
Chapter 17

The Multilateral Dimension of the Czech Foreign Policy

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In 2015, for the first time since 2011, there has been a change of the decisive value and strategic framework of multilateral co-operation or, as the case may be, of the whole Czech foreign policy. On 13 July, the new *Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Czech Republic* was approved.¹ It follows up the concept from 2011² as well as the programme statement of the government and tries to reflect the changes in the world political order too. This concept has identified three decisive global objectives, which will form the basic outline of the content of this chapter again: a) Security; b) Human dignity and human rights and c) Prosperity and sustainable development.

Contrary to the previous concept from 2011,³ which saw the multilateral platforms primarily with the instrumental optics,⁴ the new concept features signs of *moral multilateralism*,⁵ which means that the international institutions and the co-operation are perceived as a normative value by itself, which exceeds the limits of the mere tool. We can read it for example in the statement that “*as a result of these factors, the risk of weakening the current world arrangement, based on multilateralism and international law, has been increasing at the same time*”,⁶ or in the fact that the foreign policy “*enables the state and non-state subjects to operate abroad so as to contribute to furthering the interests of the Czech Republic and international community represented especially by the United Nations (UN)...*”.⁷ However, it does not change anything in the fact that the main perspective for perceiving international organizations is the instrumental one. International organization are still primarily tools or, as the case may be, fields where interests can be furthered.

The second stable feature, by which the new Concept follows up both the previous one and the multilateral practice of the last years, is the continuation of a clear hierarchy between individual international organizations. The first fiddle is played by the European Union, which represents “*the basic framework for the realization of the Czech foreign policy*”⁸ as a whole. It only officially confirms the Europeanization of Czech foreign policy and perception of EU as the decisive multilateral platform.⁹

Concerning “universal” multilateral organizations, the concept pays attention to the UN, of course, as already outlined above. With respect to it, it is possible to sense ambivalent perception of multilateralism as a value by itself and as a tool. The UN

is perceived as a representative of the international community and membership in it is “*the universal framework for the multilateral operation of the Czech Republic*”.¹⁰ Contrary to the former concept, this agenda concerning the UN is not summarized in a unified way, but it is spread in partial chapters. A sort of framework objective is that “*in the long-term, the Czech Republic supports the efforts for a reform aimed at the more efficient functioning of the UN, including a reform of membership in the Security Council*”.¹¹ The UN is gradually identified as one of the decisive platforms or, as the case may be, tools for ensuring security, specifically by means of prevention and suppression of threats.¹² For this purpose, the importance of military missions is also mentioned explicitly, including those realized within the UN.¹³ The UN is perceived as crucial for the inclusion in the control modes and efforts dedicated to disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.¹⁴ It is also one of the important platforms in the fight against international terrorism and organized crime.¹⁵

The UN, especially the UN Human Rights Council, shall play one of the key roles in supporting human rights, of course.¹⁶ A very interesting, explicitly identified priority, by which the Czech Republic wants to actively profile itself in the UN, is also the support of marginalized groups for the participation in politics and public life, with the emphasis placed especially on women.¹⁷ The concept also identifies that in the efforts for sustainable development, active engagement within the UN shall play the main role, especially in the effort to help formulate the objectives of sustainable development.¹⁸

The concept perceives the OSCE in a very similar way; it is considered the second decisive “universal organization”. Like the UN, it shall play the decisive role in the prevention and suppression of security threats and organizing missions or developing protection of human rights in the multilateral area. However, the OSCE is specifically emphasized as the key multilateral platform “*from the standpoint of strengthening the co-operative approach to the security issues in the European continent*”.¹⁹

Several other organizations are only mentioned briefly, usually with a specific focus. Therefore, the concept mentions the Council of Europe in the area of human rights, within the framework of which “*CR will keep striving for maintaining long-term functionality and further development of the control system of the European Convention on Human Rights*”.²⁰ In the field of prosperity, the concept mentions the WTO. The Czech Republic wants to strive for “*negotiation of transparent and fixed rules for trade and investments, shared by the widest possible group of states*”.²¹ The OECD is mentioned even more briefly as a key tool contributing to the sustainable development and the commitments of the foreign development co-operation resulting from the organization.²²

Therefore, if we compare explicit mentions about multilateral platforms outside of the EU and NATO, there have been no important changes. Especially with respect to the UN, we can observe nearly identical identification of the tasks and plans. The topics of the OSCE and the Council of Europe are included even less. A certain corrective in the field of *prosperity* can be considered very interesting, where the concept is defined more in favour of the development world and the environment, contrary to the previous “eagerly neo-liberal” concept.

Minister Lubomír Zaorálek presented the concept within the framework of the traditional annual meeting with the heads of the missions because it was the main topic of it. From the perspective of the role of international organizations, it was very interesting that Zaorálek pointed out that with respect to the new challenges the objective was primarily the co-operation on the multilateral level.²³

While the year 2015 offered to us a new *Concept* that formed a more long-term and general framework, in the field of mid-term political frameworks of the current leadership of the country nothing changed. The existing coalition of ČSSD, ANO and KDU-ČSL expressed its ideas about the basic foreign policy directions in the programme statement of the government²⁴ and the coalition agreement²⁵ (refer to the issue of this “Annual book” from the last year²⁶).

The first pillar of conceptualization of this book is the issue of politicizing partial topics of Czech foreign policy. Multilateral diplomacy belongs traditionally to the least reflected ones. In the last two annual books, both the Parliamentary and the European elections were an interesting litmus-paper. They could be well used for the demonstration if the issue of multilateralism in the Czech political discourses was an open and reflected topic or not. However, no such opportunity was offered to us in 2015.

Another area, where the issue of (non-)politicizing of the multilateralism can be monitored well, concerns the sessions of both chambers of the Parliament of the Czech Republic as well as of the Foreign Committee of the Chamber of Deputies. Contrary to fairly interesting politicizing of the topic of multilateralism during the visits of Minister Lubomír Zaorálek and Deputy Petr Drulák from 2014, the year 2015 did not offer any interesting reflection of the issues in the Foreign Committee of the Parliament. The closest to certain politicizing of the topic resulting from the context of multilateral organizations was the debate about the governmental proposal of the ratification of the *Convention of the Council of Europe on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse*. However, even this was soon heading to the technical issues of the integration into the legal order and a special debate about the boundaries between the arts and pornography.²⁷

The topic of multilateral organizations got to the Chamber of Deputies primarily as a context again, in which legislative standards were formed, which the Parliament dealt with. We can observe a similar trend for years and it has not been anything new. The Chamber of Deputies led a technical debate about the ratification of the amendment of Article 8 of the *Rome Statute* of the International Criminal Court²⁸; it dealt with the proposal of the ratification of the Convention of the Council of Europe on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse²⁹ or ratification of the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child* implementing the procedure of submitting an announcement.³⁰

The OSCE and the Council of Europe were also mentioned “slightly” several times as a source of information regarding the conflict in Ukraine³¹ in debates about the Public Defender of Rights.³² The discussion concerning the governmental proposal to send out the Czech soldiers to the UN mission on the Golan Heights (UNDOF) was very interesting. An important debate evolved over this issue concerning how meaningful such mission was in fact or, as the case may be, if the UN missions as such were

meaningful. It was also discussed if the government pandered too much to the ideas of the President, who favoured specifically this mission for a longer time.³³

The climax of politicizing of the universal multilateralism was the interpellation of the MP Miroslav Grebeníček aimed to the Minister Zaorálek in the matter of compliance with and enforcement of the Act on Protection of Peace of the UN Charter and other conventions.

Within this interpellation, there was a debate about the general meaning of the UN in the current world order, the role of the Security Council as the guarantor of the international peace, analysis of the UN missions, especially in the nineties, or the UN Charter and the international law in general.³⁴ However, this debate was a sporadic event. Even though both above-mentioned examples were a very interesting illustration of politicizing of the universal multilateralism, it can be hardly concluded that we could speak about politicizing the multilateral diplomacy as a whole in the long-term horizon. The Senate did not surprise with respect to politicizing at all and copied especially the topics prepared within the Chamber of Deputies, however without outstanding debates, which could be considered politicizing the topic.

The second building pillar of the conceptual framework of this book is *polarization*. Especially the question if the practice of non-politicizing and obvious marginalization of the multilateral co-operation is a result of very different ideas about the directions in this field, which would block a meaningful debate about a particular topic. Although the year 2015 was, as I tried to point out above, relatively interesting and some interesting differences between Internationalists and Atlanticists came to the surface,³⁵ such partial contradictions had hardly any prominent impacts on the Czech multilateral practice and they were not a cause of non-politicizing the multilateralism, which was a marginalized part of Czech foreign policy in the long-term. At the same time, if we look deeper, there is a widely-shared agreement about how to perceive international organizations. It means primarily instrumentally as tools serving to foster the Czech interests.

THE MULTILATERAL DIMENSION OF CZECH FOREIGN POLICY: AGENDA AND EVENTS

Security multilateralism of the Czech Republic

The speech presented by President Miloš Zeman this year at the annual 70th session of the General Assembly was very specific. In his impromptu speech, he was focused on one topic only, namely on the international terrorism or, as the case may be, the fight against it. This speech was even more interesting because in the last years this topic had not played any important role in the Czech security multilateralism. Zeman declared international terrorism to be the biggest threat to human civilization and also the main cause of the current migration to Europe. He criticizes the reduction of the international terrorism to the Islamic State and the fight against terrorism led as a classic war. Finally, he proposed small missions approved by the authority of the Secu-

rity Council, which would be focused on the “nerve centrum” of the terrorist groups, instead of massive occupations.³⁶

Minister Zaorálek also provided opinions about the issues of terrorism. He stated that *“terrorism was not only a security threat. In particular, it threatens by cutting the ties that bind us together in our societies. To prevail over violent extremism, we have to live our normal lives and avoid being subjected to simplifying accusations of various religious or national groups.”*³⁷

However, the decisive security topic concerned the events in Ukraine. It was reflected for example by the fact that a majority of the speech of minister Zaorálek at the UN Human Rights Council was rather of a security framing nature. Zaorálek summarized that the conflicts, like that in Ukraine, had an immense impact on the civil population and, at the same time, they presented a threat to the regional and international security and stability. And he continues by saying that *“territorial aggression – 70 years after the end of the Second World War – is a vivid topic again, which must be addressed by the international community as an urgent matter. Mr. President, fights and stirring up of the conflict in Ukraine must end.”*

The same attention was paid to the events in Ukraine in the session of the Ministerial Council of OSCE, which took place in December in Belgrade. The Deputy to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivo Šrámek clearly stated: *“The Czech Republic actively stands behind the role of the OSCE in facilitating de-escalation of the conflict in and around Ukraine, be that through the current deployment of 18 monitors within the Special Monitoring Mission or through our financial contributions. The Minsk Agreements must be fully implemented and any solution must stand on the full respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine.”*³⁸ He ended by mentioning that for the development of European security it was also necessary to solve long-term conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgia or Moldavia or to meet the commitments in the field of the arms control. In addition to addressing territorial conflicts, the issue of migration or searching for ways of restoring consensus in the area of European security were also dealt with in the session.

In his speech, I. Šrámek also emphasized that at the time of the 40th anniversary of the conclusion of the Helsinki Accords, the concept of security built on the three key pillars and the importance of their principles should not be questioned, but on the contrary they should be clearly enforced in the current crisis of the European security.

In addition to the territorial priorities, the security multilateralism also deals with thematic priorities. The new concept explicitly mentions that one of the decisive objectives in the field of multilateral security is *“ensuring functional and transparent modes of the arms control, including non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction”*.³⁹ Therefore, it codifies the long-term priority of the security multilateralism. The importance of this priority was demonstrated by the Czech Republic for example by the active participation in the session of the First Commission of the 70th session of the General Assembly, which dealt with disarmament and international security. There the Czech Republic, by words of its permanent representative Edita Hrdá, clearly signed up at first for the lasting importance of the *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation*

of Nuclear Weapons as the key tool of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Hrdá highlighted that she believed in the establishment of the zone without nuclear weapons in the Near East; she welcomed the historical agreement between E3 + 3 and Iran; she criticized nuclear tests of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and called upon it to return to the NPT mode. She ended her speech by calling for the negotiation of the binding treaty about the ban on production of fissile materials for nuclear arms.⁴⁰

An important part of the Czech impact on nuclear disarmament is the already traditional conference Prague Agenda, the topic of which for this year was "Nuclear Deterrence: Enduring Concepts and Current Debates". The conference co-organized by the Institute of International Relations and the Charles University was focused this year primarily on the analysis of the Review conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons from the turn of April and May and also on the issue of new nuclear powers. Deputy to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Jakub Kulháněk, who opened the conference, emphasized the international importance of the Prague Agenda among the events dealing with the issues of disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Kulháněk also brought to mind that disarmament had to be considered a long-term process, which might not be abandoned despite many hindrances.⁴¹

As already hinted above, the priority of the arms control and disarmament was not focused on the nuclear arms only but also on the conventional ones. In particular, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) plays an important role. The Czech Republic will strive for its universalization, as mentioned explicitly in the new concept. Václav Bálek, head of the department for disarmament and non-proliferation of the UN section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, spoke in the session of the First Committee within the 70th session of the General Assembly of the UN and declared that "*ATT is a successful story of the development of internationally agreed standards intended for regulation of yet non-regulated global trade with conventional arms. [...] The Czech Republic is prepared to assume its share of responsibility and actively contribute through its work in the Managerial Commission and through active help and assistance across the countries.*"⁴²

An important HR event was the February visit of the general manager of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü. He met Minister Zaorálek, with whom he debated the issues of liquidation of chemical weapons in Syria, USA, Russia, and Libya; investigation of chemical attacks in the Syrian conflict or evaluation of the Czech membership in the OPCW. A. Üzümcü also had a lecture for the expert public and media about the topic "What made the OPCW successful", which was organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs together with the European Security Centre of the Institute of International Relations.⁴³

Human right and international law multilateralism of the Czech Republic

The main change in the field of human right multilateralism was the end of the Czech membership in the UN Human Rights Council as of 31. 12. 2014. Therewith the Czech Republic lost one of the most efficient multilateral tools of its human rights policy, within which it was really active in the last years. It is proven by two adopted

Czech resolutions concerning equal political and public participation and enforcement of two resolutions about the right to assembly and association, the submission of which was facilitated by the Czech Republic.⁴⁴ Similarly, it was an active vice-chair state in 2014. Kateřina Sequensová, Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the UN Office in Geneva, summarized the Czech actions as follows: “*Within three and half years of existence of the membership, the Czech Republic confirmed with its active, open and fair performance that human rights were, are and will remain its foreign political priority.*”⁴⁵ The fact that the Czech Republic also considers human rights a priority for the future, was already suggested by showing its interest in having a chair in this institution again in 2019–2021.

However, the importance of human rights or the role of the Council does not fade for the Czech Republic with the finished membership in any way, as it was also stated by Minister L. Zaorálek in his speech there. He stated: “*The Czech Republic became an observer state. Allow me to assure you of the support and importance, which is attached by us to the work of this highly significant body at the time when its mandate is more difficult than ever before. We will continue highlighting the topics, which are perceived by us as the cornerstones of human rights.*”⁴⁶

And the human right practice of the Czech representatives in the Permanent Mission in Geneva that are the main players in the field of the human right multilateralism, clearly showed that hardly anything has changed in its proactive approach, even if there was one important staff change in the middle of the year. K. Sequensová was replaced in the position of permanent representative by Jan Kára, who handed over the credential letter to the hands of Michael Møller, the highest representative of the Geneva branch of the UN, as of 31. 8. 2015.⁴⁷

Territorially the emphasis was put especially on the events in Ukraine. Minister L. Zaorálek dealt with them considerably in his speech in the Human Rights Council. Zaorálek framed the events especially with the sharp rhetoric of human rights: “*All accusations of violations of human rights must be duly investigated. All such murders, rapes, tortures, sexual attacks, kidnapping shall be investigated.*”⁴⁸ At the HRC, the Czech Republic also expressed its opinion for example about the deteriorating human right situation in Crimea after its illegal annexation, and especially about the situation of Crimean Tatars and Ukrainian-speaking communities. The arbitrariness of the process with Nadiya Savchenko was mentioned or an emphasis was put on respect to the humanitarian law and help for civilians.⁴⁹ The Czech Republic also clearly appreciated the work of the monitoring missions of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.⁵⁰

In addition to the primacy of Ukraine, the Czech human right criticism was heading in the traditional direction. The Czech Republic spoke sternly concerning the events in Syria, especially against extensive and systematic attacks against civilians, women, and children as well as against religious or other vulnerable groups. It also stood against the use of chemical weapons and barrel bombs, especially in civil areas.⁵¹ The Czech Republic also emphasized unlimited access of the International Examination Commission to the country and pointed out that the Security Council should submit the findings to the International Criminal Court.⁵²

A clear and decisive reproach was voiced against the DPRK when the Czech Republic called for releasing political prisoners and especially for referring the findings of the DPRK to the International Criminal Court.⁵³ The Czech Republic expressed concerns about the possible frustration of the reform efforts in Myanmar, deteriorating freedom of press or assembly. And it also voiced its disenchantment with the political prisoners not being released or, as the case may be, making new prisoners from the ranks of activists and journalist.⁵⁴ Deteriorating situation in Belorussia was also criticized, especially with respect to the non-transparency of the election processes and non-releasing and insufficient rehabilitation of all political prisoners.⁵⁵ The Czech Republic regularly spoke against the situation in Russia, China, and Azerbaijan⁵⁶ and more briefly and fitfully about the situations in Bahrain, Iran, Egypt or Pakistan.⁵⁷

In his already mentioned speech, Minister Zaorálek also successfully summarized the thematic priorities, which formed and would form the core of the Czech human right multilateralism: *“They include the equal and efficient participation of citizens in political and public matters. [...] The level, to which women, ethnic or other minorities have access to decision-making processes in our societies, how they can intervene in the decision-making about budgets and other public policies, shows how democratic our societies really are.”*⁵⁸

He adumbrated that the decisive human right priority of the Czech activities in the multilateral organizations in the last at least three years was surely the issue of political and public participation. In this field, the Czech Republic showed initiative in 2015 for example by organizing and hosting, together with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, a discussion about this topic. Concerning civil involvement, J. Kára said the following: *“Shortage of opportunities – for women, minorities, people with disabilities, marginalized or otherwise threatened groups – to participate meaningfully in the administration of political and public matters has a destabilization impact on peace, security, and development.”*⁵⁹ The importance of this topic was confirmed by the third submission of the resolution dealing with participation, which was again unanimously approved with the support of 60 countries from all parts of the world. The resolution emphasized especially the potential of information and communication technologies for civil involvement.⁶⁰

The second topic, which became the core of the human right multilateralism *de facto* as late as in 2014, but which has clearly become the Czech priority, is the issue of women's rights and their position in the society. The importance of this topic for the agenda of human rights is also clearly outlined by the new *Concept*, which interconnects this issue with the issue of political participation. The *Concept* clearly conveys that *“the Czech Republic will also strive for the global strengthening of the position of women in the society. [...] the Czech Republic will focus especially on the issues related to participation of women in public life.”*⁶¹

One of the boldest acts within this priority was the co-submission of the Resolution 2242 about women, peace, and security, which was approved in October within the session of the Security Council on the occasion of the anniversary of the first resolution (1325) of the Security Council about this agenda. The permanent representative E. Hrdá emphasized at this occasion that the study analysing impacts of the Resolu-

tion 1325 clearly proved that the „*participation of women on all levels was the key to operative efficiency, success, and sustainability of peace processes, peacebuilding and peacekeeping efforts*”.⁶²

The Czech Republic also clearly spoke about this topic for example within debates about the integration of the gender perspective into the activity of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms. Here the Czech Republic, aware of its own problems, mentioned one example of good practice used by non-profitable organizations focused on women's rights in the form of databases of female experts intended for media, but also usable for example for the UN.⁶³ And similarly, another proposal from the Czech Republic was mentioned, which was focused on the reform of election laws, with the objective of presenting such rules so that women would account for at least 30% of all candidates in the ballot papers.⁶⁴ Similarly the women's rights were defended by Lucia Zachariášová from the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic within the discussion “Productivity, well-being, and gender policies”⁶⁵ or Deputy to Minister for Human Rights Marina Štěpánková in the Commission on the Status of Women.⁶⁶

A new topic, which was commented by the Czech Republic within the Council, was the hardly negligible issue of migration, of course. The representative J. Kára stated that the Czech Republic “*fully agreed with the call of the High Commissioner [for human rights] to find permanent solution of this crisis, in compliance with international human right conventions and humanitarian law. Such a solution must be complex and address the main causes, at the same time with offering specific help to refugees and migrants.*”⁶⁷ The Czech Republic also actively spoke in the 66th session of the Executive Committee of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and expressed its opinion especially about the situation of the Afghan refugees. Here Jan Kára emphasized that Afghan refugees formed a considerable part of the current wave of migration to Europe and that an important pillar of the solution of the migration issue was the issue of the development co-operation.⁶⁸ The migration issue is also frequently related to the June visit of Deputy P. Drulák to Geneva. Among others, he also met Deputy to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Thomas Alexander Aleinikoff. They were dealing with the issue of the so-called migration crisis in the area of the Mediterranean and the possibility of co-operation between Europe and the UNHCR. The will of the Czech Republic to relocate Syrian families from Jordan and offer a scholarship programme for the Syrian refugees in the Jordan refugee camp Zaatari was also appreciated. Similarly, the effort was highlighted to contribute to the support of internally displaced persons in Ukraine. P. Drulák also met the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein and the Chairman of the UN Human Rights Council Joachim Rucker. In addition to the situation of individual offices, they also dealt with the issue of migration in particular.⁶⁹

The General Secretary of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn Jagland, came to visit the Czech Republic in June. The last visit of the General Secretary of this organization took place in 2007. He was welcomed by Minister L. Zaorálek, who greatly appreciated the role of the Council of Europe in maintaining the human rights standards across the continent. During the meeting, human right issues were interconnected with the security rhetoric. “*At the time when Europe must face various crises, it is of ut-*

most importance to defend the principles, on which the Council of Europe is built,” said the chief of the Czech diplomacy. In addition to the issues of balance between the protection of human rights and fight against terrorism, the partners were also dealing with the issue of the events in Ukraine to a great measure and with other foreign policy topics and their relations to the protection of human rights.⁷⁰

An important event at the Council of Europe is awarding the Václav Havel Award. This year, it was awarded in Strasbourg by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe together with the Charta 77 Foundation and Václav Havel Library to one of the most prominent persons of the Soviet dissent and founder of the Moscow Helsinki Group Lyudmila Alexeyeva.⁷¹ The decisive human right event in the field of OSCE was surely the 39th Implementation meeting of the human dimension of OSCE. Last year, it took place at the turn of September and October in Warsaw. Here Czechia together with other 57 participating countries, representatives of civil society, international organizations and other actors discussed key European human rights topics. In their speeches, the Czech representatives were focused on the topic of fundamental freedoms; equal rights for women and men in all spheres of life; democratic institutions and the topic of two speeches, namely the issue of inclusion of the Romani people, played an important role.

Interesting news from the OSCE was the election of Ivana Dobešová, the head of the Permanent Delegation of the Parliament of the Czech Republic to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the member of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic for the ANO movement, to the position of the Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues during the 24th annual session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.⁷²

Another event worth mentioning was also the visit of the Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Michael Linka, to Prague. He met Deputy Kulhánek. In addition to the issue of the status of human rights in individual member states, both representatives were focused especially on the conflict in Ukraine and on the active role of the Czech observers in the OSCE missions, which was greatly appreciated by Director M. Linke.⁷³

From the perspective of international law, it is certainly important to mention that the Czech Republic is one of the first 30 countries, which ratified the annexes to the Roman Statute concerning the crime aggression and Article 8 defining war crimes. Hence, the Czech Republic expressed clear support to the International Criminal Court, considering it one of the main pillars of Czech foreign policy, as was said by the representative E. Hrdá.⁷⁴ The International Criminal Court is an important point of the Czech international law multilateralism. Let us also remember for example the important position of the ICC judge Robert Fremer, who has been working at the court since 2012. An important event was the election of the judge Ivana Hrdličková to the position of the chairperson of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, which was assumed by her in early March for the period of a year and a half. Hrdličková worked as a judge of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon from 2012 when she was appointed by the UN General Secretary.⁷⁵

Economic and development multilateralism of the Czech Republic

The decisive event in the field of economic and development multilateralism was a remarkable success in the form of being elected a member of the ECOSOC, i.e. to the UN Economic and Social Council, for the period of 2016 to 2018. The Czech Republic obtained 179 votes and, therefore, was elected for the East European group together with Moldova.⁷⁶ The importance of this institution is crucial especially from the standpoint of achievement of the new development agenda after 2015 when the validity of the development objectives of the millennium ended. Therefore, the Agenda 2030 shall ensure a global sustainable development in seventeen key areas and thanks to the membership in the ECOSOC, Czechia can participate in this development considerably.

The Economic and Environmental Forum traditionally forms an important part of this pillar of Czech multilateralism. This year, the 23rd annual event took place; it was dedicated especially to the administration of water resources and water management in the area of OSCE. The Forum was opened by Deputy J. Kulháněk together with the OSCE General Secretary Laberto Zannier. The objective of the meeting was especially avoiding possible conflicts resulting from this area and developing it as an area of co-operation.⁷⁷

Important support of the Czech Republic to the objectives of sustainable development was presented by Jaroslava Jermanová, the First Vice-Chairperson of the Chamber of Deputies within the panel debate “Changing Approaches to Policymaking: the Role of the SDGs”.⁷⁸ In her extensive speech, Jermanová emphasized at first that if sustainable development should function, the agreed rules should be complied with by everybody without exception, and at the same time she pointed out that it was necessary to obtain general social consensus for the idea of sustainable development and required measures. Finally, she also interestingly interconnected the emphasis on sustainable development with the aforesaid priority of women’s rights and gender equality.

The topic of sustainable development was also commented by Deputy to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Martin Tlapa during the general discourse within the High-level Political Forum about Sustainable Development.⁷⁹ Tlapa emphasized the necessity of monitoring, accountability, and review as the pillars of the successful implementation of the development agenda after 2015. Tlapa added that the High-level Political Forum “*about sustainable development was in a unique position to attract more political attention to the agenda of sustainable development and to ensure a balanced position of the economic, social and environmental pillars*”.

The issue of the development after 2015 is related to one significant personnel issue. Andrej Babiš, the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, met the UN General Secretary Ban Ki-moon in April. They dealt especially with the issues of the new development framework, conference in Addis Ababa and the issue of necessity of adequate funding of the development agenda by 2030.⁸⁰

One of the decisive events worth mentioning is surely the anniversary of 20 years since joining the OECD, which took place in December 1995. Joining the OECD was

one of the most remarkable symbols of signing up to the liberal democratic and capitalistic perception of the world. One of the clear signals, how much the Czech Republic developed and was duly included within this framework, was the entry to the OECD Committee for Development Co-operation as the first new member country of the EU, which took place in 2013.⁸¹

Another important event related to OECD was the first Czech appearance in the position of the vice-chair country at the Ministerial Meeting of OECD.

The Czech Republic co-presided over the meeting called “Unlocking Investment for Sustainable Growth and Jobs” with the Republic of Korea and France. As the name suggests, the meeting was focused on the efforts to support economic growth, however in the way that it was sustainable with respect to social and ecological impacts in the spirit of sustainable development, which becomes the main global framework of the development.⁸² Here the Czech Republic was represented by Minister L. Zaorálek, who emphasized, among other things, that *“inequality, climate changes, migration, and mobility represented huge challenges to our world. Unless we manage them, they can threaten our way of life or even the whole civilization.”* In addition to the afore-said issue of migration, a mixture of human rights and security topics was interwoven in the debates. Therefore, the ministers also expressed their opinions about the situation in Ukraine or about the topic of international terrorism.⁸³

THE MULTILATERAL DIMENSION OF CZECH FOREIGN POLICY IN MEDIA AND PUBLIC SPACE

The Czech media space rarely covers the Czech multilateral diplomacy directly or the meaning of the international organizations per se. However, even in 2015 news appeared that stirred attention of the media and brought the Czech multilateral policy near to the general public.

Thanks to the 70th anniversary, certain attention was paid to the UN. The media were focused primarily on interpreting attitudes of top politicians concerning this crucial institution. Especially the words of minister L. Zaorálek were reflected, who, despite awareness of the weaknesses, emphasized that the UN was still the key organization for the world. However, very critical voices resounded, for example from the pen of Jan Keller, who highlighted the total ignorance of the organization in the current policy of the powers. Generally, it only concerned an isolated media reflection of the importance of the crucial international organization as such.

Greater media coverage was provided to the annual 70th session of the General Assembly, with the emphasis logically put especially on the speech of President M. Zeman. In addition to the summary of Zeman’s recommendations in the global fight against terror, media commented critical voices, which were opposing Zeman’s naivety, saying why the powers should listen to the antiterrorist plans of the president of just a small country or criticism due to neglecting the events in Ukraine, including explicit mentions about the Russian aggression.

However, the biggest attention was paid to the UN with respect to Czechia concerning the hard criticism concerning the systematic violation of the rights of refugees, especially children, from the High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein. He clearly objected to the Czech practice of systematic and long-term detention, including families with children, as well as to the practice of seizing mobile phones and money. At the same time, he very clearly protested against xenophobic or, as the case may be, openly islamophobic speeches of President Zeman. Al Hussein ended his criticism by saying it did not concern necessary measures but a systematic practice, by means of which the Czech Republic tried to discourage the refugees from travelling in the country. The media then reflected a dementi statement of the president spokesman, as well as the statements of Lubomír Zaorálek, Milan Chovanec or Bohuslav Sobotka, who protested against the attacks, as well as the words of Ombudsman Anna Šabatová, Minister Jiří Dienstbier or Minister Robert Pelikán, who partially accepted the criticism.

As for other organizations, fairly remarkable attention was paid to the OSCE. However, primarily it did not concern the relations to the Czech Republic or Czech attitudes within that particular platform, but its role as the crucial monitoring organization with respect to the October municipal elections in Ukraine and also compliance with the peace arrangements and withdrawal of weapons in the hottest places of tension. With respect to the Czech Republic, the media usually focused on the Czech three-million contribution to such monitoring mission.

The media coverage of events within the Council of Europe was also interesting. Here the attention was paid more to the criticism of the Czech Republic again, namely in the context of the so-called Istanbul Convention that had been neglected for several years, i.e. the Convention of the Council of Europe on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. It was discussed that the Czech Republic belonged to the last states, which were refusing to sign the Convention due to incomprehensible reasons. Furthermore, basic pillars of the agreement were also presented as well as its importance of the first really complex tool of fostering women equality and suppressing this form of oppression and suppression of human rights.

Very interesting contribution to the public debate about the actual essence and meaning of Czech multilateralism was the book published in 2015 with the title: *The Czech Republic in International Organizations: between Theory and Practice*⁸⁴ written by the collective consisting of Michal Kořan, Veronika Bílková, Michal Kolmaš and Šárka Kolmašová in the Institute of International Relations. As the very title suggests, the composite authority prepared a theoretical study available to the laity public as well; it introduces the phenomenon of international co-operation to a wider public and elaborated its history or various typologies. However, what is even more important, on the basis of long-term research they offer very interesting reflexion of the Czech multilateral operation including the development of inclusion into the international structures and especially the analyses of the structures of the Czech membership and complex mapping and analyses of the financial costs. In addition to the descriptions, the book also offers a certain form of recommendations for examination

of the purposefulness of the membership or improvement of efficiency of the Czech functioning in the multilateral context. This publication is one of the biggest contributions to a wider debate about the very meaning of Czech multilateralism, which tends to be very marginalized if not neglected as a topic of the public debate within the Czech foreign policy.

CONCLUSIONS

In comparison with the previous years, nothing remarkable has changed in the overall evaluation of Czech multilateralism. Multilateral diplomacy can be defined generally as proactive, with emphasis on the co-operating line, while the individual partial areas offer somehow differing perspectives, of course.

Despite the end of the Czech mandate in the UN Human Rights Council, this part of Czech multilateralism has maintained its proactive nature and successfully followed up the previous actions. Therefore, we can say that human right multilateralism was defined by *creating a common policy* in 2015 too.

Like in the last years, in the field of security a stronger element of Europeanization can be observed. The main line of the security multilateralism could be described, therefore, as an *adaptation to the external policy* in particular. However, thanks to distinctive specialization especially in the issues of arms control and disarmament, it can be said that this main line is completed, especially in the area of the aforesaid specialization, with the trend of the proactive *creation of common policy*.

From the perspective of economic multilateralism, we can state that the Czech Republic does not invest so much energy in the above-mentioned areas; therefore, this area could be defined rather as an *adaptation to the external policy*.

Finally, it is necessary to add the field of the development multilateralism. As it concerns one of the key priorities of Czech foreign policy, it can be said openly that in this area the Czech Republic strives for active *creation of common policies*.

In conclusion, the already standard formula shall be added, however, that the overall proactive and co-operating appearance of the Czech multilateral diplomacy is not a consequence of conscious politicizing of the topic. Czech multilateralism has a rather steady tendency and is primarily in the hands of permanent missions and particular sections, the initiative of which is decisive for the resulting shape of the Czech actions within the international organizations. Certainly, this marginalization is not surprising at all, but it is rather an extension of the long-term established practice. However, even thanks to the aforesaid mapping of the Czech functioning in international organizations it is possible that a deeper reflexion would take place, which could result in more distinctive politicizing and more reflecting actions in this field.

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- ⁹ This hierarchy is well described by Kořan et al. (2015), p. 75–76. Similarly, for the analysis of Europeanization of the Czech multilateralism refer to the publication *Czech Foreign Policy in the Year...* (at least from 2010).
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