

## **Policy shift overview: How the Czech Republic became one of the European leaders in countering Russian disinformation**

## 1. About this Report

Over the last year, the Czech Republic has undergone a major policy shift on the topic of Russian disinformation. Many questions have been raised on how it has happened and what practically it means. This paper aims to bring a simplified overview of what has happened in this particular field in the Czech context since 2014. This paper does not focus on relations to the Russian Federation per se; it rather narrows the scope to the specific issue of disinformation and (hostile) foreign influence. This overall paper is authored by a non-governmental think-tank and therefore shall not be considered an official position of any government body. In specific parts, it points out specific strategic and policy government documents, which are the official position of the Czech government.

## 2. Brief Context <sup>1</sup>

### I. Post-communist legacy

Due to the communist-era legacy, the Czech public is historically sensitive to direct Russian (or any other foreign) operations on its territory.<sup>2</sup> Attempts in the Russian Federation to rewrite or falsify history about the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 are particularly delicate to Czechs. The documentary *Warsaw Pact: Declassified Pages* presenting the invasion as a protection against NATO aggression that was broadcasted on Russian state channel Russia-1 in 2015 angers Czechs as well as Slovaks. On the other hand, a considerable portion of population shares the pro-Russian sentiment. The Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM) is long-term, despite the past,<sup>3</sup> the third-most popular party in the country<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> This part of the Report consists of adjusted segments of upcoming European Values Think-Tank paper „*How do European democracies react to Russian aggression? Study of shifts in strategic documents of EU28 following Russian aggression against Ukraine*“, <http://www.europeanvalues.net/vyzkum/european-democracies-react-russian-aggression/>

<sup>2</sup> Výroční zpráva Bezpečnostní informační služby za rok 2014, <https://www.bis.cz/vyrocnizprava6c8d.html?ArticleID=1096>

<sup>3</sup> Return of the Czech Communists, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/10/12/return-of-the-czech-communists/>

<sup>4</sup> Stranické preference a volební model v lednu 2017,

[http://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com\\_form2content/documents/c1/a7652/f3/pv170127.pdf](http://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com_form2content/documents/c1/a7652/f3/pv170127.pdf)

## II. Dispute over the US missile shield (2007–2009)

After the Czech government entered negotiations with the US on the deployment of a radar system of US missile defence shield in 2007, Russia threatened to place short-range nuclear missiles on the borders with NATO pointing at the Czech Republic.<sup>5</sup> Russian president Vladimir Putin claimed it would lead to “an inevitable arms race”<sup>6</sup> and threatened to withdraw from the Nuclear Forces Treaty of 1987. The day after the Czech Republic signed the agreement on establishing the radar, Russia curtailed oil supplies via the Druzhba pipeline in the country by 50% which then had to be substituted by delivery through the TAL/IKL pipeline.<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, Russia considered the decision to drop the plans a diplomatic victory. The reaction of the Czech Republic was mixed.<sup>8</sup> In 2009 the Obama administration stepped back from plans on having components of the anti-ballistic system in the Czech Republic.

## III. Until Russian 2014 attack on Ukraine: A pragmatist approach

In 2007, the ECFR Power Audit assessed the Czech position as “*frosty pragmatists*”. The Czech Republic is oriented towards business interests, while it permanently raises concerns about democracy and human rights issues. For example, in 2006, Prague joined up countries supporting potential peace support mission in Moldova that in the end was not even discussed in the EU. It is also active when Russia violates its commercial interests or diplomatic norms.<sup>9</sup>

In 2013 National Perspectives, a pragmatic 'business as usual' approach was also described: Fear of Russia is vastly overshadowed by economic and energy relations.<sup>10</sup> According to the 2012 Czech Export Strategy, it is among twelve priority countries.<sup>11</sup> The Czech Republic is a common tourist destination for Russians as well. Currently, the economic exchange has been declining following the devaluation of ruble, recession of Russian economy, and economic sanctions. Especially the Ministry for Industry and Trade advocates strengthening economic diplomacy in relation to Russia.<sup>12</sup> The dark side is the penetration of Russian capital connected to the grey zone economy in the Czech economy

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<sup>5</sup> Russia threatens to aim missiles at Czech Republic, Poland if US installs defence shield, <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/curraffrs/russia-threatens-to-aim-missiles-at-czech-republic-poland-if-us-installs-defence-shield>

<sup>6</sup> Putin's Prepared Remarks at 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/12/AR2007021200555.html>

<sup>7</sup> Černoch a kol. *The future of the Druzhba pipeline as a strategic challenge for the Czech Republic and Poland*. International Institute of Political Science, Faculty of Social Studies. Muni Press, Brno 2012. ISBN 978-80-210-5926-9

<sup>8</sup> Unwilling to Succeed: The Czech Position on US Missile Defense – Between Strategy and Public Political Debate, <http://www.inss.org.il/uploadImages/systemFiles/INSSMemo155.02.2.Kalhousova.ENG.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> A Power Audit of EU-Russia Relations, [http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR-02\\_A\\_POWER\\_AUDIT\\_OF\\_EU-RUSSIA\\_RELATIONS.pdf](http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR-02_A_POWER_AUDIT_OF_EU-RUSSIA_RELATIONS.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Dangerfield, M., Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, chapter 11, in M. David, J. Gower and H. Haukkala, 'National Perspectives on Russia: European Foreign Policy in the Making?', Routledge 2013.

<sup>11</sup> Czech Export Strategy (2012), <http://www.mpo.cz/dokument103015.html>

<sup>12</sup> Minister Mládek the met with representatives of business community and diplomacy of China, Russia and Azerbaijan at the IE Fair in Brno, <http://www.mpo.cz/en/guidepost/for-the-media/press-releases/minister-mladek-the-met-with-representatives-of-business-community-and-diplomacy-of-china--russia-and-azerbaijan-at-the-ie-fair-in-brno-153777/>

and strengthening the Russian political influence in the Czech Republic, as Czech Security Information Service (BIS) warns.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, Czech foreign policy is active in the Eastern partnership region. European Foreign Policy Scorecards assess it as leader on support for a strong declaration at the Riga Eastern Partnership summit and for ratifying and implementing Association Agreements with Georgia and Moldova (2016), supporting democratic reforms in EaP countries through bilateral assistance, promoting political freedom in Russia (2015), and pushing visa liberalization for Russia, Ukraine and Moldova (2013).<sup>14</sup> Looking on the public perception of the Russian Federation, according to the latest Eurobarometer, 39% of Czechs had a positive view of Russia.

## IV. Energy security

In the area of energy security, the Czech Republic holds a mixed position. In the context of oil supplies curtailment in 2008, the Czech Republic has negotiated more oil via the Western European TAL pipeline in case of problems with the Druzhba pipeline.<sup>15</sup> Gazprom's long-term contract with RWE Transgas does not expire until the end of 2035.<sup>16</sup> The Czech Republic was active in the settlement of the Russia-Ukraine gas transit-fees dispute in 2009. Nevertheless, Russia's reputation as a reliable supplier was damaged. Consequently, during its presidency in the Council of the EU in 2009, the Czech Republic was a vocal supporter of projects reducing the negative impacts of energy dependency on Russia as so called South corridor or the Third Energy Package.<sup>17</sup> Over the past few years, Russian Gazprom has continued in effort to control the transport, storage and trade in the region. It has started to supply Czech customers with gas through the company Vemex owned by Gazprom and together with its Czech partner KKCG increased the capacity of gas storage. Czech energetic sector is also of interest for Russian espionage in the country. The Czech Republic has a slight nuclear energy dependency on Russia. Until 2020, TVEL, a subsidiary of Russian nuclear energy giant Rosatom, is an exclusive supplier of fuel for the Temelin nuclear plant<sup>18</sup>.

### Key Kremlin ally - the Czech President Miloš Zeman

Czech President Miloš Zeman has become the most influential Kremlin ally in Central Europe. In foreign policy, he often stands contrary to the Czech Government, which generally defends the positions of the EU and NATO.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Security Information Service, 2015 Annual Report, <https://www.bis.cz/vyrocní-zprávaEN890a.html?ArticleID=1104>

<sup>14</sup> EUROPEAN FOREIGN POLICY SCORECARD, <http://www.ecfr.eu/scorecard>

<sup>15</sup> Černoch a kol. (2012), pg. 37

<sup>16</sup> Czech Republic, <http://www.gazpromexport.ru/en/partners/czech/>

<sup>17</sup> Výsledky českého předsednictví v Radě EU, [http://www.eu2009.cz/assets/czech-presidency/programme-and-priorities/achievements/cz-pres\\_vysledky\\_cs\\_2.pdf](http://www.eu2009.cz/assets/czech-presidency/programme-and-priorities/achievements/cz-pres_vysledky_cs_2.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Temelín nakoupí jaderné palivo od ruského TVEL, <https://www.cez.cz/cs/pro-media/tiskove-zpravy/360.html>

<sup>19</sup> Czech Dilemmas over Russia and NATO, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2015-04-01/czech-dilemmas-over-russia-and-nato>

In the aftermath of the Crimea annexation, President Zeman denied the presence of Russian troops in Ukraine and endorsed claims that Kiev is ruled by fascists.<sup>20</sup> He repeatedly says the Czech Republic should call for withdrawal of EU sanctions against Russia and claimed that they have been damaging Czech farmers and the Czech industry.<sup>21</sup> Mr. Zeman as well as former president Václav Klaus (who also turned out to be a vocal pro-Kremlin advocate on the international stage) have strong ties to the Russian Lukoil company. Both men maintain friendly relationship with Vladimir Yakunin, a Kremlin proxy operating in Europe in order to spread pro-Kremlin influence.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to pushing the Kremlin messaging on the international stage and openly attacking the Czech Government which conducts pro-Atlantic policy, President **Zeman is used by the Russian domestic propaganda machine**. Inside Russia, he is portrayed as a strong anti-American leader who is a close friend of Vladimir Putin – a position which helps the Kremlin regime justify its foreign policy steps and create a picture that Russia is not internationally isolated. Data show that President Zeman is the second most quoted European leader in the Russian information space, after German Chancellor Angela Merkel, when the size of countries those leaders represent are taken into account<sup>23</sup>.

Moreover, he has played a dominant role in **providing legitimacy for major Czech conspiracy and disinformation outlets by giving them interviews** on regular basis. Also his office openly shares products of conspiracy and disinformation outlets on social media, publicly endorsing them as a relevant information source.

The important factor to understand when studying the Czech position on Russia is the role of Mr. Martin Nejedlý, an informal chief advisor to President Zeman. Martin Nejedlý, a Czech citizen born in 1966, spent most of the 1990s doing business in Russia, working in close relation to Moscow political elite<sup>24</sup>. After coming back to the Czech Republic in the early 2000s and during the time when Miloš Zeman left Czech politics following his tenure as the Czech Prime Minister (1998–2002) and his lost presidential bid (2003), Mr. Nejedlý was doing business together with Miroslav Šlouf, sharing office with him.<sup>25</sup> Mr. Šlouf had served as a long term Chief of Staff to Mr. Zeman. In 2007, Mr. Nejedlý launched Lukoil Aviation Czech, a Czech branch of Lukoil, where he personally owned 40% share<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> Czech President is a Kremlin Trojan Horse, <https://euobserver.com/opinion/133789>

<sup>21</sup> President Zeman Says Czech Republic Should Call for end to Eu Sanctions Against Russia, <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/news/president-zeman-says-czech-republic-should-call-for-end-to-eu-sanctions-against-russia>

<sup>22</sup> Is the Czech Republic Shifting Toward the West? , <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/czech-republic-shifting-toward-west>

<sup>23</sup> European Values Think-Tank Data study on How the Kremlin portrays European Leaders, [www.kremlinwatch.eu/data](http://www.kremlinwatch.eu/data)

<sup>24</sup> Zemanův pan Lukoil o své minulosti, <http://www.blesk.cz/clanek/zpravy-politika/367393/zemanuv-pan-lukoil-o-sve-minulosti-jak-jsem-kseftoval-v-moskve.html>

<sup>25</sup> Kdysi mocný Šlouf přišel o spojení, velký byznys a hlavně zdraví, <https://www.seznam.cz/zpravy/clanek/kdysi-mocny-miroslav-slouf-prisel-o-spojence-velky-byznys-a-hlavne-o-zdravi-3415>

<sup>26</sup> Milionovou pokutu za Nejedlého zaplatil Lukoil, sám nedal ani korunu, [http://zpravy.idnes.cz/prazsky-hrad-lukoil-martin-nejedly-dub-domaci.aspx?c=A161103\\_202521\\_domaci\\_fer](http://zpravy.idnes.cz/prazsky-hrad-lukoil-martin-nejedly-dub-domaci.aspx?c=A161103_202521_domaci_fer)

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## How the Czech Republic became one of the European leaders in countering Russian disinformation

During his retirement period (2003–2012), Russian influence operations focused on Zeman intensively. A friend of Mr. Zeman, former communist-era Colonel and a businessman with military material exported to Russia, Mr. Zdeněk Zbytek, introduced<sup>27</sup> Mr. Zeman to Vladimir Jakunin in the early 2000s, a long-term Kremlin insider and current Kremlin proxy influence operator. At least since 2003, Mr. Zeman started to be invited to „Dialogue of Civilisations Forum“ by Vladimir Jakunin. Mr. Zeman keeps the friendship going, meets Mr. Jakunin regularly (who has been on the US sanctions list since 2014), and he has even attended his Forum several times as the Czech president (after 2014 again in 2016).<sup>28</sup>

In 2009, Mr. Nejedlý was one of the founders of the political party „SPOZ“ („Party of citizens’ rights – friends of Zeman“). This party is a project of Mr. Šlouf, former Chief of Staff to Zeman, who wanted to get Zeman to run for president. Mr. Nejedlý worked as a Vice Chairman for Economic Issues of SPOZ in November 2010, and was later picked in March 2013 as First Vice Chairman of the party.<sup>29</sup> He practically ran the party SPOZ, which became a springboard for presidential campaign of Mr. Zeman in late 2012. Mr. Nejedlý was practically chosen by Mr. Šlouf (long-term Zemans’ Chief of Staff) as his successor and he overtook the position of right-hand aide to Zeman, despite later disagreements with Mr. Šlouf.<sup>30</sup>

During 2012 Zeman’s presidential campaign, Mr. Nejedlý was in charge of the finances of the campaign.<sup>31</sup> Until today, there is still a lot unknown about the financing of the campaign<sup>32</sup>. Mr. Nejedlý practically run and managed the campaign, but was trying to be invisible to the public and media. When Miloš Zeman won the presidential elections in January 2013, Mr. Nejedlý became his “economic advisor”.<sup>33</sup> In March 2014, the Czech daily MF DNES revealed that he occupied three offices at the presidential office, having the most privileged position within the premises.<sup>34</sup> Officially, he was working

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<sup>27</sup> RFERL Documentary, The Czech Kremlin Friends, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=leqwHeEoxc8>

<sup>28</sup> Akce Rhodos: Zemanův pravidelný hostitel je prodlouženou rukou Putina, <http://hlidacipes.org/akce-rhodos-zemanuv-dlouholety-hostitel-jakunin-je-prodlouzenou-rukou-putina/>

<sup>29</sup> Muž v pozadí: Zemanův rádce, místopředseda SPOZ a zástupce ruského Lukoilu Nejedlý, <http://domaci.ihned.cz/c1-60350670-martin-nejedly-jeden-z-nejmocnejsich-lidi-v-cesku>

<sup>30</sup> Kdysi mocný Šlouf přišel o spojence, velký byznys a hlavně zdraví, <https://www.seznam.cz/zpravy/clanek/kdysi-mocny-miroslav-slouf-prisel-o-spojence-velky-byznys-a-hlavne-o-zdravi-3415>

<sup>31</sup> Kdo platí Zemanovu kampaň? Šloufovi kamarádi z byznysu, [http://zpravy.idnes.cz/zeman-a-jeho-vazby-na-sponzory-deq-domaci.aspx?c=A120920\\_212842\\_domaci\\_brd](http://zpravy.idnes.cz/zeman-a-jeho-vazby-na-sponzory-deq-domaci.aspx?c=A120920_212842_domaci_brd)

<sup>32</sup> Žebříček kampaní: Zeman své peníze stále nevysvětlil, <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/zebricek-kampani-zeman-sve-penize-stale-nevysvetlil-r-i:article:767939/>

<sup>33</sup> Nejvlivnější prezidentův muž Nejedlý: Když jde o Zemana, peníze nepočítám, <http://www.blesk.cz/clanek/zpravy-politika/367433/nejvlivnejsi-prezidentuv-muz-nejedly-kdyz-jde-o-zemana-penize-nepocitam.html>

<sup>34</sup> Zemanovi věrní se už stihli rozhádat, [http://zpravy.idnes.cz/mf-dnes-zemanovi-vernii-se-uz-stihli-rozhadat-fm8-domaci.aspx?c=A140318\\_200240\\_domaci\\_vez](http://zpravy.idnes.cz/mf-dnes-zemanovi-vernii-se-uz-stihli-rozhadat-fm8-domaci.aspx?c=A140318_200240_domaci_vez)

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as an “external advisor”, without any pay, even without any official working contract<sup>35</sup> and therefore any security clearance<sup>36</sup>.

In 2015, Nejedlý changed his modus operandi – he stopped hiding and started appearing publicly next to President Zeman at his public speeches. Nejedlý took Zeman to Rhodos<sup>37</sup>, and he even met Putin when Zeman visited Moscow in May 2015 (Mr. Nejedlý even participated at an official meeting instead of the Czech Ambassador to Moscow, a rare move).<sup>38</sup> The interpretation is that he needed to show to the Kremlin that he is still in charge. Media investigation revealed that Mr. Nejedlý practically isolated the President, controlling information and access Mr. Zeman was getting<sup>39</sup>.

As Mr. Nejedlý was doing business via Lukoil Aviation Czech, a company which he was leading and co-owning, he got into trouble. He owed 32,6 million CZK (approx. 1,2 million EUR) to the Czech state, losing a court decision on that. His position next to the President came under threat in 2016<sup>40</sup>. In October 2016, Moscow headquarters of Lukoil, paid off his debt (even though Mr. Nejedlý was 40% owner of the collapsing company, he personally did not pay the debt)<sup>41</sup>.

Our interpretation is that the **Kremlin used its money to keep its confidant right next to the Czech President**, prior to the 2018 presidential elections where Mr. Zeman is expected to run for his second and last term. If he wins, the Kremlin gets its key ally in Central Europe to be in power until 2023. Therefore, this financial help which Mr. Nejedlý got from Moscow is geopolitically very cheap.

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<sup>35</sup> Zemanův klíčový poradce na Hradě působí na základě ústní dohody, <http://hlidacipes.org/zemanuv-klicovy-poradce-martin-nejedly-na-hrade-pusobi-jen-na-zaklade-ustni-dohody/>

<sup>36</sup> For context: Chief of Staff to President Zeman, Mr. Vratislav Mynar, applied for “top secret” security clearance and his application was denied by the National Security Authority, while Zeman’s chief of military office General Pilc has lost the top secret clearance, due to alleged contacts with Russian connections.

<sup>37</sup> Martin Nejedlý: Jak podniká člověk, který radí Zemanovi a obchoduje s ruským kerosinem, WWW:

<http://hlidacipes.org/martin-nejedly-jak-podnika-clovek-ktery-radi-zemanovi-a-obchoduje-s-ruskym-kerosinem/>

<sup>38</sup> Putin na setkání se Zemanem ocenil jeho nezávislou politiku, [http://zpravy.idnes.cz/zeman-jednani-s-putinem-0vs-zahranicni.aspx?c=A150509\\_183449\\_zahranicni\\_bse](http://zpravy.idnes.cz/zeman-jednani-s-putinem-0vs-zahranicni.aspx?c=A150509_183449_zahranicni_bse)

<sup>39</sup> Zprivatizovaný prezident: Zmapovali jsme, jak funguje Zemanův dvůr na Hradě a kdo umí vrtět hlavou státu, <http://ekonom.ihted.cz/c1-65351860-zprivatizovany-prezident-ekonom-zmapoval-jak-funguje-zemanuv-dvur-na-hrade-a-kdo-umi-vrtet-hlavou-statu>

<sup>40</sup> Prezidentův poradce Martin Nejedlý na Hradě zůstává. A pokutu 27, 5 milionů prý zaplatí, <http://hlidacipes.org/prezidentuv-poradce-martin-nejedly-jde-k-zemanovi-na-koberecek-kvuli-dnesnimu-prohre-u-soudu/>

<sup>41</sup> iMilionovou pokutu za Nejedlého zaplatil Lukoil, sám nedal ani korunu, [http://zpravy.idnes.cz/prazsky-hrad-lukoil-martin-nejedly-dub-domaci.aspx?c=A161103\\_202521\\_domaci\\_fer](http://zpravy.idnes.cz/prazsky-hrad-lukoil-martin-nejedly-dub-domaci.aspx?c=A161103_202521_domaci_fer)

## 3. Chronological Developments

### 2014

#### Czech position on sanctions

After the Russian attack on Ukraine in early 2014, the Czech government has agreed to support the EU sanctions against Russia. Several dissent voices have been heard publicly – Finance Minister Andrej Babiš and Trade Minister Jan Mládek argued that sanctions hurt the Czech economy, but nevertheless the Czech government has always voted for support of the sanctions. However, the government, which constitutionally runs the country and its foreign policy, came under attack of the President, Miloš Zeman, who was elected by a direct vote in early 2013. President Zeman has been vocally against the sanctions ever since they were imposed in 2014, making this one of his key international topics and talking points he uses on regular basis<sup>42</sup>.

### 2015

#### Czech government supports sanctions

According to Czech Foreign Minister Lubomír Zaorálek, Russian aggression and illegal annexation of Crimea is threatening Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and stability. The Czech Republic supports reforms and visa free regime for Ukraine<sup>43</sup>, and the anti-Russian sanctions are considered effective.<sup>44</sup>

#### Policy shift in the strategic documents

Following Russian aggression against Ukraine and subsequent deterioration of the security environment, the Czech government decided to update the key strategic documents:

- In the 2015 **Concept of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy**, the Czech government argues that „*Russia currently severely destabilizes the European security architecture*” and that “*Czech policy towards Russia will depend on the Russian Federation's respect for international law and for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of its neighbours*”.<sup>45</sup>
- In the 2015 **Security Strategy** of the Czech Republic, Russia is not directly mentioned by name, but it is clear that most developments are linked to its actions. It is argued that “*declining*

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<sup>42</sup> Agenda for Czech Foreign Policy 2016, <http://www.amo.cz/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/AMO-Agenda-for-Czech-Foreign-Policy-2016.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> Ministr Zaorálek: Ukrajina má naši podporu, [http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/udalosti\\_a\\_media/tiskove\\_zpravy/x2017\\_02\\_06\\_ministr\\_zaoralek\\_na\\_fac.html](http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/udalosti_a_media/tiskove_zpravy/x2017_02_06_ministr_zaoralek_na_fac.html)

<sup>44</sup> Ministr Zaorálek pro Týden: Válku s Ruskem, nechceme [http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o\\_ministerstvu/archivy/clanky\\_a\\_projevy\\_ministru/clanky\\_a\\_projevy\\_ministra\\_zaoralka\\_2015/valku\\_s\\_ruskem\\_nehceme.html](http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/archivy/clanky_a_projevy_ministru/clanky_a_projevy_ministra_zaoralka_2015/valku_s_ruskem_nehceme.html)

<sup>45</sup> Concept of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy, [http://www.mzv.cz/file/1574645/Concept\\_of\\_the\\_Czech\\_Republic\\_s\\_Foreign\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.mzv.cz/file/1574645/Concept_of_the_Czech_Republic_s_Foreign_Policy.pdf)

*security and stability in Europe's flank regions and immediate neighbourhood could pose direct threat to NATO or the EU". Hybrid warfare is also mentioned, plus "Attempts of some states to carve out spheres of influence or to achieve a revision of existing international order through a military as well as non-military tools (including disinformation intelligence operations, unmarked military personnel, etc.) may be considered a threat."*<sup>46</sup>

### **Russian intelligence activities against the Czech Republic**

Russian spies are thought to be the most active foreign agents operating in the Czech Republic. According to the Czech counter-intelligence agency (BIS), most of them operate under a diplomatic cover of the overstuffed Russian embassy in Prague numbering almost 140 employees<sup>47</sup>. Some estimates claim that two thirds of them could be spies.<sup>48</sup> In its annual report (2015), BIS warned against their activities comprising operations in the context of information war, political, scientific-technical and economic espionage. Russian secret services are also trying to cooperate with the Russian community in the Czech Republic (2014).<sup>49</sup> The Russian Federation is mentioned alongside with China as the biggest threat in a state-run or supported cyber espionage.<sup>50</sup> In the past, some spies had to be expelled from the country, but Czech diplomacy has not intended to escalate the conflict publicly because of the possible reciprocal action from Moscow.<sup>51</sup>

Czech counter-intelligence agency has changed its usual practise of being very general in its public annual reports and described the Russian activities such as:

*„In 2015, Russian information operations in the Czech Republic focused especially on:*

- *weakening the strength of Czech media (covert infiltration of Czech media and the Internet, massive production of Russian propaganda and disinformation controlled by the state);*
- *strengthening the information resistance of the Russian audience (prefabricated disinformation from Czech sources for the Russian audience);*
- *exerting influence on the perceptions and thoughts of the Czech audience, weakening society's will for resistance or confrontation (information and disinformation overload of the audience, relativisation of truth and objectivity, promoting the motto "everyone is lying");*
- *creating or promoting inter-societal and inter-political tensions in the Czech Republic (foundation of puppet organizations, covert and open support of populist or extremist subjects);*

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<sup>46</sup> Security Strategy of the Czech Republic, [http://www.army.cz/images/id\\_8001\\_9000/8503/Security\\_Strategy\\_2015.pdf](http://www.army.cz/images/id_8001_9000/8503/Security_Strategy_2015.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> Number can vary by several employees.

<sup>48</sup> Ondřej Kundra: V Česku jsou stovky ruských špiónů, <https://www.respekt.cz/video/ondrej-kundra-v-cesku-jsou-stovky-ruskych-spionu>

<sup>49</sup> Výroční zpráva Bezpečnostní informační služby za rok 2014, <https://www.bis.cz/vyrocnizprava6c8d.html?ArticleID=1096>

<sup>50</sup> Výroční zpráva Bezpečnostní informační služby za rok 2015, <https://www.bis.cz/vyrocnizprava890a.html?ArticleID=1104>

<sup>51</sup> LN: Expelling of Russian spies is hard for Czechs, <http://praguemonitor.com/2016/09/06/ln-expelling-russian-spies-hard-czechs>

- *disrupting the coherence and readiness of NATO and the EU (attempts to disrupt Czech-Polish relations, disinformation and alarming rumours defaming the US and NATO, disinformation creating a virtual threat of a war with Russia);*
- *damaging the reputation of Ukraine and isolating the country internationally (involving Czech citizens and organizations in influence operations covertly led in Ukraine or against it by Russia).*

*The above-mentioned activities pose a threat to the Czech Republic, EU and NATO not only in relation to the Ukrainian and Syrian conflicts. The infrastructure created for achieving these goals will not disappear with the end of the two conflicts. It can be used to destabilize or manipulate Czech society or political environment at any time, if Russia wishes to do so.*<sup>52</sup>

### **EEAS East STRATCOM Task-Force**

In March 2015, the Czech Government joined all EU28 countries to call for a European response to “on-going Russian disinformation campaigns” at the European Council Conclusions<sup>53</sup>. Following the establishment of the EEAS East STRATCOM Team in September 2015, a Czech seconded national expert joined the team. The Czech expert is in charge of the main activity of exposing disinformation, the weekly product called Disinformation Review.

### **Czech think-tanks respond**

In 2015, two leading Czech think-tanks launched specialist programs on Russian influence and disinformation. The European Values Think-Tank launched its Kremlin Watch Program<sup>54</sup> and The Prague Security Studies Institute started its Initiative on Russian influence<sup>55</sup>. Since late 2015, a joint bi-weekly Infowar Monitor has been being published by three major Central European think-tanks: GLOBSEC Policy Institute, Political Capital Institute and European Values Think-Tank<sup>56</sup>.

## **2016**

### **National Security Audit**

In early 2016, the Czech government launched “National Security Audit”<sup>57</sup> which was supposed to assess readiness of the Czech security infrastructure against top ten threats to the internal security. Two specific chapters were relevant to this issue: *Influence of Foreign Powers* (a chapter run by the

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<sup>52</sup> Výroční zpráva Bezpečnostní informační služby za rok 2015, <https://www.bis.cz/vyrocnii-zprava890a.html?ArticleID=1104>

<sup>53</sup> European Council Conclusions, March 2015, [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2015/03/european-council-conclusions-march-2015-en\\_pdf/](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2015/03/european-council-conclusions-march-2015-en_pdf/)

<sup>54</sup> Kremlin Watch Program, [www.kremlinwatch.eu](http://www.kremlinwatch.eu)

<sup>55</sup> Prague Security Studies Institute: <http://www.pssi.cz/russia-s-influence-activities-in-cee>

<sup>56</sup> Information war monitor for Central Europe: January 2017 Part 2, <http://www.cepolicy.org/publications/information-war-monitor-central-europe-january-2017-part-2>

<sup>57</sup> Audit národní bezpečnosti zahájen, <http://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/ridici-vybor-audit-u-narodni-bezpecnosti-zahajil-svou-cinnost.aspx>

Interior Ministry) and *Hybrid Threats* (a chapter run by the Defence Ministry). More than 120 security and intelligence experts worked on this unique assessment exercise in order to find weak spots, which would be vulnerable to future projections of the threats.

During the first phase of the Audit, which went on throughout the whole year 2016, the author of this paper Jakub Janda was an official consultant on the “Influence of Foreign Powers” chapter. Supportive documents on this chapter were published<sup>58</sup> as non-official background of a sole view of the author.

In April 2016, The Czech Minister of Interior Milan Chovanec announced a future launch of “Centre against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats”, which subsequently became operational in January 2017<sup>59</sup>. The Report of the National Security Audit was approved by the Czech government in December 2016<sup>60</sup>. Below as appendix, you will find declassified excerpts from the chapter.

### **Key Ministers acknowledge the threat**

- *“I have no doubt that Russia finds ways to fund [nationalist and Eurosceptic far-right political parties],”* Foreign Minister Lubomír Zaorálek argued<sup>61</sup>.
- *“The National Security Audit has already exposed that the [Czech] state needs to have a centre on monitoring terrorist and hybrid threats, and foreign-power propaganda,”* said Interior Minister Milan Chovanec<sup>62</sup>.
- *“The Russian side invests huge financial resources [into propaganda],”* Defence Minister Martin Stropnický acknowledges<sup>63</sup>.

### **NATO STRATCOM COE**

In fall 2016, the Czech Defence Ministry sent its expert to NATO Centre of Excellence on Strategic Communications in Riga, Latvia. The Czech Republic has not yet become a contributing nation of the Centre, it only sent its expert there to study and contribute.

### **STRATCOM SUMMIT conference**

In October 2016, the Czech Interior Ministry and the European Values Think-Tank hold a first STRATCOM SUMMIT conference, bringing together 150 specialists from 15 nations on this particular

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<sup>58</sup> Recommendation for the Future Strategy, [http://www.europeanvalues.net/vyzkum/rec\\_disinfo/](http://www.europeanvalues.net/vyzkum/rec_disinfo/)

<sup>59</sup> Centre Against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats, <http://www.mvcr.cz/cthh/clanek/centre-against-terrorism-and-hybrid-threats.aspx>

<sup>60</sup> Audit národní bezpečnosti, <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/aktualne/audit-narodni-bezpecnosti-151410/>

<sup>61</sup> Czech Republic accuses Putin of backing EU's rightwing, <https://www.ft.com/content/3d6b68aa-2d57-11e6-bf8d-26294ad519fc>

<sup>62</sup> Chovanec: Na vnitru od nového roku otevřeme centrum boje proti terorismu, <http://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/chovanec-chceme-na-vnitru-vytvorit-centrum-boje-proti-terori/r~b878f28e184311e69966002590604f2e/>

<sup>63</sup> Dvacet minut Radiožurnálu s Martinem Stropnickým, <http://www.rozhlas.cz/radiozurnal/dvacetminut/>

issue<sup>64</sup>. A similar event focusing on restricted sessions for government experts is planned for May 2017.

### **Countering disinformation is slowly becoming part of Czech foreign policy**

The Czech foreign policy has a strong legacy of support for human rights. One of the basic human rights is freedom of speech, which is seriously threatened by disinformation campaigns. Therefore, Czech diplomacy has supported StopFake.org or Memo98 projects on monitoring propaganda in the Eastern neighbourhood.

### **Czech Republic hosts “Russian Language News Exchange”**

Outside of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty which is stationed in the Czech capital since 1995, Prague has become a hosting city for Russian Language News Exchange, a program dominantly financed by the Dutch Foreign Ministry<sup>65</sup>.

### **The Czech Republic is considered one of European leaders on this issue**

Following the 2016 policy shift, major international attention was paid to the Czech activities. Prague was visited by many allied specialist delegations, who came to look at what the Czech entities are doing about this particular threat. The Czech Republic is now considered to be one of the European leaders on this issue:

*“The Czech Republic is taking a leading role in Europe’s response to disinformation, thanks to European Values Think-Tank – one of the top European think-tanks on this issue.”*

Giles Portman, Head of EEAS East STRATCOM Team<sup>66</sup>

### **Non-governmental activities**

It is not only the government who reacts to this threat. *“The Czech Republic has a well-established and active civic society,”* argues the Vulnerability Index Report<sup>67</sup>:

- The Kremlin Watch Program at the European Values Think-Tank produces weekly reports on disinformation trends and narratives spread in the Czech Republic, producing a bi-weekly Kremlin Watch Monitor in English on policy and research developments; it regularly reaches 4000 European policy experts<sup>68</sup>. Its experts have consulted on policy issues in 15 mainly NATO

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<sup>64</sup> STRATCOM SUMMIT 2016, [www.europeanvalues.net/kremlinwatch/stratcom-summit-2016/](http://www.europeanvalues.net/kremlinwatch/stratcom-summit-2016/)

<sup>65</sup> Freedom Press Unlimited, [www.freepressunlimited.org/en/projects/russian-language-news-exchange-supports-independent-media](http://www.freepressunlimited.org/en/projects/russian-language-news-exchange-supports-independent-media)

<sup>66</sup> STRATCOM SUMMIT 2016, <http://www.europeanvalues.net/kremlinwatch/stratcom-summit-2016/>

<sup>67</sup> The Vulnerability Index: Subversive Russian Influence in Central Europe, <http://www.cepolicy.org/publications/vulnerability-index-subversive-russian-influence-central-europe-0>

<sup>68</sup> Kremlin Watch Monitor I April 5, 2017, <http://preview.mailerlite.com/d9d8x7/598277233055893044/y3g5/>

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## How the Czech Republic became one of the European leaders in countering Russian disinformation

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countries since 2016. A satirical “Putin’s Champion Award” is also published on a bi-weekly basis<sup>69</sup>.

- Association for International Affairs (AMO) launched a Czech version of the Ukrainian web site StopFake.org in October 2016 that aims to verify or disprove disinformation about the situation in Ukraine.
- The Prague Security Studies Institute started its Initiative on Russian influence<sup>70</sup>, also focusing on economic relations.
- The organization People in Need produced an instructive material for teachers on Russian disinformation, which is widely distributed at Czech secondary schools.<sup>71</sup>
- Czech weekly Respekt has published a complex special issue on disinformation<sup>72</sup>.
- The Open Society Fund Prague has stepped forward to offer seed grants and a coordinating role in activities focusing on the influence of hostile foreign actors in the Czech and Slovak Republics.
- The Department of Political Science at the Faculty of Social Studies at Masaryk University in Brno analyses manipulation techniques and emotions used by the pro-Kremlin disinformation media and provides training in media literacy. The Masaryk University also launched a project of its students in order to raise awareness of the importance of media literacy among young people in the Czech Republic.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Putin’s Champion Award, [www.europeanvalues.net/putins-champion-of-the-week-en/](http://www.europeanvalues.net/putins-champion-of-the-week-en/)

<sup>70</sup> RUSSIA’S INFLUENCE ACTIVITIES IN CEE, <http://www.pssi.cz/russia-s-influence-activities-in-cee>

<sup>71</sup> The One World in Schools project run by the NGO People In Need attempts to help teachers with their effort to prepare their students for the challenges such as the Kremlin disinformation campaign. More information about the project available at:

[https://www.jsns.cz/cz/article/111/What\\_is\\_jsns.html?id=243](https://www.jsns.cz/cz/article/111/What_is_jsns.html?id=243)

<sup>72</sup> Dezinformace, <https://www.respekt.cz/special/2017/dezinformace>

<sup>73</sup> More information about the students’ project available in Czech at: <http://zvolsi.info/>

## 2017

### **Centre Against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats**

On 1 January 2017, the Centre became operational. Below, basic information on the new unit at the Czech Interior Ministry is explored<sup>74</sup>:

#### **Why was it set up?**

It was one of the recommendations that stemmed from the preliminary conclusions of the National Security Audit, which identified various types of hybrid threats, including terrorism, radicalisation and foreign disinformation campaigns, as serious internal security threats, and recommended that such units be set up within all relevant government bodies. The Centre itself was set up following a declaration of the Minister of the Interior in May 2016, after the conclusion of the first phase of the National Security Audit. The need to tackle new asymmetric, or hybrid, threats is also confirmed in the government-approved National Security Strategy of the Czech Republic.

#### **Why is it at the Ministry of the Interior?**

This is because questions pertaining to internal security, regardless of the methods and the context in which they occur, legally fall within the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior. Therefore, in legal terms, there is no difference between classical nation-wide threats (such as political terrorism) and threats that fall within the context of current hybrid campaigns (such as soft target terrorist attacks coupled with Islamist propaganda spread via social media).

#### **Will this be a new institution?**

No. The unit will be formed within an existing department using the current budget of the Ministry of the Interior.

#### **What will the Centre do?**

It will essentially be a specialised analytical and communication unit. Given the competencies of the Ministry of the Interior, the Centre will monitor threats directly related to internal security, which implies a broad array of threats and potential incidents related to terrorism, soft target attacks, security aspects of migration, extremism, public gatherings, violation of public order and different crimes, but also disinformation campaigns related to internal security. Based on its monitoring work, the Centre will evaluate detected challenges and come up with proposals for substantive and legislative solutions which it will then also implement where possible. It will also disseminate information and spread awareness about the given issues among the general and professional public.

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<sup>74</sup> Centre Against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats, <http://www.mvcr.cz/cthh/clanek/centre-against-terrorism-and-hybrid-threats.aspx>

## What is the Centre not and what will it not do?

The Centre will not be a new law enforcement agency, nor an intelligence service. It will work primarily with open sources available to all and will openly communicate with civil society, the media, and other subjects. The Centre will also inform about serious cases of disinformation and will provide expert opinions for the public and for government institutions. These opinions, as those of a government institution, will be based on the constitutional order of the Czech Republic.

## National Security Audit's Action Plan

In the first half of 2017, a non-public phase of the National Security Audit continues by adoption of a Action plan to implement the recommendations of the Audit. The policy recommendations are being planned out and it is expected that most of them will be implemented from mid 2017 on.

## Protection of the elections

Following hostile foreign meddling in various Western elections, the Czech Interior Ministry has launched a special task force on protection of the elections in early 2017<sup>75</sup>. The group works in a classified regime and it reviews any vulnerabilities the Czech electoral process might have. The country awaits parliamentary elections in October 2017 and presidential elections in January 2018, it is widely expected that Russia might meddle in the presidential elections, where it clearly aims to support the incumbent President Miloš Zeman. The other candidates are seriously preparing for various steps the hostile power can take against them<sup>76</sup>.

## The Czech Republic's Defence Strategy

In April 2017, the Czech government approved a new Defence Strategy. It also states that: *"Russia is openly trying to bring its power ambitions into reality in Eastern Europe, including through the use of its military force. In that it does not hesitate to violate the international law, which includes violating neighbours' territorial integrity. Russia uses several tools of a hybrid campaign directed at NATO member states and the EU, including targeted disinformation activities and cyber offensives."*<sup>77</sup>

## Open Call to Federica Mogherini

In March 2017, the European Values Think-Tank has launched an Open Call of 150+ European security experts to Federica Mogherini, calling on her to start taking Russian disinformation seriously<sup>78</sup>. The move was featured in 10+ national newspapers, including CNN<sup>79</sup> or Politico<sup>80</sup>. The European

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<sup>75</sup> Na MV se poprvé sešla skupina na ochranu voleb, <http://www.mvcr.cz/cthh/clanek/na-mv-se-poprve-sesla-skupina-na-ochranu-voleb.aspx>

<sup>76</sup> Volby českého prezidenta ve stínu hackerů. Týmy kandidátů pořízují šifrované mobily a kódované maily, <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/sifrujeme-kandidati-na-prezidenta-a-jejich-tymy-se-obavaji-h/r~a8827aa010a711e7afda0025900fea04/>

<sup>77</sup> Obranná strategie České republiky, [http://www.mocr.army.cz/images/id\\_40001\\_50000/46088/OS.pdf](http://www.mocr.army.cz/images/id_40001_50000/46088/OS.pdf)

<sup>78</sup> Open Letter of European security experts to Federica Mogherini:

Please start taking the Russian disinformation threat seriously!, [www.europeanvalues.net/mogherini](http://www.europeanvalues.net/mogherini)

<sup>79</sup> Mogherini: We've entered different phase with US, <http://edition.cnn.com/videos/world/2017/03/20/intv-amanpour-federica-mogherini-trump.cnn/video/playlists/amanpour/>

largest political family – EPP – has later adopted a similar declaration<sup>81</sup>. Eleven EU ambassadors have asked the EEAS on this issue and negotiations behind closed doors go on.

### **Central European Vulnerability Index**

In April 2016, a group of Visegrad think-tanks launched *The Vulnerability Index: Subversive Russian Influence in Central Europe*. Comparatively to other Central European countries, the research shows that:

- *The Czech Republic ranked third among the Visegrad group with an overall vulnerability index of 38 out of 100.*
- *Czech society, despite being quite euro-sceptic, simultaneously rejects a direct pro- Kremlin orientation.*
- *One notable exception is the Czech President Miloš Zeman, who is regarded by many as the most important and visible pro-Russian political actor in the region.*
- *At the same time, the current Czech government is leading the way in addressing subversive foreign efforts by setting up a dedicated anti-hybrid threats task force at the Ministry of Interior and is in close cooperation with a very active civil society.<sup>82</sup>*

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<sup>80</sup> Federica Mogherini 'soft' on disinformation, critics say, [www.politico.eu/article/vladimir-putin-opponents-pile-onto-federica-mogherini-eaststratcom-sandra-kalnieta-jakub-janda-estonia-atlantic-council-ben-nimmo-fake-news-russia-putin-europe-foreign-policy/](http://www.politico.eu/article/vladimir-putin-opponents-pile-onto-federica-mogherini-eaststratcom-sandra-kalnieta-jakub-janda-estonia-atlantic-council-ben-nimmo-fake-news-russia-putin-europe-foreign-policy/)

<sup>81</sup> DRAFT Resolution Nr.6 tabled by the EPP Presidency to the 2 EPP Congress, St. Julian's (Malta), 29 – 30 March 2017, <http://malta2017.epp.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/6-Draft-Resolution-Russia.pdf>

<sup>82</sup> The Vulnerability Index: Subversive Russian Influence in Central Europe, <http://www.cepolicy.org/publications/vulnerability-index-subversive-russian-influence-central-europe-0>

## Appendix 1

The following part is an abstract of the declassified chapter on “Influence of Foreign Powers”<sup>83</sup>

### National Security Audit, Influence of Foreign Powers – excerpts from the chapter

#### A. Description and Assessment of the Threat and Associated Risks for the CR

##### 1. Introduction

“In accordance with current knowledge arising from information provided by intelligence services as well as other sources, such manifestations would be those exercised by the Russian Federation, the People’s Republic of China, and some other non-state actors such as the so-called Islamic State.”

“A traditional and continuously monitored attempt at influence of a foreign power is observed in the economic field, whether it is gathering information on economic activities of entities outside the state structure or influencing strategic economic decisions at the level of state leadership, as well as all other forms of espionage (in the sense of the gathering of sensitive information by foreign intelligence services) that are not economically motivated. An old-new manifestation of the influence of foreign powers is the dissemination of propaganda and disinformation as a means of information warfare, via which foreign powers attempt to influence the state in the area of managing and using ICT channels or technologies to influence public opinion. Alongside the risks of the influence of foreign powers in the economic field, where an insufficient response to the activities of a foreign power may lead to consequences of varying severity – from economically disadvantageous situations and the weakening of the economic position of the state, to the creation of an excessive reliance on a specific investor, i.e. the foreign power, to the loss of economic independence of the state for reasons of insufficient diversification of resources, investment structures, or energy independence – exacerbated political propaganda is again gaining ground, which mainly tests the resilience of the public against manipulation, but also significantly influences the opinions and actions of responsible persons at all levels of the state decision-making process. Current propaganda of foreign powers focuses primarily on **disinformation campaigns** and its methods do not include the promotion of a specific world-view, an ideology, or a way of life, but rather the relativisation and fractioning of information, disrupting the structure of internal social trust. For this reason, the term propaganda is perceived as outdated, and the term disinformation campaign is used instead to designate this specific manifestation of the influence of foreign powers. Such a campaign, as a manifestation of information warfare, falls within

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<sup>83</sup> Audit národní bezpečnosti, <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/aktualne/audit-narodni-bezpecnosti-151410/>

hybrid threats, which are further discussed in the overarching chapter, and thus constitutes one of the most serious threats especially with regards to informational openness of democratic societies and the very limited possibilities of a state founded on the principle of the rule of law to respond to such a situation.”

The topic of disinformation campaigns is closely related to media law, namely the field of regulation of media ownership structures in the state and the possibility of reviewing the lawfulness of media content. A separate chapter is dedicated to the topic of new media (news on the internet, social media etc.).

## **2. Classification of risks, threats, and their consequences**

Factors posing a risk for the CR in the area of influence of foreign powers are classified either as risks coming from the outside (external factors) or as internal weaknesses (internal factors).

External factors include:

- Targeted efforts of foreign powers to influence public opinion in the CR (especially undermining confidence in an independent democratic state ruled by law) contrary to Czech interests

This effort is carried out by all available means, especially targeted work with information, support of traditional animosities within society, stirring up critical sentiments towards the establishment and integration structures, or the use of negative attitudes of a part of the public towards supranational entities of which the CR is a member, and allies. These methods are used to invoke the idea within society that the state is badly governed, that its focus on Euro-Atlantic integration structures is detrimental, etc.

- Targeted efforts of foreign powers to influence public administration and political representatives

As per the annual reports of the BIS, both Russian and Chinese intelligence services are building networks of access and influence among representatives of parliamentary political parties, Government officials, and lobbyists.

- Targeted efforts of foreign powers to influence the behaviour of the state via economic instruments

Strengthening the presence of foreign powers by gradually gaining influence in certain economic sectors.

- Targeted efforts of foreign powers to acquire lawfully classified or otherwise publicly inaccessible information whose acquisition may lead to endangering or damaging state interests

External factors also include the following, whose nature is often mixed:

- **Foreign communities** forming the backdrop for activities of foreign powers.

In the CR, the activities of several groups based on membership in a minority, whose official business is conducted as commercial, cultural, scientific, or religious, but which often act as organisers of events in support of opinions that would not stand in a democratic debate, or of visits of cultural and political representatives of non-democratic regimes, are observed; there is also suspicion that these groups may finance or facilitate financing of activities that are contrary to Czech interests.

- **Concentration of media ownership within foreign subjects and among a limited number of people.**
- The existence of a relatively large number of media and quasi-media projects in Czechia or in Slovak with a proxy agenda, influencing Czech society.
- **Internal factors** in the area of influence of foreign powers are identified as:
  - Weak resilience of the public against manipulation and attempts at reducing confidence in the democratic rule of law – inadequate or absent civic and media literacy.
  - Weak resilience of public administration and political representatives against manipulation and obtention of information, including cybernetic resilience.
  - Activities of political entities and political representatives openly promoting interests contrary to those of the CR.
  - Activities of former high political representatives defending interests contrary to those of the CR.
  - Activities of economic entities defending interests contrary to those of the CR.
  - The absence of systemic tools of the state enabling it to protect itself against disinformation campaigns.
- Insufficient ability to motivate foreign communities in favour of Czech interests.

Consequently, **these threats** can be classified into three categories in an environment where the described factors operate in varying degrees of interconnectedness and in varying intensity. Their consequences, of which some have already been recorded in the CR, can also be specified.

## **I. Influencing Public Opinion**

Threat relevance assessment for the CR: **High**

- Targeted undermining of confidence in an independent democratic state ruled by law and building sympathies to the interests of foreign powers.
- Disseminating disinformation via media and quasi-media platforms, including social networks, “independent” NGOs, and public figures, including political representatives who are under the influence of or promote interests contrary to those of the CR.
- Using media with concentrated ownership to enforce power interests.

- Encouraging hostile attitudes towards the CR within foreign communities and their engagement in activities contrary to Czech interests.

### **Consequence – Radicalisation of the Public**

- The rise of extremist and anti-system attitudes (threatening Czech interests) within society and among political representatives.
- An increase in support for extremist and anti-system parties and movements, their higher representation in Parliament and representative bodies of local governments.
- A decline in support for the CR's constitutional establishment and its integration in Euro-Atlantic structures, increased support for their revision.
- A decrease of public trust in the ability of the state to ensure vital national interests (SS 2015) (political independence of the CR, maintaining all the prerequisites of democratic rule of law, including the protection of basic human rights and freedoms of citizens) and strategic national interests (ensuring internal security and protection of citizens).
- The radicalisation of minorities contrary to Czech interests.
- Disruption of public order and security as a result of incidents during public gatherings, arming and civil unrest.

## **II. Influencing Decision-Making at all Levels of Public Administration Contrary to the Interests of the CR**

Threat relevance assessment for the CR: **High**

- Influencing public administration officials.
- Influencing political and constitutional representatives, both incumbent and former high representatives of the state via informal channels. Political representatives of the opposition are not overlooked, as they are seen as having future potential.

### **Consequence – Adoption of Decisions Harming Czech Interests**

- A weakening of the credibility and the negotiating position of CR in relation to allies and partners.
- Damage to strategic national interests (SS 2015): enhancing coherence and effectiveness of NATO and the EU and maintaining functional and reliable transatlantic ties.
- Potential threats to vital national interests (SS 2015): political independence of the CR.

## **I. Obtention of Lawfully Classified or Otherwise Publicly Inaccessible Information whose Acquisition May Lead to Endangering or Damaging National Interests**

Threat relevance assessment for the CR: **Medium**

**Consequence – Information Leaks** that May Endanger the Security, Political, and Economic Interests of the CR

The following criteria were chosen to evaluate threats, i.e. assess their severity:

- The severity of threats in relation to the seriousness of the interest of the target of the threat (classification of interests pursuant to the SS 2015 – vital, strategic, otherwise important)
- The speed and intensity of the onset of the consequences of the threat (measurable in some categories based on public opinion polls, phenomena described in the CR based on documented experience from abroad et al.)

## SWOT Analysis

### Strengths

- A stable democratic constitutional and political establishment; a functioning state, economic stability; low unemployment and the resultant relative satisfaction of the public with the quality of life.
- The CR's membership in European and Euro-Atlantic integration structures.
- Long-term monitoring of the situation in the area of influence of foreign powers by the intelligence services.
- Satisfactory international cooperation and exchange of information within the security community.
- Robust public media, institutionally independent of the state power.
- Developed activities of the non-profit, journalistic, and academic sectors in the area of uncovering disinformation of foreign powers.
- The disunity of foreign diasporas in the CR.

### Weaknesses

- Underestimation of the threat of the influence of foreign powers on the detriment of other threats.
- The absence of a unified position on the threat across the political spectrum.
- An ambiguous attitude of the public towards the perception of the existence and significance of the threat.
- The necessity to defend guaranteed rights and freedoms (e.g. freedom of speech et al.) and democratic principles of applying state power in combating the threat, and the associated

limited possibility of a state response.

- Weak public resilience to manipulation and attempts at reducing confidence in the democratic rule of law via disinformation campaigns.
- An insufficient capability of the state to ensure quality education in the area of civic and media literacy.
- Weak resilience of public administration and political representatives to manipulation and obtention of information; cases of conscious and unconscious cooperation.
- Inadequate screening of contractors and subcontractors of ICTs and ICT products (software and hardware) in important national security institutions.
- Poorly set cybersecurity policies in important national security institutions and the underestimation of employee education in the area of cybersecurity.
- Limited financial resources of important national security institutions allocated for the prevention and tackling of cyberthreats or for the adequate remuneration of ICT specialists.
- Insufficient ability to motivate foreign communities in favour of Czech interests.
- The amendment to Act No. 106/1999 Coll., on free access to information, allowing for a rather wide publication of information relating to national security.
- Inadequate options of the media regulator to ensure information necessary for the implementation of existing authorisations.
- The absence of strategic communication of the state as a reaction to disinformation and in order to strengthen its own credibility.
- The inability of the state to quickly evaluate the significance of specific cases of disinformation and failure to make a prompt response.

## Opportunities

- A relatively clear identification of the intentions of foreign powers, the ability to analyse previous attempts at influence abroad and the responses made by partner countries.
- The increased attention paid to this issue in other EU member states and within European structures (e.g. the EEAS StratCom Team), the possibility to engage in joint initiatives and participate in the search for common solutions.
- The opportunity to benefit from specific experiences of several states that have recently set up new systemic measures against the influence of foreign powers.
- An interest in addressing the threat both by the state and the non-governmental and academic sector – synergies in adopted measures.
- Historical experience of the public with the influence of a foreign power.

## Threats

- The influencing of public opinion to the detriment of democratic rule of law or in favour of a foreign power.
- The failure of the system of detection of the activities of a foreign power.
- Severe damage of the credibility of an important democratic institution (Czech TV, Police CR, et al.).
- The emergence of a widespread Czech-language media outlet promoting the interests of a foreign power different to those of the CR.
- The growth in importance/the share of power of anti-systemic, extremist, and otherwise radical groups weakening the democratic system.
- The success of political groups promoting interests different from those of the CR in the elections.
- The existence of paramilitary groups enjoying direct or indirect support of a foreign power.
- Influence of decision-making at all levels of public administration contrary to Czech interests.
- Activities of entities with a significant participation in the executive, legislative, and judicial powers.
- Activities of individual representatives with a significant influence on decision-making in the area of security.
- Activities of political entities and political representatives promoting interests contrary to those of

the CR.

- A scenario where the political and social development fulfil the objectives of a foreign power.
- The obtention of lawfully classified or otherwise publicly inaccessible information whose acquisition may lead to endangering or damaging state interests.
- Conscious disclosure of information by political representatives or public administration representatives.
- Unconscious disclosure of information by political representatives or public administration representatives.
- The breach of information confidentiality via a breach of cybersecurity.

### **Recommendations to Strengthen Resilience**

1. Set up a mechanism for the evaluation of findings on the influence of foreign powers within the framework of mutual cooperation and coordination of proposed measures.
2. Establish departments within relevant Government institutions for the evaluation of disinformation campaigns and other manifestations of foreign power influence.
3. Develop a system of training public administration officials focused on increasing resilience against influence attempts by foreign powers.
4. Create an offer of such training events that could be attended on a voluntary basis by other persons who, in terms of their activities, may be of interest to foreign powers.
5. Review the effectiveness of training relating to principles of safe behaviour on the internet at Government institutions and set a minimal standard for such training.
6. Introduce proposals in the field of substantive and procedural criminal law: possibility of using intelligence in criminal proceedings et al.
7. Develop active media strategies of important democratic institutions against the influence of foreign powers.
8. Ensure conditions for the application of HR policies of intelligence services so that these can hire the required number of candidates, train them to become high-quality experts, and retain them in the service.
9. Ensure the speed of exchange from intelligence to lawful recipients and effective feedback.
10. Introduce measures in media law strengthening the ability of the relevant Government authority to obtain information necessary or the exercise of its legal powers, especially in relation to the ownership structure of broadcasters who are legal persons.

11. Analyse the efficiency of existing legal instruments, where necessary, to respond to a significant wave of disinformation.
12. Analyse the exceptions taking into account state security interests when communicating information as per the act on free access to information.
13. Incorporate the topics of research of methods and categories of propaganda, fact-check projects, and other into security research grants.
14. Adjust curricula of primary and secondary schools (enhanced civic literacy and introduction to media literacy).

## Appendix 2: Relevant studies on Russian influence and disinformation in the Czech Republic

### [Data and polls on disinformation operations in the Czech Republic](#)

The European Values Think-Tank presents a representative survey among residents of the Czech Republic conducted by the STEM agency. The level of trust towards disinformation spread by alternative media was tested. Based on this data, Disinformation Index was created. The project was done together with Slovak Atlantic Commission within framework of “GLOBSEC Trends”

### [Pro-Russian disinformation campaign in the Czech Republic and Slovakia](#)

Paper by Prague Security Studies Institute: There are several dozens of these kinds of web sites, informal groups and communities on social networks, but also printed periodicals in the Czech Republic, and that is even though we do not have a big Russian minority. Most of these do not acknowledge any links to Kremlin.

### [The Weaponization of Culture: Kremlin’s traditional agenda and the export of values to Central Europe](#)

The hybrid warfare that Russia has been waging against Europe and the West, especially since the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis, is a fight for people’s minds and souls. Russia does not only try to undermine trust in Europe and its institutions among its citizens, but it also aims to offer an alternative. We present this joint analytical paper by Political Capital with contributions by Jakub Janda and Ondřej Kundra, investigative journalist and Head of Political Desk at Czech Weekly Respekt.

### [Mechanisms of Influence of the Russian Federation into Internal Affairs of the Czech Republic](#)

In this paper, Jakub Janda and Ondřej Kundra have written on the topic of the current state of influence of the Russian Federation in the Czech Republic. The authors identify primary interests of the Russian Federation in the Czech Republic, give examples of these related operations and provide an analytical structure to describe the influence of foreign powers.

### [The Bear in Sheep’s Clothing: Russia’s Government-Funded Organisations in the EU](#)

This paper sheds light on organisations operating in Europe that are funded by the Russian government, whether officially or unofficially. These include government-organised non-governmental organisations (GONGOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and think tanks.

### [How Russian Propaganda Portrays European Leaders](#)

Czech top two analytical institutions present a data-based study on how Russian propaganda media portray European leaders.

### [Full-Scale Democratic Response to Hostile Disinformation Operations](#)

10.05.2017

**How the Czech Republic became one of the European leaders in countering Russian disinformation**

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We present our complex strategy „50 Measures to Oust Kremlin Hostile Disinformation Influence out of Europe.” This paper has been consulted with several dozens of state and non-state diplomatic, academic, security and intelligence professionals.

**[Recommendation for the Czech Strategy against Systematic Disinformation Campaigns of Foreign Powers](#)**

European Values Think-Tank’s Jakub Janda, Head of the Kremlin Watch Programme, put together a cohesive recommendation for the Czech Strategy against Systematic Disinformation Campaigns of Foreign Powers.

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The European Values Think-Tank is a non-governmental policy institute defending liberal democracy.

Our vision is that of a free, safe and prosperous Czech Republic within Central Europe that is an integral part of the West.

We help to face aggressive regimes, radicalisation within the society, the spread of authoritarian tendencies and extremist ideologies including Islamism.

We provide decision-makers with expert recommendations and we systematically watch and evaluate their performance. We consider active citizens, accountable politicians, political parties that fulfil their role, as well as cohesive society that shares the values of individual freedom, human dignity and equal rights to be the principle elements of a functioning liberal democracy.

Since 2005, as a non-governmental and a non-profitable organisation which is not linked to any political party, we have pursued research and educational activities. In addition to publishing analytical papers and commentaries for the media, we organise conferences, seminars and training sessions for both experts and the wider public. Our events provide a platform for dialogue amongst politicians, experts, journalists, businesspeople and students.

EUROPEAN VALUES THINK-TANK

Vlkova 36, 130 00 Praha 3

[info@evropskehodnoty.cz](mailto:info@evropskehodnoty.cz)

[www.europeanvalues.net](http://www.europeanvalues.net)

[facebook.com/Evropskehodnoty](https://facebook.com/Evropskehodnoty)