

Résumé

Since 2007 the Institute of International Relations continuously analyzes the Czech foreign policy, and it has released 10 analytical monographs on it (including this one) in both Czech and English language variations. The analytical framework remains the same over all these years (though there was a major addition to it in 2013), which provides a unique opportunity for a long-term comparison of how the foreign policy changed over the years. With this insight in mind, the authors can say that 2014 was the most remarkable year for this analytical series since the time that it started and – perhaps – one of the most remarkable years in the history of the Czech Republic as such. Both domestic (e.g. the change of the Czech government) and international factors (e.g. the violent development in Eastern Europe and the increasingly aggressive Russian behavior) contributed to the fact that the domestic political and public interest in foreign policy reached recorded levels that were previously unheard of. In the past, the authors criticized the overwhelming disinterest in foreign policy matters on the part of the politicians and the public in the Czech Republic. However, the heightened, if aroused, political and public attention to foreign policy cannot be rendered exclusively – or even predominantly – as a positive and constructive feature of the foreign policy in 2014. This is not to say that in the long term, the increased interest in the foreign policy, if sustained and managed in a conscious and responsible way, will not yield a fruitful result in the future. But the nature of the political and public context of the foreign policy in 2014 further exposed the immaturity and irresponsibility of the politics of the Czech foreign policy.

As mentioned, the books' structure has been the same since 2007. The first two chapters analyze the overall domestic political and media context of the Czech foreign policy and identify the influence and involvement of each of the main actors in it. The second part focuses on the Czech acting within the European Union and the Czech security and defense policy. The third part analyzes the main development and dynamics of the Czech policies in Central Europe. The fourth section maps out various important bilateral and regional relations, and the fifth part analyzes the participation of the Czech Republic in other multilateral and thematic areas.

Furthermore, all the chapters follow a unified analytical structure. Each chapter begins with the political and conceptual context of the discrete analyzed field. In the second part of each chapter, a specific agenda and some events of the examined year, as well as their impact on and relevance for the Czech foreign policy, are analyzed.

Most of the authors also included an analysis of the involvement of the different actors in the monitored area and also the media coverage of the given topic. With the support of the Czech Grant Agency, the team of the authors has enriched the conceptual framework in 2013 by adding several further analytical categories that would allow them to qualitatively improve the theoretical knowledge of foreign policy-making. Also, thanks to the deepened cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for the second year now, the IIR's analysis also includes an overview of the diplomatic activities of the main Czech foreign policy actors.

In 2013, several questions were added to our research repertoire in order to develop a new conceptual framework for explaining the foreign policy of small and medium-sized states, as well as a more general explanation of the Czech foreign policy as such. The set of new questions consists of the following: *In what areas did the Czech Republic carry out a pro-active or a re-active policy (or no policy at all), and how successful was it in this respect? Why did it carry out these policies? In what areas did a polarization and a politicization of the foreign policy-making agenda occur, and what impact did these factors have on the Czech foreign policy? How does the Czech Republic react to challenges coming from outside the regional/international/global environment, and why? And how is the Czech Republic itself trying to influence the environment?*

In order to answer these questions, the conceptual framework differentiates among various types of foreign policy behavior on two axes. The first axis consists of (**pro**) **active**, **inactive** and **reactive** types of behavior. *Proactive foreign policy* is initiated by the state's own ideas about how foreign policy should look. In this type, ideas about the meaning and purpose of foreign policy are based on national and domestic sources rather than on external stimuli or external expectations. *Reactive foreign policy* is formulated in response to an identifiable strategy or policy of any other actor. In this type, external stimuli are the actual trigger for the formulation of foreign policy, and not just the background against which foreign policy is formulated. The mere fact that the Czech Republic, in formulating its foreign policy, reflects the external environment (interests, strategies and priorities of other actors) is not sufficient to enable us to classify its foreign policy as reactive. Each foreign policy strategy (whether proactive, inactive or reactive) in some way reflects the external environment. For reactive foreign policy it is typical that it applies to a specific and clearly articulated foreign policy strategy of external actors. In contrast, for an *inaction* in foreign policy it is typical that the foreign policy does not respond to internal or external stimuli. An absence of internal stimuli may explain the lack of consensus on and the indifference of political elites and/or the public towards foreign policy. An inactive foreign policy may also be due to a conflict between domestic ideas about the role and purpose of government foreign policy and external expectations. We believe that "inaction" in foreign policy, i.e. a government's inability to take a position in response to an external stimulus and its inability to formulate its own strategy, should be studied as a peculiar phenomenon in its own category. Analysis of what is ignored in foreign policy is often more beneficial than examining what is being done in it. Despite that, passivity, inaction and ignorance remain neglected topics in the social sciences in general.

The second axis consists of *offensive*, *neutral* and *cooperative* policy behavior. *Offensive policy* is characterized by confrontational behavior towards the external environment. In this kind of behavior, challenges to the outside may result from active efforts to impose one’s own ideas on the outside world within a certain policy field. *Neutral policy* lies the crossroads between offensive and cooperative policy. However, neutrality is not to be confused with passivity. Neutrality can manifest in an active form in which the state is actively involved in the development of a policy, for example, through mediation. Neutrality can also take on a reactive form, for example, when the state responds to external stimuli by promoting neutral policies. And *cooperative policy* can also come in three forms: the active, passive and reactive forms. Active cooperative policy means that the state acts as a leader: it actively proposes a common policy, but the state does not enforce its idea offensively (coercion), but rather seeks to build coalitions and broader support for its proposals. Passive cooperative policy corresponds to the position of a fare dodger. A fare dodger is passive and inactive, and unresponsive to external stimuli, and s/he does not develop his/her own activity. The politics of fare dodger can also be co-operative – the actor remains passive while utilizing the benefits of a common policy. Finally, a reactive cooperative policy takes the form of a full adoption of an external policy.

Based on these considerations, the team of authors has prepared the following matrix of possible foreign policy behavior.

	Offensive	Neutral	Cooperating
Pro-active action	IMPOSING ONE’S OWN POLICY	MEDIATION	CREATION OF A COMMON POLICY
“No” action	IGNORANCE	LACK OF INTEREST	FARE DODGER
Re-active action	ACTIVE RESISTANCE AGAINST EXTERNAL POLICY	ADAPTATION TO EXTERNAL POLICY	COMPLETE ACCEPTANCE OF EXTERNAL POLICY

The second major question is what factors contribute to generating one of these particular policies. Apart from the quite understandable and well-studied dimension of capabilities for carrying a particular policy, we also consider whether any of the above drafted modes of conduct/behavior are influenced by the various degrees of *politicization* and *polarization* of a given agenda. Because of its frequent use, the term “politicization” in political science is defined in a variety of ways. The team gravitated to the following definition: politicization is best understood as the extent to which [a topic] is a part of [the] public and political debate throughout the political process

and policy making process. The presence of the topic in the “public and political debate” for our purposes includes the following: the presence of the topic in the public sphere and the media; the presence of the topic in election debates and programs of political parties; and the presence of the topic in the debates in both chambers of parliament, especially in the context of the legislative process and all other channels of democratic decision-making processes.

The last concept is polarization. The team chose to differentiate between two forms of polarization:

1) institutional polarization (typically conflicts between or within the Parliament, the MFA, the MoD, and the Ministry of Industry and Trade, or even conflicts at the level of departments).

2) non-institutional polarization (public or political, and cultural). In principle, for the purpose of this analysis we consider a topic to be polarized

- when there is a consistent position of key political actors (esp. the political parties and their representatives) and institutional actors (the President, the Prime Minister, Ministers, ministries etc.) in regard to the topic, in which the given actor unites itself in order to promote internal discipline (instead of substantive arguments, but the discipline belongs to a party or institution) while, at the same time, such a position is, importantly, in opposition to that of another actor.
- when the political/institutional actors do not insist on “distinct” positions in regard to the topic; instead they insist on conflicting opinions, and no de facto debate takes place; as a result the policy and the related debate are blocked.
- when the time period of such attitudes lasts for at least for one analytical period (that is, a calendar year), but it might last even longer if possible.

Already in the previous year, the team has worked with precisely this matrix, and most of the authors concluded that there has been low or zero politicization and polarization levels in most Czech foreign policy areas in 2013. The prevailing mode of behavior during the caretaker government of Jiří Rusnok was one of a “fare dodger” and “adaptation to external policies” (with the exception of China). The year of 2014 offers a completely contrasting picture, though. Due to the domestic and international developments in that year, many previously de-politicized areas became subjects of a heated public or political debate, and this in turn contributed to polarization. In terms of foreign policy behavior, the inactive and reactive modes still prevailed, but the scope of areas where the Czech foreign policy acted in a more pro-active way broadened.

The new government of Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka took over the foreign policy helm with two laudable objectives. First, it wished to awaken the Czech foreign policy from the tranquil state into which it slid since the EU accession and, second, it wanted to make it more predictable and thus more effective. However, the form of the awakening somehow preceded the substance and, consequently, the new leadership of the Czech diplomacy found it extremely difficult to explain itself both do-

mestically and internationally. And with the severely turbulent (to borrow a term from aviation) external environment and the non-consensual acting of the directly elected President Miloš Zeman, the year of 2014 recorded new highs in terms of the unpredictability and incomprehensibility of the Czech foreign policy.

Among the first impulses of the new government was the impulse to distance itself from the previous right-centrist governments in the area of *EU politics and policies*. The debate about the EU intensified, and several symbolical gestures towards a more “pro-EU” stance were manifested; however, these were soon howled down by the response to the development in Ukraine. The EU-related debates consequently became more politicized and polarized than in previous years; yet, the reactive and adaptive mode of behavior mostly dominated. In *security policies*, the Czech policy became unprecedentedly active, even though the adaptive behavior still prevailed because of the new security challenges. What has changed, though, was the overall intensification of the public and political debate, which reflected the re-militarization of Eastern Europe. For many years, the *Czech-German* relations did not fully utilize their potential, and the same can be said about the Czech-German relations in 2014. The declared shifts in the Czech EU policies opened new areas for cooperation with Germany; however, the multiple voices coming out of the Czech foreign policy establishment (especially the voice of the President) rendered the Czech activity to establish a new level of the *Czech-German interaction* less intelligible for the Germans. Other than that, however, Germany remained a non-polarizing and non-politicizing issue for the Czech political milieu. Other neighborly relations of the Czech Republic (those with *the Visegrad group, Austria, Poland and Slovakia*) experienced a so far unprecedented level of attention, politicization and polarization. In terms of the resulting policies, however, nothing changed the overall positive evaluation of the cooperative and active Czech approach to Central Europe. On the contrary, Central Europe seems to be further strengthening its role as a fundamental platform for the Czech foreign policy activities. Nevertheless, the same cannot be said about the Czech bilateral relations with the *United States*. The fading of the “romance” of the relationship has been reported in previous volumes; however, in 2014 we could see a more conscious departure from an active and strategically formulated policy toward the USA in the Czech Republic, even though the security and economic ties remained un-weakened. As for *Russia*, because of the Ukrainian escapades, it fared more prominently in the foreign policy debates in 2014, which resulted in an increased politicization and polarization of it. In terms of behavior, the Czech Republic kept its rather re-active and adaptive mode toward the overall EU framework of relations; however, it attempted to soften the EU’s stance towards Russia with regard to the sanctions. The Czech foreign policy did not come up with new ideas in relation to *Eastern Europe* in general and *Ukraine* in particular. The government was trying to find a balance among the often contradictory claims of the big economic players, the political factions within the Czech Social Democratic party itself, NGOs and political opposition parties when formulating its policy towards Eastern Europe, and as such, it succumbed to a more or less reactive mode of behavior. With regard to the *Western Balkans*, the Czech diplomacy displayed a more pro-active and cooperative way of acting while this issue re-

mained mostly de-politicized and non-polarized (with the exception of Kosovo). The authors of the respective chapters on *France* and *Great Britain* pointed to more proactive, depoliticized and non-polarizing policies towards these countries as well. The Czech policy towards the *Middle East* in 2014 could be characterized in similar terms as in 2013, but with a slight reformulation of the stance towards Israel. Furthermore, a low level of interest continues to define the Czech policy towards *Sub-Saharan Africa*. In contrast to this, the Czech policy towards *China* experienced a robust turnaround and also stirred a considerable amount of politicization and polarization. It is almost the only case of a polarized and politicized policy on the part of the Czech Republic that does not fall into the category of re-active behavior. On the contrary, the Czech diplomacy displayed an unprecedented level of activism towards China, following an activist turn made already by the caretaker government of Jiří Rusnok

The *multilateral* dimension of the Czech foreign policy did not experience any important changes. It continues to engage in an adaptive mode of policy, respecting the EU-framed initiatives within the UN and other important multilateral fora. Also, the level of politicization and polarization remained low here. A more pro-active approach was demonstrated within the multilateral human rights agenda. *Human rights* in the Czech foreign policy in general, however, acquired a more prominent importance in the public (and less so in the political) debate. The new government initiated preparations of a new conceptual approach towards human rights in foreign policy which further accentuated the existing division in political attitudes towards this agenda, and both polarization and politicization intensified in this respect. However, at the multilateral fora, the Czech diplomacy engaged in a pro-active and cooperative mode. The *energy*, *cultural*, *economic* and *development cooperation* areas of foreign policy did not experience such prominent changes and continued to have rather low levels of politicization and polarization. Especially in the case of the external economic relations, this might be good news after all the years of difficult communication between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Industry and Trade.

The project of the annual publications of the Czech Foreign Policy Analysis of the Institute of the International Relations aims not only to contribute to the theoretical and analytical understanding of the Czech foreign policy, but also to promote a corroborative research among various analytical centers in the Czech Republic and thus to support the building of a reflective analytical community. In keeping with this goal, apart from the authors from the IIR, external collaborators from the Association for International Affairs, the University of Economics, Charles University and Masaryk University have participated in the creation of this year's volume. We would like to express our gratitude to all of them. We would also like to thank Dr. Tomáš Weiss from Charles University in Prague, who took up the challenge of being the main reviewer, a task that requires considerable erudition and considerable patience with the team of authors. Nevertheless, the writers, of course, are responsible for any inaccuracies, errors or omissions in their respective chapters. Furthermore, the book would not have been possible without the organizational and analytical assistance of Barbora Fialová-Hronešová from the University of Economics. The team of authors also greatly benefited from the help of many professional trainees from the IIR. Furthermore, for the

first time the yearbook is enriched by data and statistics provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs thanks to the long-term support of the project from the Department of Policy Planning (OPP) and also from the Ministry's management. Also, another factor that helped us in our analysis was the open and helpful attitude of many of the Ministry's staff, who provided both valuable information and reflection on the texts. Last but not least, our thanks go out to the personnel of the IIR (especially the publishing department and the library) for their dedicated, very helpful and professional approach during the development of this publication, which required, due to its nature and difficulty, an extreme flexibility and a high amount of understanding during its completion. The book has also been published with the kind support of the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic. On behalf of our team of authors I would like to express the hope that the strengthening of the ambitions of this publication will further contribute to deepening our understanding of the Czech foreign policy.