

## Résumé

Ever since 2007, the Institute of International Relations in Prague has been publishing deep and far reaching analyses of the Czech foreign policy (CFP) in book form every year. In each book the team of authors asks several fundamental questions about the CFP: *What was the foreign policy in the previous year like and why? What actors were making the CFP and in what ways? How did the Czech media inform about foreign policy and how did their reporting contribute to the overall context for the CFP making? What have been the main trends of the CFP in the past few years and how does the last year relate to these trends? Can we assess the CFP as successful, where does its potential lie and where can we find the biggest problems?*

This year's edition is comprised of twenty-one chapters written by twenty-three authors from the Institute of International Relations and other cooperating institutions. The book focuses on the majority of the principal dimensions of the CFP in 2011. The structure of the book underwent only very few changes since the last edition. Unlike last year we decided not to include a summarizing chapter that would cover the Czech bilateral relations to the Western European countries as a whole; instead, we went back to the original model of analysing only the relations with France and Great Britain and doing so in two separate chapters. Plus, for the first time, there is a chapter specifically oriented to the issue of energy in external relations while, unlike in previous editions, we did not include a chapter on the region of Latin America in this edition.

Most of the chapters deal with the new Concept of the Czech Foreign Policy that was adopted by the government in July 2011. It took five years for the Czech government to work out a new foreign policy concept after the last one expired in 2006. The individual chapters evaluate the significance of the new strategic mid-term concept and compare it with the previous one (valid for the years 2003–2006). It should be positively taken into account that the new concept came into existence at all after all those years of empty promises and despite the fierce (but short-lived) political debates that followed its adoption and questioned both its meaningfulness and its content. Many of the authors also appreciate the fact that the Czech administrative capacity for implementing and carrying out foreign policy improved over the years and that it can be described as relatively stable and professional. Another widely accented theme is the growing impact of the EU's external relations framework (and the impact of the EU on the CFP in general). The majority of the chapters deal heavily with the continuing – or even deteriorating – problem of the inadequate political context for the Czech foreign policy making. In particular the problem stems from a general po-

litical disinterest in foreign policy matters, and this disinterest has even been amplified by the permanent domestic political crisis and the fragility of the governing coalition. On the other hand, the political discussion suffers from extremely polarized views about the fundamentals of the Czech foreign policy orientation, which especially has a negative impact on the Czech performance on the European level. What is more, this polarization can be found not only between the coalition and the opposition but also within the coalition itself.

The first chapter is devoted specifically to the issue of the political context of CFP and maps the involvement of the main foreign policy actors (the government, the parliament, the president). Among others, it touches on the problematic process of working out and pushing through the new mid-term concept of the Czech foreign policy and it also focuses on an inherent conflict among the foreign policy actors. The second chapter follows with a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the media context. It points out the fact that all three of the negative phenomena that plague the media context (selectivity, emotionalization, and personification) continue to limit the creation of a meaningful public background for foreign policy making. The third chapter is aimed at the EU dimension of the CFP. This chapter deals in detail with some selected aspects of the Czech EU activities at the particular level, and at the general level it makes some severe critical points about the contradictory and inconsistent positions that the Czech Republic often assumes towards the EU. The following chapter on security matters also reflects the new concept of the Czech foreign policy but it is more directed toward an evaluation of an innovated security strategy. Apart from that, the chapter describes the Czech involvement in the NATO and EU security and defense frameworks and an international military cooperation. A more critical tone is adopted when the author observes the army acquisition processes, which are too often accompanied by corruption charges. The Central European relations of the Czech Republic are then covered in two separate chapters – one of them is devoted to Germany, and the other to the Visegrad cooperation, Poland, Slovakia and Austria. Both chapters take into account the strategic importance of this region for the Czech foreign policy and attempt to find out how its strategic nature is conceived and realized by the Czech diplomacy. In the case of Germany the author appreciates the pragmatic and overall cooperative approach of the Czech Republic but also points at the growing discrepancies in the long-term outlook when it comes to the future of the EU. A similar conclusion could be made with regard to the Visegrad group and Poland but in these cases the Czech Republic shares more particular commonalities and multi-level and multi-issue links with the other country or countries than with Germany.

After the EU, security and regional sections comes an extensive part that deals with the Czech bilateral relations to the USA, Russia and selected countries in Europe as well as in non-European regions. When it comes to the USA, the author praises the Czech ability to find a new referential framework for this relationship as such a framework considerably lacked after the U.S.'s decision to cancel its plans to place parts of its national anti-missile defense in the Czech Republic (2009) even though the author notices that a certain amount of bitter disappointment is still perceptible among some of the Czech Atlantist-oriented elite. Meanwhile, he points out that the Czech-Rus-

sian relations continued in their pattern of strengthening the significance of economy at the expense of other issues. Despite that, the security and geopolitical prism still influences the Czech Republic's interpretation of its economic relations with Russia (for example, in the sphere of investments). A similar "economization" took place in the Czech relationship with France, which was caused mostly by the rising French interest in the Czech nuclear energy sector. In contrast to that, the ties with Great Britain underwent a process of greater politization, mostly because of the two countries' closer communication (and shared views) about several important EU questions. But if there is a region in regard to which the Czech foreign policy seems to be highly organized and well defined, it is certainly the region of the East European post-Soviet countries (namely the Eastern Partnership countries). The chapter on Eastern Europe analyses not only the multilateral and regional framework but also the bilateral relations, of which the relations with Ukraine are the most important ones. Afterwards, the chapter devoted to the CFP towards the Balkans pays attention to the fact that the Czech Republic is attempting to build and strengthen a close relationship with Croatia and Romania since the proportion of shared priorities with these countries (closely followed by the shared priorities with Bulgaria) is on the rise. Then the Czech Republics extensive Middle East agenda is lumped together with its agendas toward North Africa and Afghanistan in a single chapter. The authors argue that there is a general tendency of the Czech diplomacy towards these regions which can be described as a growing Europeanization on the one hand and a view on the part of the CFP that perceives this agenda as increasingly important (due to the stormy "Arab Spring" development) on the other. In contrast to this, in 2011, the Far East dimension of the CFP remained very much the same as in 2010, lacking any important dynamics. Also in this case the EU external dimension plays an ever stronger role, and it is the EU that seems to be the only instrument capable of asserting the Czech priorities towards this region (if there are any). Sub-Saharan Africa confirmed its marginal position in the CFP, which can be put in contrast with the significance of this region within the matrix of the EU's external relations. On the other hand, though, the author of the chapter on it stresses that the communitarization of this foreign policy vector enables the Czech diplomacy to concentrate on particular priority projects in this region without the need to pay extensive attention to the region as a whole.

The last third of the book covers the multilateral dimension of the Czech foreign policy and other thematic areas. In the chapter on the area of multilateral relations (which does not include the EU and the NATO) the author argues that multilateralism remains rather on the periphery of the Czech diplomacy with particular and limited goals, and certainly not with a strategic sight in the background. In the newly included chapter about energy in external relations, there is a strong focus on nuclear energy, but also on some EU-related issues like implementation of the EU's liberalization measures or regional energy-infrastructure interconnections. Also, this part stresses the significance of the EU framework, namely for the Czech external energy security. In the sphere of the development cooperation the Czech government was trying to solve a dilemma between meeting its responsibilities and commitments and staying within the limits of the extensive fiscal austerity measures of the time. What helped

to sustain the economic slowdown in the development cooperation was the strong institutional backing of this policy. The negative economic trend also affected Czech external economic relations and the policy of their support. Besides that, the Czech economic diplomacy was negatively influenced by the continuing political disputes about the ways this policy should be set up and executed. This is even more burdening when we recognize that the external economic relations of the Czech Republic are a major contributor to the Czech economy in general. Finally, the last chapter states that the Czech cultural diplomacy underwent an interesting development in 2011 as the government adopted several conceptual decisions that have the potential to cause substantial positive progress in the years to come.

The book *Czech Foreign Policy in 2011. Analysis of the Institute of International Relations* consistently follows the conceptual framework of the four previous editions, including the inner structures of individual chapters. Each chapter begins with an analysis of the political environment and its effects on the actual policy making. This is followed by a description and critical assessment of the main foreign policy agendas and events. We decided also to keep a focus on the roles and involvement of individual actors and governmental institutions as well as on the impact of the media-related context on the quality of foreign policy debates and foreign policy as such. In the end of each chapter the authors contemplate about the continuity and the long or mid-term trends in a given area.

Thanks to this framework, which has been thoroughly followed for the past five years, the book offers a unique and continual opportunity to watch the development of the Czech foreign policy in an unprecedented depth and extent. The project of the annual analysis found its place in the Czech public, academic and political debate about the Czech foreign policy. This was only possible because of the great and active support by the policy actors themselves and the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The book could not, however, have come to light without the enormous endeavor and professional approach of the publishing department and the library of the IIR and also the many colleagues who worked on this project as part of their internship experience at the Institute. The team of authors is also greatly indebted to the main peer-reviewer Michal Romancov and the reviewers of some individual chapters (Jan Karlas, Petr Kaniok, Filip Černoč, Petr Kratochvíl). I am also personally grateful to my research assistant Petra Nováčková for her immense help.

As every year, we would like to express the hope that the book will contribute not only to a critical discussion about a crucial part of the Czech political life but also, in its own humble way, to enhancing the quality of the Czech foreign policy as such.

For the team of authors,

Michal Kořan