

## 2007 AFoCR/FOS FREEDOM LECTURE

### "EU and US in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: What Identity for Transatlantic Relations."

*Featuring:*

**Alexandr Vondra**, Deputy Prime Minister of the Czech Republic

On 16 November 2007, the CSIS New European Democracies Project hosted the Deputy Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, Alexandr Vondra. The eighth annual Freedom Lecture was co-sponsored by the American Friends of the Czech Republic and Friends of Slovakia.



Vondra discussed the future of transatlantic relations and stressed that the values and strategic interests of both Europe and the United States remain convergent. According to him, a community of values exists, which highlights a commitment to democracy, the rights of the individual above the state, and an emphasis on market economics. Furthermore, a dedication to combat international terrorism and assure energy security are also essential for the transatlantic community.

Vondra stated that some complications are also evident for the new identity of transatlantic relations. After the end of the Cold War the common enemy of the transatlantic alliance has not been as easily identifiable, and the mission has not been as clear. Furthermore, the process of EU integration has been successful, with cooperation becoming increasingly productive. However, the EU also has had difficulties in defining its own identity and structure, which for a while forced it to become more introvert. All this has presented challenges for transatlantic relations, but Vondra insisted that they must and can be overcome.

He stressed that the United States has always been important to Europe, as a true partner and defender. The U.S. saved Europe twice from total destruction, suffering great financial and human sacrifices. Furthermore, without the Marshall Plan, Europe's economy would not have recovered after World War Two. Finally, the U.S. role in NATO has been instrumental in guaranteeing European security, and U.S. leadership helped liberate Central and Eastern Europe from totalitarian regimes.

Vondra discussed the three areas of greatest strategic importance for transatlantic relations: security, economic cooperation, and energy. In terms of security, Vondra believes the EU and the U.S. need to engage in a serious debate concerning the future of NATO. EU member states need to coordinate their position concerning Kosovo, while ESDP should be more intertwined with NATO. Vondra also discussed the U.S. missile defense shield as a current hot topic. The Czech Republic believes that cooperation with Washington is key in this project, and that the proposal is beneficial, as it will keep the U.S. engaged in Europe. Diplomacy and arms limitation

agreements play roles in security discussions, but they are not always successful. Vondra insisted that all NATO allies are entitled to the same level of security and should benefit from the same level of protection; missile defense can ensure this security.

Concerning economic cooperation, the EU and the U.S. currently dominate the global economy. The two represent nearly 60 percent of world economic output and are responsible for approximately 40 percent of world trade, with over EUR 200 billion exchanged every day. However, Brazil, India, and China all have expanding economies and are becoming increasingly more significant on the global market. Vondra contended that the EU and the U.S. need to ensure they have a level playing field in the future. To do this, they need to foster cooperation and ensure their competitiveness within these markets. Neither the U.S. nor EU members should be responsible for holding up the Doha round, and concessions need to be offered on both sides.

Finally, Vondra discussed energy issues. Access to energy resources has decreased and energy now influences a state's geopolitical position. Unfortunately, most energy resources are situated within authoritative regimes. Vondra's proposals for increasing energy security includes diversifying energy resources, increasing nuclear energy, and liberalizing the energy market.

Vondra asserted that since the end of the Cold War, the transatlantic relationship has been reinventing itself. During this time, there have been controversies between the U.S. and Europe, especially on issues concerning international law. However, Vondra emphasized that these disagreements should only be viewed as labor pains, and not as death tolls of transatlantic relations. Central and East European countries have always supported a strong relationship with the U.S., and they now have a chance to benefit from their position in the EU to further strengthen the relationship.

In conclusion, Vondra emphasized that transatlantic relations must now be defined by the notion that both the EU and the U.S. are equal partners. In this relationship, they must always have a global picture in mind, as any global problems would be difficult to solve without cooperation between Europe and the United States. Indeed, common interests and a sense of collective responsibility still unite these two powers, and the transatlantic partnership is vital for global stability. It is necessary to keep this partnership strong, as the future will demonstrate that the transatlantic agenda is a global agenda.



Vondra was presented with the Friends of Slovakia Medal of Honor following the lecture. He was also given a certificate of appreciation from both the American Friends of the Czech Republic and Friends of Slovakia.