

SECURITY ENVIRONMENT 2018

**THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DEFENCE POLICY
AND THE ARMED FORCES OF THE CZECH
REPUBLIC**

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this analytical study is to evaluate the development of the security environment of the Czech Republic. The goal of the Centre for Security and Military Strategic Studies, University of Defence in Brno (CBVSS) is to provide an alternative view of the debate on the implications for the security environment for formulating and implementation of effective defence policy of the Czech Republic. The study is based primarily on the materials prepared by the CBVSS and analytical materials from the countries which share the same or similar security environment and security interests. The study presents the results of a comparative analysis of available open sources and includes assessment of selected national and transnational actors. The verification of the outputs was performed in the context of expert meetings with the participation of the Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic, the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic and the representatives of the security community.

For the purposes of this study, the security environment is understood as the outer environment of the implementation of the Czech national (security) interests. In geographical terms, this applies, in particular, to the territory of the continental Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. Because of the geopolitical position of the Czech Republic and its close integration into the European security architecture (mainly being part of NATO and the European Union), this paper pays attention also to the broader context and selected current trends in the global security development.

THE NATURE OF THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

In the past few years, the security environment has undergone some dynamic changes after a relatively long period of stability. The trends affecting the form of international relations are now more risky and complicated than they were in the past two decades. The security environment in a globalised world is more complex and includes a number of dimensions, which may not have been taken into account until a few years ago and which generate growing instability and insecurity.

The scope, diversity and interdependence of threats increase. Their development is difficult to predict.¹ Under these conditions, it is challenging to identify unambiguously the opponent or a clear barrier of war aggression and to evaluate the necessary reaction on this basis, involving the use of military force and defining the parameters of development.

The Czech Republic, as a member state of the EU and NATO, is not confronted with military threats and challenges immediately on its territory or its borders, but it shares the security environment with the partner or allied countries at the periphery of these international organisations. The actual or potential threats emerging from the unstable environment at this periphery affect the Czech Republic with bigger or lesser intensity. However, the Czech Republic will cooperate or participate in

¹ FRANK, Libor. Trendy vývoje bezpečnostního prostředí a jejich důsledky pro ozbrojené síly. In: Defence & Strategy conference 2015. Brno. University of Defence 2015, pp. 35-43.

addressing the crisis situations and military elimination of threats in the future, in particular, in the framework of a fair sharing of the burden of collective defence.

GLOBAL SECURITY ACTORS - CONFRONTATION OF THE *STATUS QUO*

In the global security environment, there is a negative development represented by the weakening of the importance of the states of the Euro-Atlantic group in terms of demography, economy and political power. This situation is caused by the rise of regional powers outside the European continent or North America (the BRIC group) and it creates the preconditions for the challengers of the existing global power distribution and the possibility of applying stronger influence at the expense of the Euro-Atlantic group, which will affect also the CR.

There is a continuing erosion of the system of international relations based on the superiority of the United Nations. The role of the UN is increasingly marginalised by the activities of some actors and inconsistent position of global powers. There is also a question of the relevance of the current composition of the Security Council in relation to the above-mentioned rise of non-European powers and thus the legitimacy of its decisions in the future. In recent decades, there were several military operations without a clear UN mandate that divided even the allies within NATO. The disputable and non-consensual legitimisation of some unilateral steps was a similar case.

The Russian Federation, inter alia, reacted to the erosion of the post-war arrangement and weakening of the role of the UN in its controversial activities in Georgia and Ukraine, which were motivated or substantiated by pointing out to similar behaviour of the West in the recent past (e.g., military intervention of the Alliance in the Kosovo crisis and the recognition of the unilateral declaration of the sovereignty of the Kosovo entity not respecting the Russian opinion and applicable UN Security Council resolutions). The annexation of Crimea, a violation of the fundamental principles of the Helsinki Final Act from 1975 and the Budapest Memorandum from 1994, was justified, from the Russian perspective, by the Kosovo precedent, just as in the case of recognition of the sovereignty of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in 2008.

The relevance of the United Nations in the Middle East region is also questionable, being paralysed by the different positions of the permanent members of the Security Council. The UN is not able to adopt a crucial position on the conflict in Syria nor on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or Israeli activities in the Golan Heights. The issue of East Jerusalem and the status of Jerusalem as the capital of the state of Israel also illustrate the widely differing positions of the US and most EU states, i.e., closest partners, whose security interests are interconnected through almost identical NATO membership.

This approach undermines the cohesion between the transatlantic partners, between the old and new Europe or between groups of states within the EU and NATO. At the same time, it impairs the validity of their common position in the cases where it is defended by the need to respect the fundamental principles of international law and the UN Charter. The acceptance of the annexation or separation of a part of the

sovereign territory of another actor always contributes to the erosion of a stable international order and creates potentially unwanted precedents for the future.

The UN as a universal tool for global security does not fulfil its function. The actors with the ambition to change the global balance of power in their favour are gaining strength. From the global point of view, this is a turning point that will be reflected in redefining the security and defence policy of the European states, whether at the Alliance, EU or national levels. The transatlantic partner of Europe, the United States, as the present main guarantor of security of the European pillar of NATO, is now more intensively engaged in defence of its own interests in the western direction over the Pacific Ocean, in the Pacific and Asian space, than toward the east across the Atlantic Ocean. In this respect, the willingness of the United States to bear the costs of the provision of security and defence of their European partners reduces. The growing concerns with new American isolationism or fundamental changes in geopolitical preferences have become an incentive for the implementation of a credible security policy at the EU level or the European pillar of NATO and at the level of the European nation states.

NATO MEMBERSHIP WILL REQUIRE FAIR PLAY IN THE SHARING OF COSTS

The North Atlantic Alliance, the guarantor of security of the European continent, or its western part, has not been spared a crisis of identity. The Alliance is responding to the internal and external stimuli not envisaged recently. The main topic for the two last summits of the Alliance was the conflicting relationship with the eastern neighbour of NATO. After decades of a relative quiet, typical with disregarding less likely military threats, the Russian challenge brings the momentum that draws attention of a number of member states to the questions of credibly ensuring their own defence - with the growing importance of Article 3 of the Washington Treaty.

Since the crisis year of 2014, regional instability in the post-Soviet space has not culminated, the conflict in eastern Ukraine has frozen and Russian assertiveness or threat has been, from the point of view of a number of member states, overshadowed by other security threats (migration, terrorism). For Eastern European states, the credibility of collective defence and deterrent potential remains a priority. NATO is looking for a balanced way of strengthening of military capabilities in Eastern Europe to such an extent that would stop the potential revisionist Russian ambitions. The tool consists in credible deterrence and the readiness of the Alliance to intervene in favour of its eastern allies. In this respect, NATO addresses the dilemma brought by the contradiction between the persistent long-term offshore engagement beyond their geographical boundaries with an asymmetric adversary (CRO) and the development of a credible capabilities to conduct a high intensity conflict with a state actor with equal military potential (WT, Article 5).

The relationship of NATO to the Russian Federation and other security issues is dependent on cohesion. There are different attitudes and opinions and the question is to what extent it will be possible to find the desirable consensus and will to act in the same way. The position of Turkey is a big question. Its policy may not correspond to the interests of the rest of the Alliance or be in accordance with the shared values.

The Turkish values diverge from the EU, NATO or the US and its positions as well as practical politics are more in line with the approach of the Russian Federation, People's Republic of China or Iran, i.e., the actual opponents or potential challengers for the Euro-Atlantic states. The attempt at the military coup exacerbated relations with certain Alliance partners who provided political asylum to the members of the Turkish armed forces. It is possible that the Turkish internal development will be reflected in the weakening of the Alliance ties.

In practice, this erosion is already visible: Turkish position toward the Russian Federation does not respect the position of the Alliance and the acquisition of the Russian rocket system S-400, which is not compatible with Western equipment, in a period of frozen cooperation between NATO and Russia and the sanctions imposed, is perhaps even meant to demonstrate the autonomous policy toward the Western partners. The earlier intention to acquire similar system from the PRC, which was not so controversial under the respective circumstances, was abandoned under the pressure from NATO in the past.

The coherence and efficiency of NATO in the case of pursuing joint interests in the Middle East and the Caucasus region would be probably paralysed by the Turkish stance. The personnel changes within the Turkish armed forces were significant as to quantity and undermined also a number of personal relations with colleagues within the Alliance, including the members of the Army of the Czech Republic. This can lead to a certain mistrust in the newly delegated Turkish partners in Alliance structures and missions and further impair mutual cooperation.

There are different perceptions of Russia as a security threat. After three years, the crisis and conflict in Ukraine has gradually lost its mobilisation potential that it had at the time of its outbreak and the question is whether the current unified Western stance toward Russia will continue in the long term. The fact that the relations between the member states of NATO and the Russian Federation on a bilateral level may undergo a dynamic change in a relatively short time is once again attested by the example of Turkey that shifted from an above-standard partnership to a strongly confrontational position in less than two years, currently again enjoying normal bilateral relations and intensive cooperation in a number of areas. Although the Turkish position is very specific, it is not possible to rule out the possibility that the internal problems of countries that are geographically distant from the presently latent conflict line between NATO and Russia may lead to an erosion of the common position of the Alliance in the course of time.

The NATO Summit in Warsaw addressed the unprecedented challenges the Alliance currently faces, from global terrorism through Russian aggression in Ukraine to the migration crisis. The type of reaction or solution to these identified challenges are still a matter of divergent views among the allies. The need for an effective deterrence and the necessity of its projection into the building of competences has been unanimously confirmed.²

For NATO, the Russian factor highlighted the long-ignored need for the ability of the armed forces to face confrontation with an advanced conventional adversary. The

² GLOBSEC NATO Adaptation Initiative. One Alliance. The Future Tasks of the Adapted Alliance. Bratislava 2017.

relations with Russia will not get back to normal and Russia's attempt to disintegrate the Alliance will continue. After nearly two decades of preference of building expeditionary capabilities and high mobility in conflicts with an asymmetric opponent, the focus shifts to territorial defence, because we cannot automatically assume the absolute superiority in areas such as electronic warfare, aerial dominance, etc. Certainly, we cannot rely on long response times that would permit a response to the deteriorating situation and allow an increase in military capability. The actually existing and currently available capacities of the armed forces including the existence of adequate military reserves and stocks are and will remain crucial. The financing of defence will be a critical parameter in the evaluation of the overall contribution of individual members.

EUROPEAN INTEGRATION 2.0

The security environment of the European continent and geographical neighbourhood has been exposed to the changes which can be associated with the events of the so-called Arab Spring. This process has resulted in a relatively serious destabilisation of the North African and Middle East region with the effects still present today. It has been shown that even the military interventions of the West may not bring positive changes or long-term stability in the crisis regions. On the contrary, in some cases the military intervention led to the deterioration of the security situation and possibly created the conditions for fragmentation of hitherto functional state units and a number of prolonged conflicts difficult to resolve (Iraq, Libya). The turning point in the previous development can be seen in the year 2014, when the so-called Islamic State unexpectedly and effectively established itself in the territory of Iraq and when the internal political crisis in Ukraine led to the Russian military intervention on the Ukrainian territory and the consequent significant deterioration of relations between the West and the Russian Federation.

In terms of implementing credible security and defence policy, the European Union is in a similar situation to NATO. The main security topic of the last two years, which had more actual impact on the member states than the Russian annexation of Crimea, namely, the migration crisis revealed a number of weaknesses in the current functioning of European structures and contributed significantly to polarisation of opinions, both within the EU and in the societies of individual member states. There are also voices calling for a fundamental redefinition of the current concept of the European defence policy and its instruments.³ For example, there is a question whether the concept of the EU Battlegroup is still viable and to what extent this is just a waste of energy and resources when the options for its flexible use, e.g., for the protection of the external borders of the EU, are very limited.

The ongoing regional conflicts in the EU neighbourhood following the so-called Arab Spring point out the limited value of the European *soft power*, until a few years ago still regarded as a substantial ability that allowed effective EU actions in crisis regions. On the contrary, in the context of the migration crisis it was possible to observe the

³ Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for European Union's Foreign and Security Policy.

lack of functioning of the common European security policy and the return to the autonomous, often uncoordinated and externally criticised approach of individual member states. This development has become a certain impetus for an increased EU activity in the field of security and defence and base for new initiatives of the EU diplomacy, as the EU can no longer count solely on NATO in protecting its member states from external threats. According to the security strategy, the EU will develop a policy of collective defence, which will allow acting autonomously, if necessary.

The EU strategy requires a credible European defence, which will be crucial for an equal transatlantic partnership with the US. It requires Europeans to take more responsibility for their safety, which is fully in line with the requirements voiced by the US and NATO for some time already; on the other hand, there will be permanently present doubts about a possible undesirable doubling of the role of the Alliance.

Also, the NATO summit in Warsaw emphasized the need for closer cooperation between the EU and NATO. Even the fact that the NATO and EU bases are almost identical has not provided the necessary flexibility, which is reflected, inter alia, in the complex process of approval of the movements of the allied forces through the territory of the national member states, which also led to calls for a “Schengen zone” for NATO forces.

The policy of the present American administration is also reflected at the EU level, in a number of questions representing different positions and pursuing different priorities in areas such as global climate change, revision of the nuclear agreement with Iran, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, American tax reform, etc. This development suggests the growing discrepancy in practical politics as well as declared interests and has become a stimulus for the debate on the future of the transatlantic political and military partnerships. It also encourages again the idea of a closer European cooperation in defence policy, including the concept of common European military forces. There have been many similar visions and projects of specific instruments of common European defence over the past two decades, but compared with the past, there is another very significant factor outside the changes in American politics: *Brexit*.

The termination of membership of the United Kingdom will not have a major impact on the EU in a number of areas, because a whole series of exceptions applied, but with the British departure a significant opponent of greater integration of the EU in the field of defence will disappear. *Brexit* can provide the impetus for the strengthening of the military cooperation within the EU. However, the implementation of *Brexit* significantly weakens the existing military potential of the EU.

Defence expenditure of the UK represented approximately 15 % of the total budget of the whole of the EU and because of its strong naval forces, the UK was also the promoter of common EU naval operations in the Mediterranean and other regions of the world. Phasing out of the EU activities in this regard can be assumed. The loss of the British nuclear deterrent as well as the loss of the second position of a permanent member of the UN Security Council are not negligible for the EU either.

One of the consequences of *Brexit* is also partial weakening of the position of the US toward the EU, since the departure of the Anglo-Saxon partner with a strong

orientation to the transatlantic link will mean losing a current dominant ally inside this European institution. The pending *Brexit* allowed to launch a permanent structured cooperation claimed by the vast majority of the membership of the EU, i.e., PESCO. This platform has the potential to achieve the European strategic autonomy in the future, which would constitute crisis management operations, deploying stabilisation missions or training units without the involvement of the US, joint development of competences and fulfilling the European ambitions in the area of common defence policy.

The growing emancipation of the EU can contribute to the disruption of the cohesion of the transatlantic relationship and asymmetric relationship between the US and its European allies. On the other hand, the current American concept of transatlantic alliance is conditioned with the *America First* attitude to a greater extent than in the past and Europe is seen as a competitor and economic adversary. As the new national security strategy of the United States suggests, it prefers to focus on other aspects of foreign policy and Europe ceases to be a priority.

They still remain the most important partner for each other. The mutual dependence in defending their own interests cannot be underestimated. The current development should not be neglected and should be reflected in the policy of the European states at both national and EU levels, since the qualitative transformation of asymmetric relationship will logically lead to a growing pressure on the need to create the absent European capabilities.

It is an open question whether *Brexit* will have any significant impact on the integrity of the EU that could become a stimulus for further dissolution of the existing bonds, resp. lead to further exits, or, on the contrary, lead to a further deepening of political integration. One of the prospective consequences is the reality of the so-called multi-speed Europe and strengthening the French-German heart striving for autonomous pursuit of European interests and creation of instruments for this purpose. The recent success of the pro-European parties in the elections in France and Germany indicates the continuing trend of European integration.

States comparable with the Czech Republic will have the option to join this heart or be pushed to the edge of European integration and become its hypothetical or practical periphery. In the past, the Czech Republic did not emphasise the opinions of the German or French politics in security issues (Iraq, the Middle East, the Caucasus). Now it will be confronted with their reinforced position within the European debate. To ensure the safety of the Czech Republic, it is important to support a more ambitious project of European integration in the area of defence while sustaining the weakened transatlantic relationship.

THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION: RESET OR CONFRONTATION?

The Russian Federation is a revisionist power seeking to restore the spheres of influence in some countries in its neighbourhood and to renew the power potential for promoting and defending Russia's national interests, including possible projection of the power beyond its own territory. Russian ambitions make this country a potential adversary for the EU and NATO as well as for some countries that are not members of the two organizations. In these states, the Russian Federation is seen as the actor representing a direct threat and military danger. Likewise, the Russian Federation sees the NATO at its borders as the most significant security threat at the present time and the North Atlantic Alliance is recognised as an adversary in the current strategic documents.⁴

The revival of the Russian power potential was very successful, in particular, in the first decade of the 21st century, however, the financial crisis and the fall in prices of exported raw materials, which form the backbone of the Russian economy, weakened this trend, aided also by the economic sanctions of the EU and the US imposed on the Russian Federation after its intervention in the Ukrainian crisis in 2014.

The Russian military potential was demonstrated in the Russian-Georgian conflict in 2008, however, despite a successful campaign and attainment of the objectives, the persistent obsolescence and low efficiency of the Russian armed forces was also displayed. The Russian party reacted to the identified deficiencies by large and costly modernisation of the armed forces.

The Ukrainian conflict and the annexation of Crimea then demonstrated the new capabilities of the Russian forces, including the new concept of unconventional hybrid operation. Destabilising the Ukrainian state, immediately adjacent to the EU and NATO, demonstrated the possible risks for states lying in the Russian area of interest and drew attention to the phenomenon of information operations. Effective influencing of large groups of society through the instruments of hybrid operation can pose risks especially in the Baltic states with strong Russian-speaking minorities. Information operations as a tool for achieving the strategic objectives of the state without direct use of the armed forces are incorporated in the current Russian military doctrine.

Amazingly successful was the Russian involvement in the Syrian conflict where the deployment of an air contingent, special forces and accurately guided ballistic missiles helped overturn the unfavourable situation on the battlefield in favour of the Syrian government units. It also demonstrated the ability of a long-term projection of military forces in remote external deployment even with very limited possibilities of transport and logistics, which represent the limits of contemporary Russian capabilities.

However, the respective interventions of the Russian Federation did not achieve any significant strengthening of the Russian geopolitical and geostrategic position, but essentially only defended the status quo at the price of a significant deterioration of relations with regional and western actors. Abkhazia and South Ossetia remained

⁴ Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation. Moscow, 2014 [cit. 2018-01-07]. Available on: <https://goo.gl/Lzhunc>

firmly grounded in the Russian sphere of influence since the collapse of the Soviet Union and Soviet Georgia, even during the multifaceted decline of Russian power potential and influence during the Yeltsin era.

The elimination of the Georgian efforts to reintegrate these entities, the recognition of their sovereignty and the conclusion of allied contracts after 2008 did not constitute any qualitative shift or strengthening for the Russian positions in the region and did not have any impact on the foreign-policy orientation of Georgia toward the Euro-Atlantic circuit. The annexation of Crimea may have resolved the question of uncertain hiring of bases post 2012, but at the cost of force confrontation with Ukraine, which the Russian Federation had been long trying to get into its political and economic sphere of influence.

The intervention in Syria brought increase in the prestige of the Russian Federation, however, from the practical point of view, following the withdrawal of the Russian forces there will be no strengthening of the Russian positions in the region and the preserving of the Syrian government will be more beneficial for Iran. Considering the Syrian involvement as a prerequisite for a permanent presence of Russian forces changing the military-strategic situation between NATO and Russia at the southern flank of the Alliance in order to weaken the eastern flank of the Alliance is not entirely justified.

There is certain ambivalence apparent in the approach of NATO and the EU to the Russian Federation, given by different historical experience and geographical proximity or distance and also other, for instance economic, factors. The conflicting potential is logically present primarily in the area of contact of the territories of the member states of the aforementioned organizations with the Russian Federation.

The strategic challenge is thus represented, in particular, by the area of the Baltic states, or the Eastern Baltic. In this area, Russia demonstrates its power to the NATO member states and causes incidents to probe for defence capacities of EU member states (Finland, Sweden). In the Kaliningrad region, Russia deployed significant Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) capacities, which could potentially limit the ability of rapid Alliance's support for the Baltic States and possibly contribute, in active cooperation with Belarus, to disrupting the ground connection via the Polish-Lithuanian border, the so-called Suwalki corridor.

The Russian nuclear deterrent was reinforced also here, particularly through the deployment of Iskander mobile ballistic missiles, which is very sensitive primarily for the nearest NATO member states due to the specific geographical position of the Kaliningrad region. Other conflicting area is the Black Sea, albeit here the strengthening of the A2/AD and other military capabilities in the annexed Crimea does not represent a strategic threat for NATO directly bordering on this territory.

The Russian strategic objective is the establishment of a buffer zone in the south and west and acquiring control over the northern polar regions, including the Arctic area, as well as the maintenance of the existing political and military dominance in the area of post-Soviet Central Asia.⁵ The long-term strategic interest is the weakening of the transatlantic and Anglo-Saxon influence (USA, Canada, United Kingdom) in

⁵ Strategic Foresight Analysis: 2017 Report. NATO HQ SACT Strategic Plans and Policy.

Europe associated with the emergence of a new European security architecture favourable for Russia.

MENA: THE TERRITORY OF PERMANENT INSTABILITY

The security environment of the EU countries (and owing to the almost identical base also the European pillar of NATO) will be undoubtedly faced in the future with the developments in geographically not distant regions, where we can see an increase of instability over the past two decades, and compared to the European development, we can talk about an era of disintegration.

In the MENA ⁶region, in particular, in the Middle East, North, but also Central Africa (over vast areas ranging from Pakistan to Nigeria), there are currently at least seven intensive conflicts going on: in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Libya, Somalia and Southern Sudan. All conflicts are extremely destructive, long lasting, without any clear winner or loser. They lead to destruction and disintegration of the previously unitary nation states and their *de facto* breaking up into various factions, bringing along the risk of an endless cycle of undecided wars and the period of permanent instability.

This process does not create an actor that would represent a direct military threat to the EU or NATO countries, however, the consequences of these conflicts, especially mass migration, have already reached the European continent. The predictions of further development expect increasing migration in the next few decades, not only for reasons of the worsening of the security situation. Also, returning of a bigger number of current refugees to their original homes cannot be expected.⁷

The consequences of the current conflicts, even if they have completely calmed down already, will persist in the affected regions for about 25 years.⁸ There is also a strong interconnection of the threats. The recent or ongoing conflicts are both, their cause as well as an effect of other factors, such as climate changes, demographic growth, extreme social inequality and uneven economic development in the region.

This region is not among the geographical priorities for the Czech Republic, but it is part of a shared security environment with the Mediterranean EU and NATO member states. The development in this area has a significant influence on the common EU policy as well as policies at national levels and also the internal development of the partner states outside the Mediterranean area. It also polarises the relations between allies, potentially disturbing the internal cohesion.

For the neighbouring countries, the region represents a clear priority and obscures other geographic vectors, including the eastern one. It is comparable to the importance of the Russian neighbourhood for the Baltic States, and although there is no element of direct military threats, it affects other sectors of security far more deeply. The territory of North Africa holds significant reserves of oil and natural gas

⁶ MENA - Middle East and North Africa

⁷ An annual report on the activities of the military intelligence for 2016. (2017), MD CR. Military Intelligence, p. 6

⁸ SIPRI Yearbook 2017, p. 9.

and the North African states represent a major energy supplier for certain EU member states.

The respective regions affected by a series of revolts and unrests of the so-called Arab Spring go through socio-political changes without the prospects of normalisation of the situation. The collapse of Libya, the civil war in Syria, re-escalation of the conflict in Iraq, the Kurdish question and prospective disintegration of the Syrian and Iraqi states, the rise and fall of the so-called Islamic State and the associated movement of jihadists into other conflict regions, two power coups in Egypt, the conflict in Yemen, power rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia associated with intensive arms programmes in the Persian Gulf, all these anticipate that the threat of other regional conflicts with a wider impact in many aspects on the immediate surroundings and the European continent is topical. It can be expected that the Czech Republic will participate in crisis operations of various type and intensity, led by the EU, UN or NATO.

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CZECH REPUBLIC

The worsening security situation in the world is sensitively perceived by the public as well as the political elites. In the context of the Czech Republic, it leads to a hitherto unprecedented support for the armed forces and higher political willingness to spend on defence.

In terms of defining the defence policy and its priorities, we can talk today about the most favourable situation since the establishment of an independent state. The diversity of threats (Islamic radicalism, massive migration caused by regional conflicts, Russian assertiveness, etc.) guarantees reliable and broad societal support for strengthening the defence of the state, despite the polarisation of the society in other topics.

Redefining the political assignment in response to the changes in the security environment has major implications for the armed forces. We can talk about a post-intervention period, as the priority placed on expeditionary forces operating under specific conditions in remote regions is being abandoned. Emphasis is placed on the development of capabilities for the defence of the territory of the Czech Republic and its allies. It is important to ensure an effective interoperable collaboration with allies over the entire range of operations, including conflicts of high intensity.⁹

It is more important than before to pay attention to the *Host Nation Support* capacities, allowing the support for allied units on the territory of the Czech Republic during their transfer, training or operating deployment.

The current trend of transnational cooperation is evident both in the case of NATO and, especially, EU. There are a few options for possible cooperation, however, probably only one of them is actually beneficial. The Visegrad Four, often accentuated in the past, is not entirely appropriate for regional cooperation in the military field, because it represents a relatively diverse group of states with significantly different potential, priorities of foreign and defence policies and national interests.

Over the past two decades, despite the claims and plans for mutual cooperation the V4 group did not establish itself significantly in the military area and the current situation does not provide any prospects for future military cooperation, with the exception of time-limited projects, such as the common EU BG, which may have been the potential maximum for V4. The present political cooperation based on shared positions of the V4 states during the migration crisis does not produce sufficient basis for the future and the different priorities will probably lead to marginalisation of the grouping as a mere formal organisation. The strengthening of bilateral cooperation with neighbouring countries is much more effective.

The mutual cooperation between the Czech Republic and Slovakia is facilitated by a range of traditional ties, still, given the constrained options of the two countries, it is very limited and does not mean an essential contribution for the CR. Cooperation with Hungary in both political and military fields is even more limited and there is no

⁹ DYČKA, Lukáš, PROCHÁZKA, Josef. Reakce a adaptace české obranné politiky na aktuální vývoj bezpečnostního prostředí. In: Vybrané trendy vývoje bezpečnostního prostředí a možné implikace pro ozbrojené síly. Brno. University of Defence, 2017.

prospect of such cooperation that could be beneficial for both parties or V4 as a whole.

The state with the greatest potential and ambitions in the military field, Poland, is a relatively unstable partner with regard to the polarised domestic political situation, developing not entirely convincing visions of regional cooperation, such as *Intermaria*, in which the Polish state should be playing the role of a dominant regional power. The total Polish potential is significantly higher than of the other members of the V4 combined, still, it is not sufficient to place Poland into the position of a long-standing core state at a level comparable with the *Framework Nations Concept* (FNC).

Poland can be a model for the Czech Republic and other European countries in the field of defence spending and the relationship between the society and the army, the question is whether these positives adequately reflect the actual competences of the Polish armed forces. The collision course of the Polish foreign policy toward the EU and the main powers such as Germany and France contribute to the weakening of the historical ties and destabilisation of the European environment; this does not make Poland a suitable partner state with a similar potential for the CR in political or military areas.

Germany, thus, remains potentially the most important regional partner for the Czech Republic. The Federal Republic is a country which is a key partner for the Czech economy, but its importance for prospective significant cooperation in the military field has been somewhat overlooked. In the past, the politically unpopular historical reminiscences could have a certain role along with the efforts to cooperate with states whose armed forces had the expedition capabilities that Germany lacked. In the post-intervention era, and with the emphasis on preserving the necessary capacities of territorial defence, both within and outside the FNC, Germany is perhaps the only relevant partner for the Czech Republic.

This fact should be more reflected by the defence policy of the Czech Republic in the future and closer bilateral cooperation with Germany should be prioritised because of more promising and more effective contribution to the defence of the Czech Republic as well as the capabilities of its armed forces.

The projected common European defence capabilities and tools to achieve them may have positive or negative impact on the armed forces of the CR in a number of areas. Provided there is no undesirable doubling of the already established NATO structures, autonomous European troops will be able to react more flexibly to immediate threats in the neighbouring regions with more effective contributions allocated to defence by individual European states, including the Czech Republic.

However, it is also possible that the opposite will happen, possibly even weakening the defence capabilities of individual nation states, in the case of a fundamental shift of the centre of gravity of the defence process of the European structures or absorption of quality human resources by such structures with regard to the limited recruitment potential and expected better financial support for European military personnel.

The current development of the security environment implies the need for increasing the capacity of conventional warfare (along with the necessary increase of resources in terms of economy, personnel, technology), both as a result of the renewed

importance of this type of combat in contemporary conflicts as well as due to the declared ambitions of NATO and, in particular, the EU. The growing ambitions of the EU will naturally lead to a higher pressure on the allocation of resources in some states, the need to balance parallel commitments toward NATO and the EU, and thus more precise planning. Even if the declared ambitions and commitments of the Czech Republic have remained at the same level, pressure will increase on the actual implementation of these commitments, thereby challenging the principle of one set of forces. In this context, it is not possible to exclude the emergence of the tools with which the EU or NATO will enforce similar obligations far more strongly than in the past. The period of allocating the forces and resources in a high level of availability already extends and the existing one set of forces for the EU and NATO will become insufficient in the future.

This trend will also increase the need for complementing and enlarging not only the battle units, but also support forces. Satisfactory implementation of the stated objectives will require significant financial and human resources, thus, an essential condition for their fulfilment is a long-term and stable political support for the implementation of the defence policy and the social willingness to spend and increase resources. A certain form of renationalisation and remilitarisation of defence at the level of the nation states is already a phenomenon that is apparent in many of central and eastern European countries.

The areas of external military activities of the Czech Republic will continue to include the Middle East, or even the North African region (Iraq, Mali). The current situation involving destabilisation of entire state units and their effective disintegration gives no hope for political solution leading to the settlement of the conflicts and tensions in the near future. The area of Iraq is also the destination for military material from the Czech Republic, in the short term representing support for the allied actors, e.g., in fighting against the extremist Islamic State. In the long term, however, this approach may contribute to further destabilisation of the region due to further proliferation of weapons to non-state actors whose ambitions and objectives may not always be in accordance with the interests of the Czech Republic and its allies and partners.

The external security environment also includes such aspects which have a direct impact on the internal security. In connection with the threats and risks brought about by the migration crisis, the debate appears whether the role of the armed forces has or should be changed with regard to ensuring internal security. In a number of countries, particularly those which are situated on the main migration routes, there was or is a debate about the use of the military in managing the consequences of the above threats.¹⁰

Basically, we can identify two areas where there is legislative and practical extension of the scope of the armed forces. These are assistance activities aiding the police in the surveillance of borders (in the case of massive migration flows) and the activities in the area of military intelligence (combating terrorism). There is no fundamental change in the role of the armed forces and the redistribution of competences in ensuring internal security of the state and the main responsibility for the internal

¹⁰ FRANK, Libor, DYČKA, Lukáš, NOVOTNÝ, Antonín, FUČÍK, Jakub, KRAUS, Josef, STOJAR, Richard. Role ozbrojených sil v oblasti vnitřní bezpečnosti. Study. Brno. CBVSS UO 2016. p. 5.

security and order remains on non-military security forces. This still shows that the range of tasks that may be assigned to the army will further expand rather than narrow down and will require a higher degree of versatility of the armed forces. It is reasonable to assume that the armed forces will be more involved in the operations of crisis management, if conditions or political assignment will require so.

In some Western European states, the role of the army in ensuring internal security has been a long-term matter, most demonstrated in the surveillance of public space in the event of increased terrorist threats, often of a long-term nature. In the Czech Republic, similar involvement of the military in surveillance of public buildings in the event of increased terrorist threats or surveillance of the border area has served so far as a political gesture for the population and the display of desirable activity.¹¹

In this respect, adapting the structure of the armed forces for the tasks of internal security is not completely desirable, due to the limited capacities, because the level of threats and risks is still relatively low. Instead, the priority should remain in the strengthening of the above-mentioned capabilities for addressing military threats.

The Czech Republic, based on long-term strategy documents and declarations, foresees an increase in the level of ambition and strengthening capacities to fulfil the allied commitments of collective defence. Currently, there is no alternative for the NATO membership and the Atlantic relationship in the provision of security and defence of the state. The Czech Republic has to be able to fulfil its obligations of a fair sharing of the burden of collective defence and also to strengthen its military capacity in accordance with Article 3 of the Washington Treaty.

The current strategy documents, such as Defence Strategy 2017,¹² sufficiently emphasize the main changes in the security environment, their possible implications for our state, our interests and armed forces. The question still remains how to provide sufficient resources and support decision making in the political sphere and public opinion for fulfilling our commitments and for the practical implementation of the measures necessary to maintain and enhance defence capabilities of the Czech Republic.

¹¹ DYČKA, Lukáš, PROCHÁZKA, Josef. Reakce a adaptace české obranné politiky na aktuální vývoj bezpečnostního prostředí. In: Vybrané trendy vývoje bezpečnostního prostředí a možné implikace pro ozbrojené síly. Brno. University of Defence 2017, p. 15

¹² Obranná strategie České republiky. Praha: MO ČR Praha, 2017.

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