, 2012.
- 53 "WikiLeaks iratok Gyurcsányról, Orbánról és Öszödről" [WikiLeaks Files on Gyurcsány, Orbán and Öszöd], *Magyar Nemzet Online*, September 6, 2011. <http://mno.hu/belfold/wikileaksiratok-gyurcsanyrol-orbanrol-es-oszodrol-874998>. Accessed: September 2, 2012.
- 54 Interview with senior Hungarian diplomat, April 2012, Budapest.

- 55 "Jobbik: Felhőborító módon reagált Martonyi a leplezett jenki kémkedésre" [Jobbik: Martonyi's Reaction to the Uncovered Yankee Espionage Was Outrageous], *kuruc.info*, December 6, 2010. <http://kuruc.info/r/2/70539/>. Accessed: September 2, 2012.
- 56 "A Nemzeti Együttműködés Programja" [Program of National Cooperation], *Parliament of Hungary*, May 22, 2010. Available: <http://www.parlament.hu/irom39/00047/00047.pdf>. Accessed: September 5, 2012. p. 39.
- 57 "Magyar külpolitika az uniós elnökség után" [Hungarian Foreign Policy after the EU Presidency], *Government of Hungary*, December, 2011. http://www.kormany.hu/download/a/cb/60000/kulpolitikai_strategia_20111219.pdf. Accessed: September 5, 2012.
- 58 "A Nemzeti Együttműködés Programja" [Program of National Cooperation], *Parliament of Hungary*, May 22, 2010. Available: <http://www.parlament.hu/irom39/00047/00047.pdf>. Accessed: September 5, 2012. p. 38.
- 59 "Nemzeti Energiastratégia 2030" [National Energy Strategy until 2030], *Government of Hungary*, 2012. <http://www.kormany.hu/download/4/f8/70000/Nemzeti%20Energiastrat%C3%A9gia%202030%20teljes%20v%C3%A1ltozat.pdf>. Accessed: September 5, 2012.
- 60 "A Kormány 1035/2012. (II. 21.) Korm. határozata Magyarország Nemzeti Biztonsági Stratégiájáról" [Government Resolution No. 1035/2012. (II. 21.) on the National Security Strategy of Hungary], *Government of Hungary*, February 21, 2012. Point No. 32.
- 61 "Orbán Viktor: Magyarországon puccs van" [Viktor Orbán: a *Coup d'état* Is Taking Place in Hungary], *origo.hu*, February 28, 2008. <http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20080228-orban-viktor-magyarorszagon-puccs-van.html>. Accessed: September 5, 2012.
- 62 Cable id. 10BUDAPEST30, *GoH Soon to Enter South Stream Joint Venture with Gazprom*, January 21, 2010; "WikiLeaks: Politikai játékszernek használta Orbán az orosz gázvezetékét" [WikiLeaks: Orbán Used the Russian Gas Pipeline as a Political Toy], *origo.hu*, September 2, 2011. <http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20110901-wikileaks-deli-aramlat-vezetek-es-orban-viktor.html>. Accessed: September 7, 2012.