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Czech Defence Policy Assessment in 2017/2018

Hodnocení obranné politiky České republiky v letech 2017/2018

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Abstract: The research described in this paper was conducted in the framework of institutional research project Strategic Alternatives (STRATAL) within the Centre for Security and Military Strategic Studies of University of Defence, The Czech Republic. Article assesses the development of Czech Defence policy in 2017 and first half of 2018. Authors analyse key change drivers in external environment (security threats, EU strategic autonomy, transatlantic link). In second step authors evaluate measures taken in political, military, administrative, economical and societal domain in response to key change drivers and highlight related risks to effective defence policy formulation and implementation.

Abstrakt: Výzkum popsany v tomto příspěvku se uskutečnil v rámci institucionálního výzkumného záměru Centra bezpečnostních a vojenskostrategických studií Univerzity obrany, Česká republika, jehož název je strategické alternativy (STRATAL). Příspěvek analyzuje vývoj české obranné politiky od roku 2017 do poloviny roku 2018. Autoři hodnotí klíčové hnací síly změn ve vnějším prostředí (bezpečnostní hrozby, strategickou autonomii EU, transatlantickou vazbu). Ve druhém kroku posuzují opatření prováděná v politické, vojenské, správní, ekonomické a společenské oblasti v reakci na tyto hybné síly a vyzdvihují některá rizika související s účinnou tvorbou a realizací obranné politiky.

Key words: Defence Policy; The Czech Republic; Key Change Drivers; Domains; Armed Forces; Defence System; Defence Strategy; Strategic Environment; Security Environment; Threat; Challenges.

Klíčová slova: Obranná politika; Česká republika; klíčové hybné síly; domény; ozbrojené síly; systém obrany; obranná strategie; strategické prostředí; bezpečnostní prostředí; hrozby; výzvy.

INTRODUCTION

Point of departure for this analysis is the fact that the Czech Defence Policy (CZDP) find itself in the fourth year of its adaptation phase aiming at enhancing readiness and preparedness of Czech Armed Forces (CZAF).¹ The adaptation of the CZDP embraces measures taken in political, military, administrative, economical and societal domain in the wake of rapid change in its security environment after Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and the subsequent Russian support for separatists in Ukraine's eastern provinces and growing instability in Middle East and Nord Africa.² It is also related to the outcome of NATO Wales Summit.³

The period of the CZDP assessed in this article was domestically influenced by several events: (1) outcome of parliamentary elections in October 2017; (2) subsequently the new government of Andrej Babiš coming to power; (3) reelection of Miloš Zeman as a president in January 2018; and (4) appointment of general Aleš Opatava the new chief of defence staff.

Externally, the CZDP has been shaped mainly by security threats such as resurgent and revisionist Russia, terrorism and cyber-related threats with other implications such as hybrid, asymmetric and information warfare and to lesser extend also by the threat of migration from North Africa and the Middle East. The second group influencing Czech defence policy consists of challenges such as currently enhancing EU strategic autonomy in the aftermath of Brexit and uncertainty in transatlantic relations in light of accession US president Donald Trump with his push for 2% GDP spending on defence and assertive *America first* policy. These factors combined are understood as "Key Change Drivers" (KCD) for the purpose of this study.

KCD resulted into various steps taken within the Czech defence sector. Ranging from renewal of strategic documents, increased defence budget and rising numbers of armed forces personnel to problems of material and infrastructure modernization or age structure both within the military and the civilian part of the defence sector. Defence policy reactions are grouped together and assessed in following domains: (1) political; (2) military; (3) administrative; (4) economic and (5) societal⁴.

1 PROCHÁZKA, J., STOJAR, R., JANOŠEC, J., TŮMA, M., PERNICA, B., MAREK, J. Armáda České republiky symbol demokracie a státní suverenity. (Anglická verze) Praha: Vojenský historický ústav Ministerstva obrany, Praha, 2014, 239 s. ISBN 978-80-6435.

2 Security Strategy of the Czech Republic, Prague 2015. ISBN 978-80-7441-007-9. Available at: http://www.mzv.cz/file/1483514/Security_Strategy_CZ_2015.pdf; Concept of the Czech Armed Forces 2025. MoD, Prague 2015. Dostupné z: http://www.mocr.army.cz/images/id_40001_50000/46088/KVA_R_ve_ejn_verze.pdf

3 Wales Summit Declaration, 2014, Dostupné z: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm

4 Dyčka. L. (2017) *Czech Defence Policy Adaptation to Dynamics of the Security Environment*. Dissertation thesis. Masaryk University. [online]. Available from: https://is.muni.cz/th/181852/fss_d/ (Accessed 24 March 2018).

- **Political domain** is characterised by measures taken by political leadership with regards to defence policy. Thus, it includes elaboration of high level strategic and conceptual documents, official political declarations reflecting defence policy direction and position towards foreign security topics.
- **Military domain** consists of measures taken within the military part of MoD e.g. force development, readiness and conduct of operations.
- **Administrative domain** embraces all functions and processes that responsibility traditionally rest with civilian part of MoD e.g. human resource management, acquisition, internal financial and property management.
- **Economic domain** deals with macroeconomic aspects of resource allocation for defence, cooperation with defence industry and management of state owned military enterprises.
- **Societal domain** describes in broad terms relationships between military and society.⁵ Furthermore, it takes in consideration the influence of media, the ability of MoD to pursue MoD vision and interests towards wider public (strategic communication) and overall resilience of the society in response to security threats.

Finally, several recommendations to enhance responsiveness and preparedness of Czech defence system and Armed Forces are outlined; both in short- and long-time span.

1 KEY CHANGE DRIVERS

However, besides that, the ongoing trends in external environment from the previous years has still dominated the Defence policy of the Czech Republic in 2017/2018. These KCD can be grouped into two subcategories (security threats and challenges) with fundamental influence on CZDP adaptation.

1.1 Security threats as an important driver of defence policy

Security threats are clearly underlined in recently updated Security Strategy of the Czech Republic from 2015⁶ and Defence Strategy of the Czech Republic.⁷

Regarding the first group – Russia seems to be the most important KCD. Since 2014 Russian activities on the eastern flank of NATO have been troubling political elites, as well

⁵ The Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015. Ministry of Defence. Velká Británie. 2015. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-strategic-defence-and-security-review-2015-defence-facts-and-figures>.

⁶ Government of the Czech Republic (2015) *Security Strategy of the Czech Republic*. [online]. Available from: <https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/brs/dokumenty/bezpecnostni-strategie-2015.pdf> (Accessed 13 February 2018).

⁷ Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic (2017) *The Defence Strategy*. [online]. Available from: http://www.army.cz/images/id_8001_9000/8503/DefenceStrategy2017.pdf (Accessed 1 February 2018).

as the population of member and some non-member states. The Czech Republic mostly accents the fact that in Eastern Europe the Russian Federation blatantly carries out its increasing power ambitions, including the use of military force. In doing so, the Russian Federation violates generally accepted norms of international law, including the territorial integrity of its neighboring states.⁸ It has executed hybrid operations against NATO nations and EU Member States, including targeted disinformation activities and cyber-attacks, which can be seen strongly in times of elections. The latest example of this behavior is tied to March 2018 attempted assassination of Russian ex-double agent Sergei Skripal in the United Kingdom for which the chemical substance under the nickname “Novichok” has been used. However, Russia denied responsibility and accused the Czech Republic of producing Novichok allegedly because the CZAF specialization on defence against weapons of massed destruction⁹. As a result, the CZAF were under strong media pressure concerning these allegations.

As for migration, its influence on the Czech Republic was rather limited in absolute numbers of migrants in 2017/2018. For example, during the first six months of 2017 there have been only 2244 cases of illegal entry and stay on our territory¹⁰ mostly from Ukraine, Vietnam and Russia. Meanwhile the police stated they detained only 172 migrants during the whole 2017 who sought to illegally transit the Czech Republic, mostly coming from Austria and heading onwards to neighboring Germany. These people were mainly from Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.¹¹ Furthermore, for example as of November 2017 there have been just 116 asylum seekers in the Czech Republic altogether. Nevertheless, the topic itself remained very influential especially before parliamentary and presidential elections. Aside from that, the topic of migration was, in one form or another, present in programs of several other political parties and may have influenced their outcome in elections. Migration is nevertheless rarely accented alone and is – also in Defence Strategy 2017 – rather closely connected with the threat of terrorism.

The last of the group of threats – terrorism – is more broadly described in Defence Strategy 2017 as coming from an arc of instability to the south and southeast of Europe. It is rapidly spreading throughout regions from North Africa to Afghanistan, even though in 2017 it was severely weakened with almost complete annihilation of the so-called Islamic State (ISIS). This instability nevertheless stems, in large part, from the fragile states

⁸ Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic (2017) *The Defence Strategy*. [online]. Available from: http://www.army.cz/images/id_8001_9000/8503/DefenceStrategy2017.pdf (Accessed 10 February 2018).

⁹ Reuters (2018) Czechs tested Novichok-like substance for chemical warfare protection: government. Reuters.com. May 4, 2018. [online]. Available from: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-russia-skripal-czech/czechs-tested-novichok-like-substance-for-chemical-warfare-protection-government-idUSKBN1I51K2>

¹⁰ Police of the Czech Republic (2017) *Nelegální migrace za období od 1.1.2017 do 30.6.2017 [Illegal migration from 1.1.2017 to 30.6.2017]*. [online]. Available from: <http://www.policie.cz/clanek/nelegalni-migrace-za-obdobi-od-1-1-2017-do-30-6-2017.aspx>. (Accessed 19 February 2018).

¹¹ Reuters (2018) Migration drops near zero in Czech Republic but sways election campaign. Reuters.com. January 23, 2018. Available from: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-czech-election-president-migration/migration-drops-near-zero-in-czech-republic-but-sways-election-campaign-idUSKBN1FC25N>.

that have allowed non-state actors such as the ISIS and other extremist groups to create a zone of instability which extends up to the European borders and threatens Europe with the growth of radicalisation, extremism, terrorism, and also an alarming increase of illegal migration into the EU.¹² In 2017/2018 (or any previous year for that matter) there has been no terrorist attack in the Czech Republic of similar nature to those that happened in France, the United Kingdom etc. However, attacks in other countries, particularly their new form of vehicle-ramming attacks into groups of people received substantial domestic media coverage. That was especially true for the London Bridge Attack in June 2017 or a similar attack in Barcelona in August 2017. In response, discussions and commentaries about the need to secure public squares or streets in the Czech Republic received considerable attention.¹³

1.2 Security Challenges

Security challenges embrace the EU and NATO dimension of the Czech Defence Policy. A framework for the EU enhanced cooperation under the motto of *strategic autonomy* is provided by the EU Global Strategy (EUGS) published in June 2016¹⁴ which creates room for other follow-up initiatives. Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), the European Defence Fund, Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), as well as the prospect of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) all emerge at a time when EU member states are seeking to build on the momentum of European defence in response to Brexit mostly through the Implementation Plan on Security and Defence.¹⁵ Common feature of all these initiatives within the EUGS framework causes stress on the gradual synchronisation of national defence planning cycles and capability development practices.¹⁶

It seems that EU strategic autonomy represents a significant issue to be dealt with. Out of numerous EU related initiatives within the EUGS framework, perhaps the most

¹² Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic (2017) *The Defence Strategy*. [online]. Available from: http://www.army.cz/images/id_8001_9000/8503/DefenceStrategy2017.pdf (Accessed 1 February 2018).

¹³ Aktualne (2017) Cíle teroristů v Česku? Máme je u nosu a sami je islamistům nabízíme, varují bezpečnostní experti. 2017 [Targets for terrorist attack in CZ? Right under our noses, claim security experts]. *Aktualne.cz*. 24. August 2017. [online]. Available from: <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/zahranici/cile-teroristu-mame-je-u-nosu-a-sami-je-islamistum-nabizime/r~1a314bba871111e7aec7002590604f2e/> (Accessed 2018).

¹⁴ European Union (2017) *Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*. [online]. Available from: http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf. (Accessed 13 February 2018).

¹⁵ European Union (2017) *Implementation Plan on Security and Defence*. [online]. Available from: https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/implementation_plan_on_security_and_defence_02-03-2018_jus_0.pdf. (Accessed 13 February 2018).

¹⁶ The CARD on the EU defence table by Daniel Fiott European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), April 2017.

publicly discussed one in the Czech Republic during 2017 was PESCO which is provided for in Articles 42 and 46 of the Treaty on EU and Protocol No. 10 to the Treaty, formally established in December 2017.¹⁷ The Czech Republic itself joined PESCO in December 2017 and plans to participate in three out of the total seventeen collaborative projects (Military Mobility Project, building of the European Medical Command and finally participation on building of the EU Training Mission Competence Centre).

Still barely predictable only a year ago, PESCO could now indeed become a game changer for European defence cooperation. The flurry of initiatives that have entered the EU stage over the past few months testify to a fresh momentum in which even relatively old concepts and proposals are taking a new shape – and lease of life.¹⁸

The ambition of PESCO is to provide both political and bidding legal framework for investments in the security and defence of the EU's territory and its citizens. Its main objective is to improve military assets and defence capabilities, which will also benefit NATO. It will potentially strengthen the European pillar within the Alliance and respond to repeated demands for stronger transatlantic burden sharing. A long-term vision of PESCO is to arrive at a coherent full spectrum force package - in complementarity with NATO, which will continue to be the cornerstone of collective defence for its members. However, the most important outcome of PESCO, voiced loudly by the former Minister of Finance and since December 2017 also the new Prime minister of Czech Republic Andrej Babiš is its possibility to create a common defence market¹⁹ seen as opportunity for the Czech defence industry. But even this importance was probably realised too late in the Czech Republic – as the the MoD) were unofficially blamed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of putting too little emphasis on preparation works of PESCO, as well as for showing a lack of initiative in pushing through projects that may be relevant for the Czech Republic.²⁰

The second challenge that strongly influenced CZDP since 2017 was the *uncertainty in transatlantic relations*. While the Common Security and Defence Policy of the EU may be in some regards strengthened by Brexit, NATO has been much more influenced by Trump's presidency. The security guarantee provided by NATO and the US is still seen as the cornerstone of CZDP. Already in 2016, NATO together with a strong US involvement re-established deterrence of Russia as one of the main priorities of the alliance and approved the deployment of four multinational battalions in Poland and the Baltic

¹⁷ The President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker calls for the EU to 'awaken the sleeping beauty' of PESCO. *Security and Defence Conference*. Prague, 2017.

¹⁸ FIOT, Daniel; MISSIROLI, Antonio; TARDY, Thierry. Permanent Structured Cooperation: What's In A Name? Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, Chaillot Papers 142. 2017. ISBN 978-92-9198-634-7 s.6.

¹⁹ Česká justice. (2017) Babiš v Bruselu stvrdí zapojení do armády EU, projekt PESCO vede k jednotnému trhu obrany [Babiš will sign CZ to the EU army – PESCO is a road to common defence market]. *Česká justice*. 14. December 2017. [online]. Available from: <http://www.ceska-justice.cz/2017/12/babis-bruselu-stvrdi-zapojeni-armady-eu-projekt-pesco-vede-k-jednotnemu-trhu-obrany/> (Accessed 2018).

²⁰ Gilli, A, and Gilli, M. (2017) *European Defence Cooperation in the Second Machine Age*. [online]. Available from: <http://www.iss.europa.eu/de/publikationen/detail/article/european-defence-cooperation-in-the-second-machine-age/>. (Accessed 29 March 2018).

states.²¹ In 2017 the Czech Republic announced that it will participate in this format from 2018.

What is more pressing for Prague, though, is the US desire to end the perceived free-riding on US security protection and to push European NATO members to increase military spending²² to at least 2% of GDP while simultaneously allocating 20% of the defence spending for procurement of new materiel. However, it is worth mentioning that this is not a fundamental change in the US approach. In response to the rising concerns about Russia following actions against Ukraine, the Obama administration had taken a similar view on the matter while many EU countries have been increasing defence expenditure since 2014. Nevertheless, what has been new since 2017 is the confrontational tone of the Trump administration²³.

2 DEFENCE POLICY RESPONSES

In following chapter the measures taken in political, military, administrative, economical and societal domain in response to KCD will be evaluated.

2.1 Political domain

This was due to the parliamentary elections in October 2017 which brought the old coalition composed of ČSSD (the Czech Social Democratic Party), ANO (Action of Dissatisfied Citizens) and KDU-ČSL (the Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party) to the end. The prime minister of this *old* coalition was Bohuslav Sobotka (ČSSD), known as a supporter of greater EU integration with possible creation of the *EU army* in the future. One of his strongly voiced opinions regarding security issues and namely migration was the opposition against EU quotas on migrants.²⁴

Following the parliamentary elections in October 2017, Sobotka's government handed its resignation and the former Minister of Finance Andrej Babiš was appointed Prime

²¹ NATO Enhanced Forward Presence Initiative.

²² The Economist (2017) US-EU relations: ambivalent at best, antagonistic at worst. *The Economist*. February 28th 2017. [online], Available from: https://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=1715169755&Country=-Czech%20Republic&topic=Politics_2. (Accessed 2018).

²³ Joch. R. (2017) Trumpova nevyzpytatelná zahraniční politika [Trump's unpredictable foreign policy]. *Natoaktual.cz*. [online]. Available from: http://www.natoaktual.cz/trumpova-nevyzpytatelna-zahranicni-politika-f4z-na_analyzy.aspx?c=A170512_105230_na_analyzy_m02. (Accessed 15 March 2018).

²⁴ Ghez, J, Kirchner, M., Shurkin, M., Knack, A., Hall A., Black, J., (2017) *Defence and security after Brexit: A snapshot of international perspectives on the implications of the UK's decision to leave the EU*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. [online]. Available from: <https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE225.html>. (Accessed 24 February 2018).

Minister on 6 December 2017. He had been known to mostly omit defence related topics from his agenda. However, security against the migrant threat has been one of his key pre-election themes. Nevertheless, he seems to put a strong emphasis on Foreign or Defence Policy from a purely economic point of view and does not have a clear and strong defence policy stance.

Until 2017, another member of ČSSD, Lubomír Zaorálek held the post of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, whose stance on migration mimicked that of the Prime Minister. In March 2017, during an interview for the *Hospodářské Noviny* newspaper, speaking about migration, Zaorálek said “When you have two million people coming from the east who take your jobs, social support and a number of other things, you can (try to) persuade your own people a thousand times to get used to it. They will not take it, because you simply went too far, and you did not tell them the truth.”²⁵ After Zaorálek became the Social democratic candidate for the Prime Minister in the second half of 2017 during the pre-election campaign, he warned that the West had about twenty years to reach a settlement with the Muslim world.²⁶ This position is partially related to one of the last announcements Zaorálek did as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2017. At the beginning of December 2017, the US President Donald Trump stated that the United States was preparing a plan of transferring its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. In an immediate reaction to Trump, Zaorálek’s office said the Czech Republic may be considering the transfer of its own embassy only after discussing the issue with its partners. Zaorálek’s position thus was, that the Czech Republic considers Jerusalem the future capital of Israel and the state of Palestine, as do the other EU members, but denied planning to move its embassy there.²⁷

On the other hand, transferring the embassy to Jerusalem was a long-term goal of president Miloš Zeman. For him the year 2017 was year of campaigning for re-election – a task he successfully accomplished in January 2018. His foreign political stance has been long accused of being too pro-Russian²⁸ even though he himself was a strong supporter of the US president Trump. A well known evergreen topic of CZDP in 2017 with obvious implications was the expected invitation of Miloš Zeman to the White House, which in the end did not come through. This has been a source of ridicule for Zeman’s domestic political opponents and explained as a sign that the president Zeman may be a *persona*

²⁵ Reuters (2017) Czech foreign minister: free movement could break up the EU. *Reuters.com*. 20 March 2017. [online]. Available from: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-eu-czech-minister/czech-foreign-minister-free-movement-could-break-up-the-eu-idUSKBN16R0QI> (Accessed 2018).

²⁶ The Guardian (2017) Growing awareness of colonial past fuels radicalisation, says Czech minister. *The Guardian*. 15 June 2017. [online]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/15/growing-awareness-of-colonial-past-fuels-radicalisation-says-czech-minister> (Accessed 2018).

²⁷ Czech News Agency (2017) Foreign Minister: Czechs not abandoning EU stance on Jerusalem. *Prague Daily Monitor*. 12 December 2017. [online]. Available from: <http://praguemonitor.com/2017/12/12/foreign-minister-czechs-not-abandoning-eu-stance-jerusalem> (Accessed 2018).

²⁸ Janda, J (2018) How Czech President Miloš Zeman Became Putin’s Man. *Observer.com*. 26 January 2018. [online]. Available from: <http://observer.com/2018/01/how-czech-president-milos-zeman-became-vladimir-putins-man/> (Accessed 2018).

non-grata in the US. However, president Zeman held talks with the Russian president Putin in Sochi in November 2017. During his visit there, articles praising the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968 appeared on the website of the Russian Army TV network Zvezda only to be immediately denounced and criticised by a large part of the domestic political elite including Zeman himself²⁹. Despite this criticism, Zeman managed to win presidential election in January 2018 thus securing himself second term in the office.

Since 2014, Martin Stropnický held the post of the Minister of Defence. He remained in that post since the very end of Sobotka's government making him the longest serving defence minister in the history of Czech Republic. In the new government of Andrej Babiš in December 2017 Stropnický was designated to become the Minister for Foreign Affairs, as well as the Deputy Prime Minister, assuming both posts on 13 December 2017. In May 2018 his post was offered to ČSSD as part of the coalition deal and Stropnický will likely receive ambassador post in Israel. Stropnický has been known as a harsh critic of Russian interference in domestic politics and of Russian politics on the eastern NATO flank. He is also a strong supporter of the transatlantic bond that he sees as a cornerstone of Czech security guarantees. During his mandate as MoD he had overseen sharp rise of the defence budget from CZK 42 billion in 2014 to 52.5 billion in 2017. However, his critics point to the fact that despite such rapidly growing budget, he was unable to finish the promised procurement cycle of any major military hardware such as new multipurpose helicopters, Mobile Air Defence Radars (MADR) or procuring new guns of NATO caliber³⁰. As a Minister of Foreign Affairs, he supported UK, US and French strike on Syria in April 2018 in response to alleged use of chemical weapons by Syrian Arab Army.

His position at the MoD was taken over in 2018 by Karla Šlechtová, who – despite being nominated by ruling ANO party, is seen as figurehead of president Miloš Zeman and is allegedly disliked by prime minister Babiš. She has been known as a harsh critic of the ineffectiveness of the Armed Forces leadership and also as a critique of her predecessor's inability to finish any major military procurement program. However in June 2018 when the coalition government of ANO and ČSSD was formed, she was not nominated to the post of minister of defence again due to generally negative media image, she managed to create during her tenure. Her post was thus filled with former minister of interior Lubomír Metnar (ANO).

²⁹ Czech News Agency (2017) ForMin: Czech delegation should speak of 1968 invasion in Russia. *Prague Daily Monitor*. 22 November 2017. [online]. Available from: <http://www.praguemonitor.com/2017/11/22/formin-czech-delegation-should-speak-1968-invasion-russia> (Accessed 2018).

³⁰ Stratilík, O. (2017): Hamáček: Stropnický selhal, není schopný dotáhnout velké nákupy. [Hamáček: Stropnický failed, he is unable to finish major acquisitions]. *Euro.cz*. 10 February 2017 [online]. Available from: <https://www.euro.cz/politika/hamacek-stropnicky-selhal-a-neni-schopny-dotahnout-velke-nakupy-1329847> (Accessed 2018).

2.2 Military domain

On the military level, the personal situation remained mostly stable. On 1 August, Major General Aleš Opata returned to the Czech Republic from the position of the National Military Representative of the Czech Republic to the NATO SHAPE, Mons and became the Deputy Chief of the General Staff - Chief of Staff. At that time, he had been already considered as a future Chief of the General Staff and thus a replacement of the Chief of the General Staff of Armed Forces of the Czech Republic General Josef Bečvář. This was confirmed in April 2018 and his appointment was made valid as of May 1, 2018.

The highest number of Czech soldiers abroad in 2017 operated in the NATO Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan. In 2017, the Czech army had a mandate to send 270 soldiers there with another twenty soldiers solely for the protection of the Czech embassy in Kabul. Apart from patrolling, the Czech contingent in Resolute Support was also tasked with protection of the allied forces and training of their Afghan counterparts.³¹ As of May 2018 there were 245 soldiers in Afghanistan with further possible 140 reinforcements coming in the second half of the 2018.

The CZAF also continued its missions in Mali in 2017 by sending its second most numerous contingent in history. Altogether sixty soldiers served there. The bulk of this force was a part of the EU training mission EUTM Mali. While ten soldiers served in the staff positions of the United Nations led mission MINUSMA. Finally, as of second half of 2018 the number of soldiers should rise to 120 in EUTM mission and further 30 in MINUSMA mission.

Most of the other operations abroad were considerably smaller with only one – MFO on Sinai – consisting of twenty-five men with a CASA transport aircraft. Apart from these the Czech Republic deployed smaller contingents in numerous operations led by the EU, but also the UN and OSCE, such as EU NAVFOR MED Sophia with five soldiers or the UN mission UNDOF on Golan heights with three soldiers etc.

In 2018 the Czech Republic participated in the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence in Lithuania and Latvia. The bulk of the forces (up to 230 troops – while originally 250 were supposed to be deployed) in the form of mechanised company served under German command in Lithuania and up to 60 (originally only 40 men mortar platoon was envisaged) were deployed in Latvia under the Canadian command.³²

As a part of the package deal of selling the L-159 light combat aircrafts to Iraq, the Czech Republic already sent an advisory Team in the Inherent Resolve operation in Iraq to help train the local air force in 2016. This represents probably the greatest Czech contribution to fighting the so called Islamic State. In 2017 this deployment continued

³¹ Czech News Agency (2016) Gov't approves military's foreign priorities for 2017-2018. *Prague Daily Monitor*. 19 April 2016. Available from: <http://www.praguemonitor.com/2016/04/19/govt-approves-militarys-foreign-priorities-2017-2018>

³² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic (2017) *Bulletin of Czech Foreign Policy Data VII-IX*, p. 31. [online]. Available from: https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/organizacni_struktura/utvary_mzv/oazi_mesicnik_zahranicni_politika_ceske.html (Accessed 3 April 2018).

with up to thirty-five soldiers (pilots, instructors and ground technicians). Additional capabilities included the Field Surgical Team which returned back home on 17 June 2017 and five to ten strong military police training team sent to Iraq on 4 November 2017. A decision to deploy the CBRN Military Training Team in 2018 was also taken.³³ Since this package of missions is fundamentally bilateral in nature, it represents one of the rare examples of proactive actions of the CZDP.

In April 2018 the number of soldiers in foreign missions was increased by further 270, while existing plans were specifying that for 2018 only 806 soldiers should be deployed³⁴. This increase should cost around 2,5 billion CZK annually.

A notable project regarding interoperability with allies which was envisaged in 2017 is the planned affiliation of the Czech 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade with the German 10th Armoured Division (agreed upon on 15 February 2017 under NATO's Framework Nations Concept). The affiliation of the 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade embraces already planned exercises and trainings as entry points for further practical co-operation. The affiliation will be mainly focused at common activities of staff elements and affiliated units, education and harmonisation of military requirements, common training procurement and logistical support.³⁵ In practical terms, this affiliation was, however, strongly critically politicised by Czech opposition parties in the first half of 2017 and this critique also appeared in influential magazines such as *Foreign Policy*.³⁶ It was mostly based on misunderstanding of the implications of affiliation. This step has been wrongly seen as putting the CZAF under the German command and integrating both armies. In reality, it has very practical military implications while it will be focused on systematic common training with German soldiers at a divisional level which the CZAF (due to the fact that the highest-level units are only brigades) cannot train on its own. Additionally, it will bring benefits of utmost importance for command and staff development, rather than for soldiers in basic assignments.

Activities relating to cyber defence and informational warfare have also been conceived in late 2017 and 2018. The best example is the proposed establishment of Cyber and Informational Warfare Command in the near future. This command will supplement already existing commands of Air and Land forces.³⁷

³³ Ministry of Defence (2017) *Current Deployments – Iraq*. [online]. Available from: <http://www.army.cz/en/foreign-operations/current/iraq/cbrn-training-team-140586/> (Accessed 8 April 2018).

³⁴ Czech News Agency (2018) *Vláda schválila rozšíření zahraničních misí české armády*. *Prague Daily Monitor*. 11 April 2018. Available from: <http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/vlada-schvalila-rozsireni-zahranicnich-misi-ceske-armady/1607908>

³⁵ Ministry of Defence (2017) *Letter of Intent between The Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic and the Federal ministry of Defence of the Federal Republic of Germany*. [online]. Available from: http://www.army.cz/assets/informacniservis/zpravodajstvi/smlouva-cr-srn_1.pdf (Accessed 23 February 2018).

³⁶ Braw. E. (2017) Germany is quietly building a European army under its command. *Foreign Policy*. [online]. Available at: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/05/22/germany-is-quietly-building-a-european-army-under-its-command/> (Accessed 24 February 2018).

³⁷ SPIŠÁK, Ján. *Nové operační koncepce ozbrojených sil USA a perspektivy jejich uplatnění*. *Obrana a strategie*. (Defence and Strategy.), 2017, sv. 17, č. 1, s. 20. ISSN 1214-6463 (print).

2.3 Administrative domain

As for the Ministry of Defence, main publicly available outcomes of its adaptation to KCD in 2017 and 2018 may be found in the Defence Strategy of the Czech Republic 2017 approved by the government in March 2017. Partially relevant to this issue is also the so called Armaments and Defence Industry Development Support Strategy of the Czech Republic 2025 approved by government at the very end of 2016 (19 December 2016). In the first half of 2018, works also commenced on renewal of The *Long Term Perspective* for Defence. The original text is from 2015 and thus require significant changes. So far, at the date of writing this article, only preparatory works have been carried out focusing mainly on identification of trends and best practices from comparable foreign documents³⁸.

Defence Strategy 2017 specifically addresses, that while the likelihood of a direct military attack against the territory of the Czech Republic is still very low, it cannot be ruled out that the security and/or territorial integrity of some NATO allies or fellow EU Member States may be threatened in such a way as to require the engagement of the CZAF in collective operations to ensure the defence of Allies.³⁹ This applies mainly to the threat of Russia. Thus, in practical terms, NATO commitments also influenced the amendment to the Defence Strategy of the Czech Republic 2017. From now on and depending on the nature of the crisis, the Czech Republic will be able to deploy a land brigade task force without rotation for a six-month period even for international crisis management operations. If such a task force is not deployed the Defence Strategy 2017 allows for simultaneous deployment of a sustainable battalion and a company size land task force, or an air force component, with rotation. That represents a significant increase in the level of political-military ambitions. So far, the previous Defence Strategy 2012 stipulated that a brigade size task force may be deployed only in case of NATO's collective defence operations. For international crisis management operations, the Czech Republic was able to assign the forces and assets only up to the size of a battalion task force rotated after a six-month period.

³⁸ Following countries and strategic documents were assessed. **Belgium** (The *strategic vision for Defence* 2016-2030); **Denmark** (Agreement for Danish Defence 2018 - 2023); **France** (White Paper on Defence and National Security); **Canada** (Canada's Defence Policy); Netherlands (Netherlands Defence Doctrine); **Germany** (2016 White Paper: Strategic Review and Way Ahead on Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr); **Austria** (Militärstrategisches Konzept 2017); **Poland** (The Defence Concept of the Republic of Poland); **Slovakia** (White Paper on Defence of the Slovak Republic - 2016); **United Kingdom** (National Security Strategy, Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015); **USA** (National Defence Strategy 2018). Two other states - **Portugal** (Defesa 2020) and **Hungary** (Zrynnii 2026) - were originally also included in the list but later removed for various reasons.

³⁹ Procházka, J. And Chalupová, I. (2017) *THE CZECH REPUBLIC DEFENCE STRATEGIES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT*. In: International Scientific Conference "Strategies XXI"; THE COMPLEX AND DYNAMIC NATURE OF THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT. Bucharest, Romania: Centre for Defence and Security Strategic Studies; Carol I" National Defence University, p. 242-252.

Besides that, the Defence strategy 2017 includes several other important measures, such as the establishment of new units and the rise in the number of soldiers by unprecedented five thousand new troops. So far, the original plans endorsed in the CZAF Development Concept 2025 expected reaching only 24,162 soldiers. This promising increase may, however, be source of problems in the future, since the average age of new recruits is already reaching 27 years and with adding another five thousand this trend may be even intensified. Even more pressing is the average age of the soldiers in 2017, which reached 38 years. If this number is compared with the average age of soldiers in 2007 then it may be concluded that it has risen by 5.6 years. In average, the CZAF are getting older by margin of 0.4 years per annum.⁴⁰ It may be argued that while increasing absolute numbers of soldiers is a positive step envisaged by the Defence Strategy 2017, the prospects of reaching this goal are bleak and implications for the age structure of the CZAF increasingly negative. An even worse trend may be seen in civilian personnel, where the average age reaches almost 51 years – with considerable and obvious effects on the MoD functions.

In conclusion, Defence Strategy 2017 is mostly threat based and thus generally a reactive strategy. It provides the Czech Republic with a basic strategic vision in combination with a set of strategic level objectives (back to the roots - balanced forces and article 3 of the Washington Treaty, resilience of all society, security of supply). There is also clear ambition to mitigate the history of insufficient defence financing in the past.

2.4 Economic domain

The position of the Czech Republic since 2017 concerning NATO was heavily influenced by the changing US policy owing to the new administration of president Donald Trump. During his presidential campaign Donald Trump accused NATO members of spending insufficient funds on defence. He repeated his criticism later, including on NATO's Special Meeting (also called mini-Summit) in Brussels in May 2017. Trumps' criticism from the beginning of his tenure, that "certain member countries owed 'massive amounts of money' to American taxpayers" and that NATO members must finally contribute their fair share was however partially mitigated by his reassurance to Allies of the continued US commitment to the Alliance. In the end the shock from such a strongly voiced US president announcement worked and at the mini-Summit in Brussels in May 2017, NATO's Heads of State and Government took decisions to improve burden sharing in the Alliance. That was also true for the Czech Republic, which announced to pledge efforts to reach the NATO's 2% of the GDP target for military spending along with presenting concrete plans of how to reach this goal to American allies. So far there has been only the commitment of the Czech government from 2014 to increase defence spending pro-

⁴⁰ Bednář. Z. (2017) Information support of human resources management of Czech Ministry of Defence. 2017. In print. Submitted to „Vojenské rozhledy“ magazine in January 2018.

gressively to reach 1.4% GDP in 2020.⁴¹ Furthermore, after the visit of the Czech Minister of Defence Stropnický to the US and meeting with the US Secretary of Defence Mattis in early May 2017, the Czech Republic announced that reaching 2% of the GDP is likely in 2024⁴². This step is widely seen as a co-operative reacting behaviour to the substantial pressure from the US president. However, similar promises have been made repeatedly in the past.

The then Deputy Minister of Defence Daniel Koštoval offered an alternative explanation for pledging to reach 2% of the GDP in June 2017 by voicing fear of the US political elite, and stated that it was getting increasingly difficult to persuade US population to approve increased defence spending in the USA while European allies are not doing enough in that area. This version of explanation sees US pressure for 2% as motivated not by threat of Russia or any other challenge for that matter but rather by purely US domestic concerns.

Nevertheless, in 2017 the Czech defence budget reached only 1,04% of the GDP which amounted to CZK 52.5 billion. Internally 16% of the budget was allocated to procurement, 55% to personnel costs and 29% on operations and maintenance.

One of the scarcely mentioned problems, associated with the '2% of GDP on defence' concept is the inability to utilise such a high level of spending effectively in recent conditions of the Defence Sector in the Czech Republic. According to an internal MoD calculation, to spend 2% effectively would mean to reach altogether forty thousand people (soldiers and civilians) within the defence sector. This number is far exceeding even the five thousand troops increase promised in the Defence Strategy 2017. In addition, at the same time the personal costs are expected to be under constant pressure due to the increased recruitment, rising salaries and competition over personnel on the market.

The second area necessarily be affected by the '2% of GDP' rule is the share of investments on the defence budget. According to NATO guidance funds spent on procurement are supposed to reach 20% of the entire defence budget. However, during a MoD officials (headed by Deputy Minister of Defence Daniel Koštoval) meeting with the US administrative in Washington in April 2017, a chart was presented promising the ambition to invest 30% of the Czech MoD's annual defence budget in the procurement of new equipment starting in 2020 while keeping this level for another five years. If the life cycle cost of newly procured equipment is taken into consideration, with 30% investments the operating costs will increase dramatically, thus putting heavy strain on the future defence budget of Czech Republic.

⁴¹ Ministry of Defence (2014) *Czech Coalition Agreement*. [online]. Available from: <http://www.army.cz/en/ministry-of-defence/newsroom/news/czech-governmental-coalition-sign-agreement-on-the-progressive-increase-of-the-defence-budget-101455>. (Accessed 15 March 2018).

⁴² Lidovky (2017) Ministr Stropnický: Vrtulníky české armádě dodají USA nebo Itálie [Minister Stropnický: Helicopters will be purchased either from the USA or Italy]. *Lidovky.cz*. 2. May 2017. [online] Available from: http://www.lidovky.cz/ministr-stropnicky-vrtulniky-ceske-armade-dodaji-usa-nebo-italie-p9d-/zpravy-svet.aspx?c=A170502_224422_In_zahranici_ELE (Accessed 2018).

2.5 Societal domain

Media and public space regarding defence policy in 2017 and 2018 has mostly just mimicked topics related to the threats and tendencies of the security environment. However, besides that a few other recurring themes became visible in the public space as well.

Public survey in the past have repeatedly proven an alarmingly low knowledge of ordinary citizens about the defence sector. Moreover, the MoD has not completed its work on the Strategic Communication concept, yet. The ability of MoD to shape public attitude to defence is still marginal and rests on ad-hoc activities such as preparation for the military parade commemorating the 100-year anniversary of Czechoslovak independence to be held in October 2018. This rather reactive approach cannot substitute for the long term strategy.

Among other defence related issues which were politicised and featured in media in 2017 was the ongoing discussion about the possibility to re-introduce conscription supported by the fact, that 42% of Czech citizens believe that abolishing conscription in the past was wrong. This topic was even partially reflected in the programmes of certain political parties for the October 2017 parliamentary elections (KDU-ČSD, Mayors and Independents and a few other non-parliamentary parties). However, weak election results of these parties may also reflect disinterest of the population to participate on defence. Thus, even though 86% of the respondents in public surveys claimed that they are interested in defence and 81% had high trust in the CZAFs, merely 9% of citizens indicated willingness to participate in defence of the state as a part of the armed forces in case of need.⁴³

However, since the armed forces were expanding rapidly in 2017, the need to bolster recruitment pushed the MoD to intensify its media campaign. One of the signs of this was a TV series produced in co-operation of the MoD and the Czech Television public broadcaster, vividly documenting lives of fresh conscripts into the Active Reserves (a reserve unit of the Armed Forces) called *Provedu! Přijímač*. The series aired in April-May 2017 receiving a favourable reception⁴⁴. However, in 2018 the CZAF began to quickly disappear from public discourse owing probably to decreasing threat perception as well as unstable situation concerning the Government led by Andrej Babiš, that received no-confidence vote in January 2018. In ensuing coalition negotiations between ANO and ČSSD Ministry of Defence was repeatedly offered to ČSSD by Prime Minister Babiš.

The ministr of defence Karla Šlechtová has sought to operationalize an educational program in the area of defence into school system. This effort did not find sufficient level of support across government. Moreover, it is rather narrow approach to holistic

⁴³ Dyčka. L. (2017) *Czech Defence Policy Adaptation to Dynamics of the Security Environment*. Dissertation thesis. Masaryk University. [online]. Available from: https://is.muni.cz/th/181852/fss_d/ (Accessed 24 March 2018).

⁴⁴ CSFD (2017) „Provedu! Přijímač“ – hodnocení [Bootcamp: Yes, Sir! – Evaluation]. *Česko-Slovenská filmová databáze [Czech and Slovak Movie Database]*. [online]. Available from: <https://www.csfd.cz/film/476710-provedu-prijimac/prehled/> (Accessed 24 March 2018).

enhancement of young population comprehension of the security issues. Furthermore, the plans to establish second military high school in the town of Sokolov were pushed through at the beginning of 2018. The idea behind it was to enhance recruitment potential in Bohemia region of the Czech Republic, since the only military high school is situated in Moravia (Moravská Třebová). However, this plan failed spectacularly, because of significant disinterest of applicants (only two of them passed the admission process⁴⁵). Original plans counted for 32 students in the first year.⁴⁶

CONCLUSION

The Czech Defence Policy in 2017/2018 was mostly reactive to external threats and challenges. Reactive was in terms of resistance against the Russian threat to NATO allies and with regard to the Czech Republic's willingness to accept the push from the US allies to increase defence expenditures. The Czech Republic made a clearly voiced promise to reach 2% of the GDP on defence spending despite the fact, that at this time it is more utopian than real. One of the rare cases of proactive actions was sending numerous specialists, pilots, military policemen etc. to Iraq to train the Iraqi Air Forces in using Czech made L-159 light attack planes. This mission is outcome of bilateral cooperation unlike all other operations abroad that are within the framework of NATO, EU, OSCE or UN and is an example of successful military diplomacy and support of our defence industry.

However, there are possible challenges that may hinder successful development of the CZAF in the future. The first is financing of defence needs. The inability to spend vastly increasing sums may cause the public to question the need to spend money on defence and thus damage our reputation of reliable allies. A low level of investments and slow modernization of the CZAF that still rely heavily on obsolete soviet platforms (BMP-2, Mi-24 helicopters etc.), make the Czech Republic not only ill equipped for today's operational environment, but also dependent on Russia.⁴⁷ Finally, the rapidly ageing military, as well as civilian personnel of the CZAF and the MoD will likely hinder the effectivity of the defence sector in the future. As for the election results, their influence will be seen only from the mid-2018 period onwards.

⁴⁵ Plánovaná vojenská škola v Sokolově zatím nebude, přijímačky udělali jen dva žáci. 2018. Available at: <https://www.novinky.cz/veda-skoly/470988-planovana-vojenska-skola-v-sokolove-zatim-nebude-prijimacky-udelali-jen-dva-zaci.html>.

⁴⁶ Vojenská střední škola v Sokolově přijme 32 žáků. 2018. Available at: <https://www.zapadoceskydenik.cz/sokolovsko/aktuality/vojenska-stredni-skola-v-sokolove-prijme-32-zaku.html>

⁴⁷ Procházka, J. Dyčka, L. (2017) *Czech Defence Policy – Critical Assessment and Recommendations*. Vojenské rozhledy. 2017, 26 (5), 41-60. ISSN 1210-3292 (print), 2336-2995 (online). Available from: www.vojenskerohledy.cz (Accessed 24 March 2018).

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