

Résumé

What was the Czech foreign policy in 2010 and why? A team of authors from the Institute of International Relations in Prague and other Czech partner institutions have been looking for answers to these questions for four consecutive years. The book *Czech Foreign Policy in 2010: Analysis of the IIR* is the fourth volume of a series focused on the Czech foreign policy.

In 20 chapters by 19 authors, the book provides a deep exploration of the Czech foreign policy based on an unchanged analytical framework. The book begins with an analysis of the general political context of the Czech foreign policy. The basic argument is that despite the fact that the government of Petr Nečas had a considerable majority, the Czech foreign policy during this time partly remained hostage to two basic features of the Czech foreign policy of the previous years: indifference and turbulent and unstable political conditions. Yet, several positive tendencies in it were recorded, such as, for example, the general calming down of the foreign policy debate, the more coherent foreign policy program declaration of the new government, or the beginning of work on a new foreign policy conception which had been promised since 2006. The second chapter adds an important analysis of the media context of the Czech foreign policy making, proving that there is a long term tendency toward excessive selectivity in the major media while this selectivity is determined not by the relevance of particular issues but by other, less relevant factors. This selectivity goes hand in hand with the rising personalization and more emotional framework of Czech news making.

The rest of the book is divided into several chapters, and each chapter reflects a selected dimension of the Czech foreign policy. Each chapter follows the same unifying structure: in the first part, the chapter analyses the nature of the political context of the given foreign policy dimension in order to illuminate the link between the political background and the actual foreign policy outputs, which are then explored in the second part. The third part focuses on the roles and involvement of particular actors participating in the foreign policy, and the fourth part aims at describing the media coverage and media context of a particular foreign policy agenda.

The ordering of the chapters remained unchanged from the order of the chapters in the previous yearbook. In the chapter devoted to the European dimension of the Czech foreign policy, the authors argue that the Czech Republic somehow got rid of the “troublemaker” label which it acquired in 2009. But, more importantly, the authors show that the Czech Republic deliberately abandoned its ambition to be part of

the core of the EU integration. The chapter devoted to the security dimension of the Czech foreign policy notices that the security issues played a less important role in the foreign policy debate in 2010 as compared with the previous years, yet the stakes remained high as in 2010 the new NATO Strategic Concept was finalized. The following part of the book is dedicated to the Central European dimension of the Czech foreign policy, and it confirms the strategic position of Germany, Poland and the Visegrad group. The Czech foreign policy towards Germany underwent a further process of Europeanization, the Czech-Polish cooperation gained a new depth of effectiveness, and the V4 group proved to be more viable than in the previous years. In the case of Slovakia and even more so in the case of Austria, the relations lacked a fundamental bilateral content.

The chapter on the Czech–U.S. relations aims at describing the process of searching for the new substance of the transatlantic ties after President B. Obama stepped into the office in 2009. The analysis of the Czech foreign policy towards the Western European countries is concerned mostly with bilateral ways of coalition building inside the EU and NATO. The “Balkan” dimension of foreign policy usually enjoys an important position in the Czech foreign policy thinking, and the chapter on it focuses on the question of how the Czech foreign policy capitalized on the potential it created during its Presidency in 2009. The chapter on the Czech Eastern European foreign policy proves that there is a continuity in the prioritization of this agenda regardless of the actual political representation. A complicated picture is created by the analysis of the Czech policy towards the Middle East and Afghanistan in the context of the eve of the so-called “Arab Spring” and the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan. In 2010 the Far Eastern level of the Czech foreign policy did not alter its mostly economic nature from previous years, and the Czech Sub-Saharan ties went back to the low profile normalcy of the period before the EU presidency. Similarly the Czech-Russian relations unfolded without any extraordinary factors and were dominated by economic issues. The same can be said about the Latin American dimension of the Czech policy in 2010. The book is concluded with a series of chapters on other thematic issues – multilateral diplomacy, economic diplomacy, human rights and development cooperation in the Czech foreign policy, and cultural diplomacy. The multilateral dimension of the Czech foreign policy recorded an even greater decline of interest while the human rights level has slightly changed, especially with regard to its territorial focus. Development cooperation witnessed two trends – a strengthening of the Czech position in the sphere of development cooperation, and a limiting of the range of its obligations.

All the chapters uncovered a single feature that was present almost everywhere in the Czech foreign policy in 2010: a lack of issues as electrifying as, e.g., the U.S. radar base, the Lisbon treaty or Czech military missions abroad. The Czech foreign policy in 2010 was – with several minor exceptions – a calm one without any strategic changes or challenges.