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# Czech Security Dilemma

## Russia as a Friend or Enemy?

*Edited by*
Jan Holzer · Miroslav Mareš

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The last decade has demonstrated that threats to security vary greatly in their causes and manifestations and that they invite interest and demand responses from the social sciences, civil society, and a very broad policy community. In the past, the avoidance of war was the primary objective, but with the end of the Cold War the retention of military defence as the centrepiece of international security agenda became untenable. There has been, therefore, a significant shift in emphasis away from traditional approaches to security to a new agenda that talks of the softer side of security, in terms of human security, economic security, and environmental security. The topical New Security Challenges series reflects this pressing political and research agenda.

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Editors

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*Editors*
Jan Holzer
Department of Political Science
Masaryk University
Brno, Czech Republic

Miroslav Mareš
Department of Political Science
Masaryk University
Brno, Czech Republic

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# Preface

The book is an outcome of a project titled *Russia as a Friend or Enemy? Czech Security Dilemma in an Interdisciplinary Perspective*, funded by the Grant Agency of the Masaryk University (project code MUNI/M/0921/2015). This was a three-year research project dealing with the process of securitization of the Russian issue in current Czech politics. None of the chapters has been previously published. At the same time, we emphasise that the contributions to this volume summarise latest research of their authors; the findings discussed in the respective chapters have appeared in several dozen scholarly journals in English, Czech, Polish, and Russian. In that sense, the working theses, methodologies, factual claims and conclusions of this book reflect the comments and feedback by a number of anonymous reviewers who have *de facto* also contributed to this book. We would like to express our thanks to them as well.

Although the individual chapters have clearly defined authorship, the book has consciously been written as a collective piece, as the respective contributions took into consideration the content of the other chapters in the book. All authors (who included not only political scientists and experts in security studies but also scholars of international relations, historians, linguists, and economists) provided feedback on each other's drafts and participated in extensive debates on security and politics in Central Europe, Russian history, culture, economy, current internal and foreign politics, and democracy and non-democracy. Numerous other Czech and international colleagues have also contributed in their own

way to the individual studies. On the whole, the book thus reflects the perspective of a truly interdisciplinary team of contributors, and corresponds with the broadly conceptualized goals of the research project.

Brno, February 2019, on behalf of the team of authors, Jan Holzer and Miroslav Mareš.

Brno, Czech Republic

Jan Holzer
Miroslav Mareš

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# Notes on Contributors

**Pavel Boček** is an Associate Professor in History in the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Czech Republic. He specialises in Central European, particularly Czech history, and also Russian history.

**Lucie Coufalová** is a Lecturer in the Faculty of Economics and Administration at Masaryk University, Czech Republic. She specialises and lectures on economic history and macroeconomics. She also has a background and a Ph.D. in Hispanic studies.

**Jiří Gazda** is a Linguist, Russian Studies Scholar, Associate Professor in the Department of Slavonic Studies, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic. Dr. Gazda is the author of a monograph entitled *The Dynamics and Internationalisation of Vocabulary of the Modern Russian Language* (Masaryk University, 2002; in Czech) and co-author of several monographs: *The Modifications of Language and Literature in Contemporary Russian Texts* (Masaryk University, 2007; with I. Pospíšil; in Czech) and *Languages in the Integrating World* (Muenchen: Lincom Europa, 2010; with M. Krčmová et al.), and around 60 articles and chapters. Habilitation Thesis: *Dynamics of Language Processes in the Transformation and Post-transformation Periods of the Russian Society* (2013).

**Jan Holzer** is a Professor in the Department of Political Science and Researcher at the International Institute for Political Science, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic. Professor,

Department of Theory and Methodology of Politics, Faculty of Political Science, Maria Curie-Sklodowska University, Lublin, Poland. Dr. Holzer is E.MA Director, European Inter University Center, Venice, Italy. He is also author and co-author of 12 monographs, most recent *Militant Right-Wing Extremism in Putin's Russia: Legacies, Forms and Threats* (Routledge, UK, 2018; with M. Mareš and M. Laryš), *Czech Politics: From West to East and Back Again* (Barbara Budrich Verlag, 2017; with S. Balík et al.), and 100 articles and chapters.

**Martin Jirušek** is a Researcher in the International Institute of Political Science and a Lecturer in the Department of International Relations and European Studies, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Czech Republic. His research focuses on energy security in the post-communist Europe, Russia's role in the European energy sector and the global and transatlantic dimensions of energy security. He published articles on the conceptual foundations of energy policy in Central-East and South-East European countries and the European Union, the role of Russia in the natural gas and nuclear sectors in Central-East and South-East Europe, and the role of the United States in the global energy sector. Martin leads a number of research projects focused on the aforementioned regions and topics. He also co-organizes the Masaryk University's annual summer school on energy security.

**Petra Kuchyňková** is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of International Relations and European Studies, Researcher at the International Institute for Political Science, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic. Dr. Kuchyňková is author and co-author of dozens of articles, e.g. *The Conduct of Gazprom in Central and Eastern Europe: A Tool of the Kremlin, or Just an Adaptable Player?* (East European Politics and Societies, 2018; with M. Jirušek), monographs, e.g. *Energetická bezpečnost asisjských zemí a Ruské federace* (*Energy Security of Asian countries and the Russian Federation*; Masarykova univerzita, 2014; with H. Koďousková, A. Leshchenko and M. Jirušek) and book chapters.

**Miroslav Mareš** is a Political Scientist, Professor in the Department of Political Science and Principal Researcher in the International Institute of Political Science, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic. He is a member of the International Association of

Political Science, European Expert Network on Terrorism Issues (chair of the subgroup on Right-wing extremist, Left-wing extremist and separatist violence in Europe between 2015 and 2017) and member of the editorial board of the Radicalisation Awareness Network. His research interests are in political extremism and terrorism and security policy in East Central Europe. He has published a number of books, numerous academic papers and book chapters. His most recent books include *Militant Right-Wing Extremism in Putin's Russia: Legacies, Forms and Threats* (Routledge, UK, 2018, with J. Holzer and M. Laryš); and *Challenges to Democracies in East Central Europe* (Routledge, UK, 2016, with J. Holzer).

**Josef Šaur** is a historian and literary critic, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Slavonic Studies, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic. Dr. Šaur is executive editor of *Novaia rusistika* journal and author of a monograph *Boris N. Čičerin o ruských dějinách: státní škola jako historiografický a společenský fenomén* (2015, *Boris N. Chicherin on Russian History: State School as a Historiographic and Social Phenomenon*), and 40 articles and chapters.

**Tomáš Šmíd** is a political scientist and security expert, Senior lecturer in the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic. Dr. Šmíd is former Fulbrigt Fellow at Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, SAIS, The Johns Hopkins University, Washington, DC (2010–2011) and author and co-author of several monograph and numerous articles.

**Radomír Vlček** is a Senior Researcher in the Institute of History, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. He is also the Head of Eastern Europe Research Centre and the Chairman of the Czech Society for Slavonic, Balkan and Byzantine Studies. He is an external lecturer at the Faculties of Arts and Education at Masaryk University. He specialises in the history of Central and Eastern Europe between the eighteenth and twentieth Centuries, particularly Russian history and ideology.

**Tomáš Vlček** is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of International Relations and European Studies and the International Institute of Political Science of Masaryk University, Czech Republic. He is a member of the Center for Energy Studies, an independent research platform, and of the Czech Nuclear Education Network academic association.

He has taken part in numerous government and academic projects on energy security and energy policy and has undertaken a number of research forays to Russia, USA, and countries in Europe, especially the Central and Eastern Europe, as well as South Eastern Europe. His research focuses on the nuclear and oil sectors from a commodity perspective, and the energy security of Central and Eastern and South Eastern Europe from geographical perspective.

**Libor Žídek** is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Economics and Administration at Masaryk University, Czech Republic. He is the author and co-author of several monographs (Žídek, L.: Transformation in Central Europe, CEU Press, Budapest-New York, 2017; Žídek, L., *Centrally Planned Economies: Theory and Practice in Socialist Czechoslovakia*, Routledge, 2019; Žídek, L.: *Transformace české ekonomiky, 1989–2004.* C. H. Beck, 2006) and articles focused on economic transformation in Central Europe. He has given invited lectures on economic transformation in a number of countries, including the USA, Canada, Japan, Germany, the UK, Poland, Finland, Ukraine, Jamaica and Hungary. His research primarily focuses on economic history, centrally planned economies and economic transformation in Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of the communist regimes. He lectures in Macroeconomics I, World Economic History I, II, Economics of Transformation.

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CHAPTER 1

# Russia as a Czech Security Enigma: Introductory Remarks

*Jan Holzer and Miroslav Mareš*

As a young boy, I (Jan Holzer) would often pass by a wall that had these grand white numbers written on it.

2:0

That graffito shouted out the result of an ice hockey match between the Czechoslovakian and Soviet national teams at 1969 Ice Hockey World Championship in Stockholm. The otherwise mundane sporting clash became legendary in Communist Czechoslovakia, as this particular victory constituted a kind of consolation for August 1968 when armies of five Warsaw Pact states (led by Soviet forces) invaded the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (CSSR). In the view of Kremlin political elites of that time, lead by Leonid I. Brezhnev, an invasion was the only way of halting the reform process of the so-called Prague Spring and the realisation of

J. Holzer (✉) · M. Mareš
Department of Political Science, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic
e-mail: holzer@fss.muni.cz

M. Mareš
e-mail: mmares@fss.muni.cz



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the doctrine of "socialism with a human face" which they—more or less accurately—considered dangerous for the stability of the entire communist bloc.

The present volume does not aim to critically reflect on the 1968 events.[1] The regard for Russia and all things Russian at that time dropped to an all-time low among Czechoslovak citizens at that time. It was not by chance that the derogatory term "Russkies" ("Rusáci") rose in popularity in the 1970s and 1980s, as it which articulated a particular political and social "archetype" attributing all the vices of Communism to Russia. This is how an ever increasing part of the Czech society voiced its negative opinion on Communism—notwithstanding the fact that linking Communism exclusively to its Russian source was a merciful self-delusion, for radical (revolutionary) socialism that got entrenched in modern Czech politics long before the Russian revolutionary developments took place, and had distinctively Central European—or perhaps Austrian-Hungarian—roots.

After the 1989 events and fall of Communism, the possibility of reinvigorating Czech sympathies towards Russia sounded like a pure political fantasy. The then catchphrase in Czech politics was the "Return to Europe" which in fact became reality after the Czech Republic joined the NATO and later the European Union—even though it took longer than many in Central Europe expected. The Czech Republic, as the successor state to Czechoslovakia, which disintegrated in 1992, *finally* seemed to have become an enduring part of the West, of its political structures and civilisation values. It was the same West which, represented by French and British political elites' actions, was said to have betrayed Czechoslovaks in München in 1938; the same West from which the country was forcibly ripped away after the Second World War. Curiously, another "ice hockey miracle" served as a symbolic affirmation of this alleged return home: The surprising triumph of the Czech national team in the 1998 Nagano Olympic Games, the first ever Winter Olympics which featured star players from the National Hockey League.[2] At last, we were back in the West—and this time, truly "for eternity"…

However, recent developments in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) seem to support the claim that, over and over again, our projections tend to be "overtaken by history". Notions such as threat, risk, worry or fear, which were gradually dropping out of the Central European public vocabulary after 1989, have suddenly started gaining in substance as well as importance. All of a sudden, the historically oft-cited Czech oscillation between the West and the East (Balík et al. 2017), one that was thought to

have been resolved by the collapse of Soviet Communism (understood in the Czech context as *Russian* communism, as noted above), reappeared. What is more, it now incorporates important security considerations.[3]

Contributors to the present volume believe that this situation calls for an up-to-date study investigating the Czech understanding of current affairs in CEE. The CEE region, which provides the broader geographical backdrop to this book's individual chapters, is analysed mainly in a diachronic perspective. The book examines the security dimension of contemporary Czech politics, understood as current external orientation of the Czech state. In accordance with recent conceptual trends in social sciences, this implies examining of all manifestations of security issues in the realms of politics, economy, culture, media, mentality, and so on. However, we also take into consideration the problem of historical and structural presumptions, that is, old controversies and conflicts over the definition of interests and value orientations of the Czech polity, as well as over the determination of fundamental foreign policy goals of the Czech state and its relationship to major external actors.

After all, social scientific analysis of any given security constellation presupposes identification of relevant actors. Contemporary CEE are quite understandably populated by a wide range of both state and non-state actors, among which the European Union and Russia play pre-eminent roles. Both have substantial influence over the CEE geopolitical and geocultural region; both not only aspire to transform this region but have the power to do so. Nevertheless, in the present volume we frame the security dimension of Czech politics exclusively with reference to Russia—its statehood, regime, polity, history, economy, and culture.

One might naturally ask why the Czech–Russian relationship should be considered unique or otherwise useful for analysis of the security situation in CEE. Controversially, for the last two centuries, Russia has represented a ubiquitous, or even internally constitutive, and at the same time dichotomising topic in Czech culture and politics. The relationship to Russia is a weighty concern for all Central European national polities (for some, e.g. Poland, this debate has become even more intensive). No other CE country is however as internally riven in its stance on Russia as the Czech Republic; nowhere else in the region does the Russian issue divide both the political landscape and the society itself as much. What is more, the distribution of sympathisers and critics is remarkably balanced here—or more precisely, there are regular swings of support towards the respective (opposing) trends. This is evidenced by the recurrent changes of *foreign,*

*political, and mental inclinations of the Czech polity* and the accompanying uncertainty regarding its desired place either in the West or in the East. This could serve as a first-take concise justification of the subject matter of the present volume.

Early traces of a deeper Czech engagement with the Russian question can be found in the realist, anti-Russophile, and often ironic work of Karel Havlíček Borovský (1886), the founder of Czech journalism. On the other hand, still in the second half of the nineteenth century the young Czech political society witnessed the emergence of an exceptionally spirited Slavophile movement, at least with regard to the CE context. The Slavophile current was an understandable response on the part of some Czech elites to the extremely complicated realities of the contemporary Czech–German relationship—and specifically to the then-thriving non-Slavonic projects of modern state- and polity-building (that is, Pan-Germanism and Austrianism) in the Central European—then Habsburg-ruled—geopolitical space (Kořalka 1996, pp. 90–137). In short, the Russian question was a permanent element of both Czech national renaissance and regular political life in the nineteenth century.

From the very beginning, Czech–Russian relations involved an important security dimension because they reflected the broader Europe-wide security developments. Here we leave aside cases of Russian military involvement in the CE region, for example during the Napoleonic wars,[4] even though they certainly contributed to the image Russia developed within the Czech society. Russia however played a distinct role during the First World War when it endorsed the demands for national self-determination raised by exiled Czech political elites; among other things, Russia allowed the formation of the Czechoslovak Legion on its territory.

In other words, Russia remained the centrepiece of heated intellectual and public disputes also during the twentieth century within the Czech society: a subject of both assent and dissent, of hope and rejection. Notable contributions included the brilliant study of the Russian revolution by Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1915/1916),[5] or the critical analyses of Bolshevism by the historian Jan Slavík (e.g. Slavík 1936) which were among the first of their kind worldwide. As regards contemporary political events, the continuing presence of an influential Russian element was evidenced by the phenomenon of Czech Pan-Slavism which cut across party affiliations, as well as by the turn of the radical wing of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party to Soviet-inspired ideas (and later, at the turn of 1920s/1930s its complete submission to the decision-making mechanisms of and ideo-

logical direction by the Moscow leadership, in the name of "internationalism"). There was also an internationally significant factor in that interwar Czechoslovakia became a major refuge for "white" anti-Communist émigrés. This had tragic ramifications both during the Second World War (as groups of these emigrants collaborated with the Nazi regime) and after, when forcible deportations ensued and many emigrants were murdered by the NKVD.

After Germans were eliminated from the Czech territory via post-war expulsion of the German minority, a central assumption formulated earlier by the father of Czech historiography, František Palacký, may be argued to have been resolved by history. Palacký (1836/1848) identified the "German issue", or the incessant clashes and competition between Germans and Slavs, as the heart of what became known as the Czech question. Russia, which had always constituted a natural counterpoise to the German motif within Czech conscience, culture, as well as politics, was now invited to replace Germany as the new substance of the Czech question—and remained so for the rest of the twentieth century.

This is why the arrival of Soviet troops in the Czechoslovak territory in 1944–1945, Soviet support for the Communist coup in February 1948, activity of Soviet advisors during the so-called Stalinist trials, or the already mentioned occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet army between 1968 and 1991 were all ascribed within the Czech discourse to "Russians", even though other nations of the USSR also participated. At the same time, different groups of the Czech polity judged these events and developments differently and often in opposing ways. Examples include, first, the widely accepted gratefulness to the Soviet Union and its troops for liberating Czech lands from fascism *versus* negative experiences of those who suffered under Soviet oppression or witnessed Soviet armies' crimes during the liberation; and second, the completely opposing views of the August 1968 invasion held by, respectively, supporters and opponents of the Normalisation regime of the 1970s and 1980s.

Russian–Czech relations during the twentieth century formed a subset of Soviet-Czechoslovak relations. As such, they reflected broader political developments, such as, joint membership in the Anti-Hitler alliance, competition between the Western and Eastern blocs during the Cold War, or the consequences of adoption of the Brezhnev doctrine. They thus spilled over to the realms of military or external security[6] as well as cultural and science diplomacy, achieving its heyday in the latter dimension after the 1978 joint space mission of Alexej Gubarev and the Czech astronaut Vladimír

Remek—who was the first person from a country other than USA or USSR to reach outer space.[7] Soviet-Czech cooperation in areas of economy and energy also had significant strategic impact (as was the case, e.g. with the Druzhba oil pipeline).

The contributors to this book see all these facts as justifying scholarly focus on Czech–Russian relations, for it reveals the unique Czech perspective on Russia, one that seems to differ from those prevalent in other Central European polities—Hungary, Poland, Austria, or Slovakia. As noted above, the unique features of the Czech debate on Russia stems not from its fervour or internal contradictions, but from the fact that these intensive clashes come and go in exceptionally balanced and historically alternating formations.

Such an approach also makes it possible to embed the main rationale of the book in present-day concerns. Our goal, then, is to investigate current threats and risks concerning Czech security which arise from the very existence and activities of the Russian state and its authoritarian regime, especially as regards the possibility of a geopolitical reorientation of the Czech Republic.

Conceptually, this book is framed by the classic Schmitt categories of *friend* and *enemy* (*Freund und Pfeind*; see Schmitt 2007; Gudkov 2004, 2005). In our view, their main advantage lies in conveying a realist conception of politics which steers clear of moral and ideological assumptions when studying relations between sovereign political units, while being aware of the possibility of existential struggles among them. The authors of this book consider it fruitful to analyse contemporary Czech–Russian relations through the lens of the friend vs enemy distinction, the two sides of which represent support for and negation of "one's own way of existence" (Schmitt 2007, p. 27). According to this conception, politics is the site of resolution of public conflicts arising from natural—Marxists would say dialectical—antagonisms. One consequence of this is the justified assumption of a dual nature of mutual acknowledgment—regarding, on the one hand, reception of Russia by Czechs, and Russian self-perception on the other, including its perception of the external world.

As for Russian self-reflection, scholars on Russia have routinely distinguished two basic variants (Shiraev 2010). The first builds on the assumption that Russian (geo)-political, cultural, and religious self-identification has been always rooted in a negative concept of enemies of Russia, both external/foreign and internal, that is, those infiltrated within Russian society. Such an attitude, out of which the socio-political categories of *ours* and

*alien* arise (Nadskakula 2013) is said to reflect dominant mentality behind Russia's domestic and foreign policies alike[8]—including their present-day incarnation, which can be traced to the restoration of a personalised authoritarian type of rule at the beginning of the twentieth century which was keen on gradually escalating the relations with the West, especially with "Europe". A deeply ingrained, confrontational stance of the Russian elites is supposed to be the key element among these invariables, one that is directed both inwards (against internal enemies and evildoers) and outwards, in the sense that international relations are intrinsically hostile to Russian identity. Conflicts of the past and present, conventional or unconventional, are said to have infused Russian society with a peculiar understanding of the world, namely as a place defined primarily by competition, struggle, and war, as opposed to dialogue and consensus. This is where the category of *the enemy* proves useful as a methodological tool for comprehending contemporary Russian politics (Lucas 2008). The hybrid conflict in Eastern Ukraine seems, combined with the "Little Russia" project, seems to confirm this view, documenting the growth of negative attitudes within Russian internal discourse (as an aside, the language of pro-Kremlin commentators is hardly much different from that of anti-Kremlin voices; see Dugin 2012; Limonov 2013; Bennetts 2014, 2016). The impact on security interests of other actors is obvious, as is the urgent need on the part of these actors to identify the resulting threats and possible ways of responding to them.

This conflict-driven, enemy-fuelled construal of Russia however does not tell the complete story. With respect to the West, Russia's efforts in the course of history to expand its influence have always simultaneously incited its interest in establishing contacts with Europe, learning from examples and incentives; generally in emulating Europe and perhaps overtaking her. Moreover, Russia repeatedly became the European bulwark against threats from the East. It is precisely this image of Russia as the outpost of Christianity and barrier against danger (presently, one could point to Russian self-perception as the frontline force in the fight against Islam; see Dannreuther and March 2010) which has always stimulated visions of its saviour duties, besides reinforcing the Russian conviction that while Europe cannot do without Russia, she does not bother to try to understand and fully appreciate it—or even that Europe is a debtor to Russia. Perhaps all of this is at play at once, as the chaotic situation in the Syrian conflict attests. For these reasons, also the category of *the friend* remains relevant if we are to understand Russia of the past and of the present.

Some authors have therefore claimed that duality, or parallel development in mutually contradictory tracks, represents a fundamental attribute of Russian thought and culture, including their perception by outsiders (Billington 1966; Bäcker 2007). Several sources of this have been identified: historically embedded cultural-religious dualities, namely paganism vs Christianity and Western vs Eastern Christianity (for a Czech perspective, see Putna 2015); spoken East Slavonic language vs written South Slavonic language imported via religious texts; old vs modern creed within the Orthodox Church; or patriarchal Russia vs the new Russia of Peter the Great. All these contrasts gradually evolved into politically salient tensions. Among the latter, the original big issue arose between Westernism (*zapadnichestvo*) and Slavophilism, a tension that stood for the binary opposition Russia vs Europe, or Orient vs Occident. These axiological dualities survived the October (socialist) revolution and the coming into power of the Bolshevik regime (Zubov 2014). Even scholarly clashes over the proper interpretation of the ideological identity and the degree of historical (dis)continuity of the Bolshevik regime (see Malia 1994; Pipes 1995), or of the national vs imperial dimensions of the process of building the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Szporluk 2003; Nowak 2011) followed the traditional dualist logic.

The bottom line is, Russia has always consciously compared itself with the West and striven both to catch up and to define its stance towards it. This, in turn, allowed influential sections of West- and Central European polities and their elites to project into Russia their own visions, dreams, and illusions, which in their majority stemmed from a dissatisfaction with imperfect political realities of their own societies. In some peculiar cases, Russia was even invoked as the main ally or associate in the struggle against variously defined and/or felt threats. For some Central- and West-European actors, Russia thus became an idealised frame of reference: The Czech example discussed above, with its German-dominated historical baggage, is a case in point in both its being typical and unique.

Seen in this light, the identity of Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin's regime strikes us as a topic well worth a deeper study. By developing a new state doctrine—even if upon a selective synthesis of divergent and often controversial episodes of Russian history—combined with gradual restoration of internal stability which in turn enabled revitalisation of imperial ambitions (Mankoff 2011; Heinrich 2013), Russian leadership succeeded in overcoming the period of uncertainty that reigned after the collapse of the USSR and during Boris Nikolayevich Yetlsin's era. What these had in

common was the loss of Russia's superpower status. Current Russian politics is then characterised by renewed imperial aspirations (Trenin 2009; Tsygankov 2010), innovative utilisation of economic and energy-related pressure (Högselius 2013), and rise of radicalised actors in domestic affairs (Mareš and Laryš 2015). Although the project of state modernisation failed (Ledeneva 2013), Russian elite's response to the challenge of Colour revolutions was quick and efficient (Ó Beacháin and Polese 2010; Horvath 2013; Lyytikäinen 2016), and forces in opposition to Putin's regime have no substantial footing as of now (Bennetts 2014, 2016). The latest and truly emphatic evidence of the restored Russian confidence is exemplified by the conflict in Eastern Ukraine and the annexation of the Crimea; both cases included Russia's initially covert but gradually open support for local separatist forces.

At the same time, sanctions imposed on Russia by the international community in the aftermath of the Ukrainian events were perceived as offensive rather than threatening by the Russian elites. Moreover, they found it increasingly easier to find willing partners in Western or Central Europe. These affiliations were often justified on the basis of the interest, shared by Russia and the so-called West, in fighting against international terrorism. In political scientific terms, Russia behaves as a modern authoritarian regime (Holzer and Martinek 2018) which has grown into a full-fledged political alternative to Western liberal democracies.

* * *

This introduction outlined the breadth of topics and provided some background for analysis of the relationship between the Russian and the Czech states. In the view of the authors of this book, these themes bear heavily on the current security situation in the CEE region, and understanding it requires familiarity with the wider context. The book thus explores the current Czech relationship to Russia in light of particular historical legacies which, jointly with Russia's power politics and its interests in the Central European region, feed into the present uncertainty of the Czech polity about its foreign policy orientation. So the Czech security dilemma can be again posed in terms of a dualism: While Russia is perceived by many as an imminent security threat, there is also the view that cooperation with Russia is the preferable option as regards both international and domestic security goals.

In terms of methodology, the book falls under the wider conception of *foreign policy analysis*. That is, we explain current securitising moves within the Czech society on the basis of a complex reconstruction of structural factors (political regime, economic regime, economic and energy capacities, socio-demographic attributes, cultural interactions, mentality patterns) as well as of securitisation issues (protection of economic interests, organised crime, migration flows, counterintelligence activities, protection of democracy, extremist and radical actors and cybersecurity).[9] Both contribute to the riven character of the Czech attitude towards Russia, of the community as a whole and of individual actors within its public life.

The respective chapters acknowledge shifts in social science analysis of security issues that happened since the early 1990s. The catchwords here are *widening* and *deepening* of security analysis, in addition to traditional security concerns. We thus first address the societal and communication dimensions of security which supplement traditional subjects of inquiry, such as military, internal-security or economic-security matters. And second, we are interested in how security is construed by a wider array of actors apart from the states, mainly various social and political groups (especially those who appeared threatened). Our usage of the term *securitisation* draws on the Copenhagen School and social constructivism in general (Berger and Luckmann 1966): just because a certain issue becomes a matter of security does not follow that there is an objective threat. What is implied is that the issue has been publicly (especially in speech and writing) presented as such (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 24).

Description and analysis of discursive construction of threats as well as of motivations of actors who engage in securitising moves thus constitute a central element of the book. Needless to say, events such as fall of the Iron Curtain, collapse of the Warsaw Pact, disintegration of the entities to which both the Czech Republic and Russia were successor states (i.e. Czechoslovakia and Soviet Union), and the Czech accession to NATO and EU are best defined as classic *hard security issues*. This is one reason why the study of Czech–Russian security relations is still dominated by the traditional approaches. This has been reinforced by awareness of and research on the so-called hybrid threats, or hybrid wars: Not least with reference to the events in Ukraine from 2014, this term captures coordinated activities in several security sectors at once, with the aim of achieving state-defined goals vis-à-vis the enemy. Various hybrid undertakings, including a broadly construed instrument of propaganda (that covers, among others, influencing

public opinion or disturbing society by spreading hoaxes), are subsumed within security studies within the military security category.

However, even the lens of geopolitics and "great strategies" make space for explanation of non-military dimensions of the relationship between a small Central European state and an East-European powerhouse with global imperial ambitions. Migration from Russia, scheming by foreign intelligence agencies, impact or Russian-speaking organised crime on societal security, "strategic" background of economic relations, consequences of so-called "gas wars", and common environmental threats—all these are highly pertinent aspects of security in Central Europe.

More specifically, the authors of this book ask the following questions regarding the specific Czech reflection of Russia: *What is the perception of Russia within the Czech polity? What is deemed agreeable/offensive about contemporary Russia? Which "Russian" topics are salient/inconsequential for the Czech society, and which function as unifying/dividing factors? What are Czech political actors (not) afraid of with respect to Russia? Regarding the present strategy of Russian political elites, are the dual analytic categories of* friend *and* enemy *applicable to the Czech case? Is Czech actors' behaviour influenced by historically embedded and shaped political, socio-cultural, economic, and military processes and relations?* Ultimately, we pose the deliberately normative question: *Is it appropriate to be afraid of Russia?*

## Notes

1. Those interested in modern Czech and/or Czechoslovak politics can consult the recent book by Balík et al. (2017).
2. For readers keen on symbolism, we add that the Czech team beat Russia in the tournament final (1–0), and the only goal was scored by a player named *Svoboda* which means *Freedom* in English.
3. The Czech historian Jiří Hanuš (2017) ventures to claim that a reopening of the so-called "Dispute over the meaning of Czech history" is taking place.
4. Russian armies arrived to the historical territory of Czech lands as a part of the alliance between the Habsburg Monarchy and Russia against Napoleon; the major clash came in the 1805 Battle of Austerlitz.
5. Originally professor of philosophy at the Charles-Ferdinand University in Prague, T. G. Masaryk became the first president of independent Czechoslovakia in 1918. In the era of Austrian-Hungarian monarchy, he was however primarily known as a public intellectual.
6. As documented, among others, by cooperation of both countries' intelligence agencies in their fight against terrorism: The Czechoslovak *State Secu-*

*rity* assisted the KGB (its Soviet counterpart) in its actions against Armenian terrorism.

7. It is worth noting that Vladimír Remek—the world's 87th astronaut, Hero of the Soviet Union, and member of the Czechoslovak/Czech Communist Party both before and after 1989 (between 2004 and 2013 Remek actually sat in the European Parliament, having been re-elected in 2009)—became the Czech Ambassador to Russia in January 2014.
8. This mentality sprang from several sources, including experience with the Tatar rule, alignment with the Byzantine tradition through envisioning the Moscow state as the third Rome (after which "no fourth is coming") where secular and religious authorities become one; the history of Russian territorial state-building; emergence of the absolutist patrimonial model of rule of the Samoderzhavi (Tsarist autocracy), the triumph of revolutionary Bolshevism, and so on (Kivelson and Suny 2017).
9. On this level of analysis, we rely on official documents provided by the Czech government which define threats and risks arising from both international and domestic political developments. See Drulák and Horký (2010), Drulák and Střítecký (2010), Drulák and Handl (2010), and BIS (2017).

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CHAPTER 2

# The Hybrid Campaign Concept and Contemporary Czech–Russian Relations

*Miroslav Mareš, Jan Holzer and Tomáš Šmíd*

## Introduction

Russia presents a substantial challenge to Czech security policy. Given the specific geopolitical, historical and cultural circumstances of Czech–Russian relations, this challenge is extraordinary when compared to relations with other European countries. A complex legacy of contacts between states in the territories of today's Russia and Czech Republic and the current international as well as domestic developments—that is the basis for a complicated set of relations in which a great number of actors are involved.

M. Mareš (✉) · J. Holzer · T. Šmíd
Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic
e-mail: mmares@fss.muni.cz

J. Holzer
e-mail: holzer@fss.muni.cz

T. Šmíd
e-mail: tsmid@fss.muni.cz



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Vladimir Putin's authoritarian regime is perhaps the best known, and certainly the most active, of these actors. Its key geopolitical interest or objective in the former Eastern bloc is to weaken or even entirely break the links between the countries of that region and the Euro-Atlantic structures, especially NATO, less so the European Union. In their response to Russia, or more precisely to its current regime, Czech political groups are strongly stratified, from Russophile and pro-Kremlin[1] factions to openly Russophobe entities. Understandably, Russia uses its allies in the Czech political spectrum to pursue its interests. For this reason, Russian interests in the Czech Republic are securitised in official security documents; yet at the same time, important relations are maintained with Russia in areas that are relevant to security.

The aim of this chapter is to describe the dilemma that Czech politics experience with respect to Russia in the domain of security and to put this in the context of the current debates about 'hybrid conflicts'. To enable understanding of the current situation, we note the main issues from the historical legacy, both those preceding the establishment of an independent Czech Republic and the quarter of century of its independent existence. Mainly, however, we will characterise the present strategic level of Czech–Russian relations from the viewpoint of security in Central Europe; considering the pro-Kremlin subversive activities occurring within the Czech Republic and the countermeasures taken against them, as well as cooperation between the Czech Republic and Russia, which continues in some security sectors despite a number of controversies. The description of the issues in Czech–Russian security relations will lead into the formulating the conceptual framework of a *hybrid campaign*, which will then be applied in the subsequent chapters of this monograph.

## Historical Legacies of Relations and Security up to 1992

In current security debates about Czech–Russian relations, historicism is a dominant theme. This often means that references are made to the nineteenth century or the first half of the twentieth century (see below), but most often the actors in the disputes justify their current positions by referring to the liberation of Czechoslovakia in 1945 and the occupation of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (ČSSR) by the Warsaw Pact armies in 1968. The frequent use of the words 'Russian', 'pro-Russian' and 'anti-Russian' in the Czech public discourse thus logically results in a confus-

ing mixture of legacies of tsarist Russia and Soviet communism with their expressions of relations towards the present political regime. The fact that a broad range of historical references is used to justify views of the contemporary Putin regime also reflects the breadth of the legitimacy claimed by this regime: it, too, combines an appreciation of non-communist tradition (the legacy of tsarist Russia, the Russian Orthodox Church) with memories of the positive aspects of the Soviet era (especially the victory in World War II). In sum, an understanding of the security consequences of the current Czech–Russian narratives is conditioned by a broader historical commentary.

A pan-Slavic, pro-Russian orientation was established when modern Czech politics was formed in the second half of the nineteenth century, as one of the tendencies of modern civic development (national-civic identities), responding primarily to the competing, so-called 'Greater Germany programme' (Kořalka 1996, pp. 90–137). Thus, it was in Prague, for instance, that the first All-Slavic Congress was held in 1848. Paradoxically, the Czech radical Marxists (the Czech communists formed from them in the 1920s), later the crucial advocates of Russian influence, showed no substantial Russian leanings under Austro-Hungary, promoting rather the concept of Austro-Marxism, i.e. the implementation of a socialist revolution within the Hapsburg monarchy. They did, however, study the Russian theorists of revolution. Incidentally, Karl Marx had a negative view of Slavophiles and the Slavic revival and that the Russian Social Democrats (Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, Vladimir I. Lenin included) were pro-Western and criticised the Slavophiles (Pospíšil 2004, p. 106). In the period before World War I, the main supporters of pro-Russian pan-Slavism were the Czech nationalists led by Karel Kramář, who in May 1914 proposed a constitution for a Slavic empire led by Russia's tsar (Eberhardt 2016). Furthermore, foreign policy support for pan-Slavism only became a trend in Russian thinking at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Harbuľová 2004, pp. 130–131).

World War I profoundly impacted Russia and the Czech lands, as well as the future of their mutual relations. Some Czechs[2] including some conscripted soldiers expressed pro-Russian sympathies. Individuals, as well as whole units, deserted on the Eastern Front, joining the Russians; the case of the 28th infantry regiment in 1915 became particularly famous, though the circumstances of how its troops came into Russian captivity are subject to discussion (Lein 2011, pp. 53–202). The Czechoslovak Legion formed in Russia fought against Austro-Hungary (thus its members were then seen

as traitors) and Germany. The Battle of Zborov on 2 January 1917 became a Czech 'national myth', especially during the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938). It is significant, however, that the Czechs had actually fought on both sides (Medek and Syřiště 1927).

After the Bolshevik Great October Socialist Revolution and the start of the civil war, the Czechoslovak Legion found itself in a difficult situation in Russia. The impossibility of taking the legionnaires through the front line meant they had to advance through Siberia. The original intention of remaining neutral vis-à-vis the warring parties, the 'Whites' and the 'Reds', proved unrealistic: Czechoslovak legionnaires found themselves in violent conflict with the Bolsheviks. The bulk of the Legion eventually managed to return home. It is a historical paradox that whereas at the inception of Czechoslovakia this new country was involved in events in Russia, throughout the rest of the twentieth century and also in the twenty-first century the opposite dominated: Russian influence in Czech or Czechoslovak politics.

During the interwar First Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938), the response to Russia was ambiguous. Political leaders put Slavic ideas into the context of the humanist tradition and presented the Czechoslovak state as a natural centre for democratic Slavs. President Tomáš G. Masaryk, for instance, initiated the 'Russian Action', to support anti-Bolshevik émigrés from Russia; in 1922, the Slavic Institute was created (Pospíšil 2004, pp. 104–105); and the pro-Russian Karel Kramář became the first Czechoslovak prime minister. His anti-communist leaning has ultimately led him and his National Democratic Party (later National Unity) to take a sharp anti-Soviet turn. That policy line was also claimed by Czech fascists—who were marginal overall—led by a veteran of the Legion in Siberia, Radola Gajda. Paradoxically, he was accused of being a Soviet spy (Pejčoch 2011, pp. 53–54). The numerous Russian émigrés in Czechoslovakia then cultivated pan-Slavic Russian imperial traditions.

Following the success of the Bolsheviks and creation of the Soviet Union, a wave of sympathy for the country arose among Czech communists (the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, KSČ, was founded in 1921, as a multinational party). The communist argument was ideological, not pan-Slavic. Throughout the 1920s and into the early 1930s, the Soviet Union, aided by allied communist parties acting under instruction from the Third International, waged a confrontational campaign against Europe's democracies, including Czechoslovakia. It was only in the 1930s that Moscow started supporting the 'popular fronts' policy in the domestic politics of European countries. In this context, a Czechoslovak-Soviet treaty of mutual

assistance in case of an attack was signed in 1935, due to which Nazi Germany called Czechoslovakia 'Stalin's aircraft carrier' in the middle of Europe (Müller 2011, p. 170).

In September 1938, when Czechoslovakia's links with Western powers collapsed (with the Munich Agreement between France, the UK, Germany and Italy on ceding Czech borderlands to Germany), the Soviet Union proclaimed its readiness to aid Czechoslovakia, even though this was an unrealistic prospect as the two countries did not share a border (John 1997, p. 781). Despite this, in the minds of many Czechs this position contrasted with the 'Munich betrayal' by the West, and this continues to be exploited by pro-Kremlin actors to this day (Valerij 2015).

When the rest of the Czech lands got occupied in March 1939 and World War II started, two Czechoslovak centres of exile emerged, one in London around the democratic president, Edvard Beneš, and the other in Moscow around the communist leader, Klement Gottwald. However, in their views of the Soviet Union, the two exile centres quickly came closer to each other, as President Beneš shared the 'Munich syndrome', mistrusted the West and promoted the idea of a two-sided foreign guarantee for post-war Czechoslovakia. So the Soviet Union recognised Beneš's government; in December 1943 a treaty of friendship, mutual assistance and post-war cooperation was signed; and in spring 1945, when the Czechoslovak exile government returned to their homeland, then being liberated, they came from the East and not from the West.

During the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, it was largely the Czechoslovak communists who advocated Slavic ideas (Kroupa et al. 1988, pp. 422–423); some resistance groups, for instance, adopted Slavic-oriented names (the Movement for a Slavic Homeland; Styx 1990). Sympathies among the general population towards the Soviet Union were growing. Czech collaborator organisations that sought to promote an 'Arian Slavic policy' within Hitler's 'New Europe' concept were a curiosity. The activities of Russian collaborators had greater consequences for the Protectorate. The collaborator 574th Cossack Battalion, which operated as part of the SS towards the end of the war, massacred civilians in Zákřov, Moravia, during an anti-partisan operation (Černý 2006, pp. 228–231). By contrast, the First Division of the Russian Liberation Army, formally subordinate to the Committee for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia, which was established in 1944 in Prague under the command of General Andrei Andreevich Vlasov, betrayed Germany in May 1945 during the 'Prague uprising' and helped to liberate Prague (Auský 1992, pp. 38–39).

This action of the 'Vlasovites' continues to be a historical and political controversy (Smyslov 2014).

The liberation of most of the Czech territory by the Red Army at the end of World War II was viewed positively by most people, despite the many excesses that accompanied it (rape and murder of civilians, Russian secret service operations against 'White Guard' émigrés and their hauling off to the Soviet Union; Bystrov 2003). Czech society also accepted the decision of its exiled political leaders to surrender Carpathian Ruthenia—part of the pre-war Czechoslovakia—to the Soviet Union. President Beneš was the guarantor of the line that saw the Soviet Union as a key ally. In his book *Úvahy o slovanství* [Reflections on Slavism, 1947] he described the new Slavic policy as a democratic idea of Slavic nations cooperating as equal partners, and rejected 'Russism and Russophilia, even if it were a new, democratic, popular, communist or Soviet Russism' (Beneš 1947, p. 300). All-Slavic associations, such as the Slavic Committee (following on from the Czechoslovak Committee for Slavic Mutuality, established in London in 1942) were also very active under the 'Third Czechoslovak Republic' (1945–1948) and enjoyed substantial government support. The concern that the price to be paid for the Soviet Union's contribution towards vanquishing Nazism would be the installation of a non-democratic regime of the Bolshevik type was minimal among the Czech society.

The Sovietisation of Central Europe, however, soon became a reality. It is important to note that the rise of communism in Czechoslovakia was largely a domestic political phenomenon and Soviet influence was weaker than elsewhere. Having already taken control of the security forces (Kaplan 2015) and, above all, acting in the context of a strongly pro-left set-up in the already curtailed political party system, the takeover by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in February 1948 was essentially calm. Thus, whether taking control over Central Europe was an effect of traditional Russian expansionism (Veber 2015, pp. 4–5) or whether it was an ideological export, does not matter very much. The full integration of Czechoslovakia into the Soviet sphere of influence was confirmed with the creation of the Warsaw Pact in 1955. Immediately after 1948, Soviet intelligence advisers got to work in Czechoslovakia, helping to prepare, among other things, the mass show trials that were part of the state's communist rule of terror; their orders were respected by the top Czechoslovak state and Communist Party leaders, as these advisers directly mediated Stalin's will (Kaplan 1993; Tejchman et al. 2000; Kalous 2002). The Russian language became compulsory in Czech schools, and imported Russian culture got the upper hand

in the Czech lands. Although Slavic traditions were omnipresent, they were not too politicised; the regime largely legitimised itself through references to Marxism–Leninism. The exploitation also had an economic dimension: for example, in order to build its own nuclear capabilities, the Soviet Union started mining Czech uranium (Mareš 2012, p. 310).

Equally, the political changes had strong geopolitical meaning: for the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia became a strategically advantageous territory where combat operations could be conducted, should the Cold War heat up. This plan was based on a traditional Russian view, which sought to provide security by controlling as much of Eastern Central Europe as possible.[3] The Czechoslovak People's Army was to serve Soviet objectives (Luňák 2007). From the mid-1950s, the Soviet Union considered deploying its own military units, and later nuclear weapons, in Czechoslovakia. A suitable opportunity for that arose in 1968, when Czechoslovak attempts to create 'socialism with a human face' and increasing advocacy for neutrality provided the pretext for the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the armies of five Warsaw Pact countries (Fidler 2004, p. 144). These armies were supported by domestic actors, especially Stalinist circles in the KSČ (Žáček 2010). The 1968 invasion, understandably, stimulated a vast outpouring of anti-Russian feeling, as Czech popular opinion across the board ascribed it to the 'Russians' and 'Russia'; thus this became a symbolic antithesis to the May 1945 liberation of Czechoslovakia.

During the period of 'normalisation' (1969–1989), Czechoslovakia continued to be fully subject to Soviet security needs, and this included the deployment of OTR-22 nuclear missiles in 1983 (Tomek 2013). At the same time, Czechs tended to conflate the Soviet regime and Russia, although they could only manifest their antagonistic view of it symbolically, for example, in ice-hockey matches between the two national teams. The arrival of *perestroika*, spearheaded by Mikhail Gorbachev, created a modest 'Gorbymania', when the wave of interest in Russia even affected Czech pop culture (for example, Jiří Korn's song 'Miss Moskva'); this was perhaps the last spontaneous show of affection by some in the younger generation for the Russian world in Czech history, even though it was expressed with some irony and matched by a parallel admiration for a Western lifestyle. By contrast, for the Czechoslovak communist elite, Gorbachev's leadership was so liberal that Czechoslovak censors felt compelled to censor the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's daily newspaper, *Pravda*.

The fall of communism in Czechoslovakia occurred without any action on the part of the occupying armed forces; the Soviet leadership at the

time had given up on Central Europe. By 1991, the Soviet troops had withdrawn, and the Warsaw Pact ceased its activities in the same year (Matějka 2005). During the August 1991 putsch in Moscow, the majority in Czechoslovakia—with the exception of dogmatic communists—sided with the new regime. The subsequent disillusionment of the communists was deepened by the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The disintegration of both the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia in the early 1990s required a new articulation of relations between their successors, the Russian Federation and the independent Czech Republic.

## The Security Dimension of Czech–Russian Relations in 1993–2013

After establishing the independent Czech Republic on 1 January 1993, pro-Russian sympathies were largely marginalised in the new political landscape. However, pro-Russian Czech political forces gradually became more active, especially with respect to the new political leaders' determination to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). This intention was resisted by Russia, which sought a different system for European security. Meanwhile in 1993, Presidents Václav Havel and Boris Yeltsin signed a treaty of friendly relations and cooperation. Various Czech organisations, not all of which showed pro-Russian sympathies—consider, for example, the anarchists and neo-Nazis—opposed Czech accession to NATO. Other factors in Czech–Russian relations were: Russia's substantial economic debt to the Czech Republic, a hangover from the Soviet era; the possibility of Russia exerting pressure thanks to its position of an energy supplier, which the Czechs sought to mitigate by diversifying energy sources; and relations with new Western allies, in particular, Germany (in 1996 the Czech Republic asked Russia for a position upholding the legitimacy of the Potsdam Agreement, an instrument in its negotiating the 'Czech–German Declaration' with Germany).[4]

Pro-Russian groups that emerged in the final period of the Czechoslovak federation and the first years of the independent republic largely exploited the fears among the Czechs of the demands voiced by the Sudeten Germans and the rise of a new pan-Germanism. Slavic-nationalist groups, such as the Club of the Czech Borderlands and the Slavic Union were typically formed by members of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM) and other communist factions, but sometimes they cooperated with a section of the extreme right which rejected a pro-German orientation. Also initiated

by the KSČM was a broader opposition platform called 'Citizens against NATO' (Mareš 2004, p. 27).

However, Russian interests and sympathies towards Russia were not a strong then. For instance, then-President Yeltsin was not popular among Czech communists, who blamed him for the fall of communism and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The general public continued to hold a negative image 'Russians', often associated them with organised criminal groups. The same image included other ethnicities, such as Ukrainians, Armenians, Chechens and Georgians. Their shared Soviet heritage and the Russian language united them.

One of the earliest expressions of open sympathy towards Russia was the document 'Ten arguments against drawing the Czech Republic into NATO', adopted in June 1997 by the 'Caucus of the Officers of the Czechoslovak People's Army' in Brno. In 1998 an All-Slavic Congress was held in Prague—150 years after the first congress—at which the International Slavic Committee and its Czech branch, the Slavic Committee of the Czech Republic, were founded. In its manifesto, the congress rejected eastern NATO enlargement and pointed to NATO's warlike nature and its connections with pan-Germanism and capitalism (Účastníci všeslovanského sjezdu 1998, p. 47). The then Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies (the lower chamber of the Czech parliament) Miloš Zeman sent a congratulating telegram to the congress, whereas President Havel distanced himself from it (Chvála 1998, p. 5). Leaders of the Slavic Committee denied that the all-Slavic unity they proclaimed was interchangeable with Russian dominance. However, according to the Czech intelligence agency (Bezpečnostní informační služba, BIS), which was concerned about the activities of the intelligence services of the Commonwealth of Independent States countries, this was a 'covering manoeuvre' that aimed to mobilise the public and win space in the media as well as political influence (Bezpečnostní informační služba 1998).

Russia failed to prevent the eastern enlargement of NATO. When Yugoslavia was hit by air strikes shortly after the Czech Republic joined the organisation in 1999, the Czech pro-Slavic forces were readily mobilised (Mareš 2004, p. 28). The nationalist sections of both the extreme left and right expressed pro-Serbian sympathies (Mareš 1999, p. 26). Speculations about threats of attacks against transports of NATO (especially US) troops towards Kosovo were not confirmed. The pro-Russian end of the spectrum also supported Russia in its fight against Chechen independence, drew attention to the Islamist terrorist nature of the Chechen struggle

and criticised the activities of Czech NGOs (such as People in Need) and journalists in Chechnya (Ditrich and Souleimanov 2007).

It was at this time that Aleksandr Dugin's ideas started to spread in the Czech Republic, thanks to a translation of his work *The Great War of Continents* (Dugin 1999). However, Dugin's Eurasianism met with resistance from some all-Slavic activists, as it defined itself in opposition to Slavophilia and accepted certain German geopolitical concepts (Krejčí 2008).

Initially, the arrival of Vladimir Putin as Russian president at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries was no watershed. For instance, in 2000, the deputy chair of the KSČM, Václav Exner, criticised Putin's populist campaign in the journal *Slovanská vzájemnost* [Slavic Mutuality]. Referring to a report by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), he declared that the main players in Russia's electoral campaign were the politically powerful and rich owners: '[…] it was not the voters but those who chose Vladimir Putin. This is likely to influence the future direction of his policy' (Exner 2000, p. 3). A 2002 agreement between Prime Minister Miloš Zeman and President Vladimir Putin to gradually clear and repay Russian debt (scheduled to be completed in 2013) could have suggested non-conflicting future relations.[5] In the mid-2000s, Czech pro-Russian opinion continued to support the Russian struggle against Chechen insurgents, viewed the US war against terror after 9/11 and the 2003 Iraq invasion critically and campaigned against joining the EU, without scoring any political points with any of these issues. A trend of a closer cooperation with Russia was, however, foreshadowed, for instance by the 2005 transformation of the Society of Friends of the Nations of the East into the Czech–Russian Society, headed by the first Czechoslovak cosmonaut, Vladimír Remek.

Then the plan to locate a US radar base in the Czech Republic brought a significant breakthrough in Czech–Russian relations and in the exploitation of domestic pro-Kremlin opinion for political subversion. The radar was to be part of a US missile defence system. Talks started in 2002 under President George W. Bush. Information about the plan was first made public in 2005 and immediately triggered an extensive public debate. Mirek Topolánek's government supported the radar, the opposition was against. In 2008, the USA and the Czech Republic signed a SOFA agreement on the radar's location, but the incoming Barack Obama terminated the project before it was ratified (Mareš 2013, pp. 71–72).

Russia launched an international campaign over the planned radar installation, which combined accommodation (it offered its own facilities for a

shared system of defence against missile threats from the Middle East) with threats of retaliation (deployment of Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad region; cf. Hildreth and Ek 2009, pp. 16–23). The radar project divided the Czech society: according to a Public Opinion Research Centre (CVVM) poll in late 2008, 8% strongly agreed with the placement of the radar in the country, 20% mostly agreed, 25% mostly disagreed, 40% strongly disagreed and 7% did not know (Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění 2009, p. 3). Indeed, it could be argued that the canon of Czech policy since the fall of communism—that is, its pro-Western orientation—was called into question. As Kryštof Kozák noted, 'Although the planned radar was primarily to track hypothetical missiles fired from Iran, in Czech political discourse the main attraction of constructing the base was that it would deter Russia for good and decrease its influence in the region. These geopolitical connections were not lost on the Russians, who protested strongly and threatened to take counter-measures' (Kozák 2009, p. 264).

The campaign against the radar activated Czech pro-Kremlin voices. The *No to the Bases!* initiative brought together a number of all-Slavic, anti-militarist, extreme left, green and Muslim organisations. The coordinator of *No to the Bases!* denied that his initiative was influenced or funded from Russia (Glivický 2008). The communists organised their own campaign (called *No to the Radar!*) and so did organisations close to them; for instance, former senior army officers from the communist period founded an organisation they called *Soldiers Against War* (see Bastl, Mareš et al. 2011, p. 46). There were also sporadic protest activities by anarchists and the extreme right (Mareš 2013, p. 72).

The arguments of the anti-radar campaign were largely that the radar carried potential risks (international-political, military and allegedly also health); but also that it would not protect the Czech territory; it would serve the US and NATO interests, be aimed against Russia; would threaten the unity of the EU (some countries and political groups in the EU were against the project); make the Czech Republic a more attractive terrorist target; and it would draw foreign troops into the country (Hošek 2009, p. 8; Mareš 2013, p. 72). Parallels with 1968 were also drawn.

Rallies in many parts of the country, blockades and intrusions into the Brdy military zone, where the radar was to be located, helped to attract media attention to the arguments. Russian experts were invited into the country; for example, General Evgeny Buzhinsky was invited by the then strongest opposition party, the Czech Social Democratic Party (Dudek 2008). The Russian media opted for a dramatic tone: for instance, in the

*Izvestiya* newspaper, an article by a putative reserve captain of the Strategic Missile Troops, Mikhail Volzhinsky, was published in May 2008, warning that in the event of escalation between Russia and the USA the bases of the American missile defence system in Poland and the Czech Republic would become targets of pre-emptive nuclear strikes by Russia to win opportunities for crisis negotiations. These descriptions of threats, taken up by the Czech media (Novinky 2008) strengthened resistance to the radar base. Some opponents even considered guerrilla war against American troops, but these were marginal voices (Mareš 2013, p. 72). The energy issue (Czech dependency on Russian raw materials) was immanently present in the debate, and this was reflected in the Czech engagement in resolving the Russo–Ukrainian gas war at the turn of 2008/2009 during Czech Republic's EU presidency.

In this context, the American decision not to go ahead with the radar in 2009 was seen as a defeat of the pro-Western forces in Czech politics. That the Czech Republic stood between the interests of the crucial world powers was confirmed to some extent when President Obama chose Prague as the place to sign to the New START treaty on reducing the nuclear arsenals of the two countries with President Dmitry Medvedev on 8 April 2010.[6]

## The Hybrid Campaign, 2014–2018

The late 2013 events in the Ukraine put new pressure on the Czech–Russian relations. First, Viktor Yanukovich's regime fell and the 'Maidan' emerged; this was followed by vigorous Russian counteraction and the activation of pro-Russian separatist movements, with the aim of annexing Crimea (which was successfully achieved in March 2014) and to create 'Novorossiya' as a Russian satellite (two unrecognised quasi-states remain: the Donetsk People's Republic, DNR, and the Luhansk People's Republic, LNR). These events also activated Russian special military forces, cybernetic state and quasi-state units as well as a propaganda machine, which aimed to promote Russian interests and influence public opinion not just in Russia and the Ukraine, but also in other countries, the Czech Republic included (Galeotti 2016, pp. 51–75). The West—including the Czech Republic—was not ready for the war in eastern Ukraine (from March 2014 to February 2015), nor for the new ways in which it was waged.

In this 'Ukrainian crisis', the Czech government rejected Russia's annexation of Crimea (which it has not recognised) and supported EU economic and other sanctions against Russia (Ministerstvo průmyslu a obchodu

2016). Nonetheless, intense debate on these matters raged among Czech experts, politicians and the general public, involving openly pro-Kremlin political entities and actors, who questioned the efficiency of sanctions and of Western policy towards Russia. (The official documents accepted the term 'hybrid war' to describe the events in Crimea and the Ukraine; to put pressure on public opinion without any direct escalation of the war, the term 'hybrid threats' started being used.) The President Miloš Zeman played a specific role; in October 2017 in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) he asserted that Crimea should not be returned to the Ukraine, which should receive financial compensation from Russia—a proposal both countries rejected (Czech News Agency 2017).

The political debates (initially focused on the Ukrainian events) gradually moved to other security issues impacting Central Europe, with the migration crisis and Islamic terrorism in the headlines. Pro-Russian groups sought to present the migration crisis as a failure of Western policy, whether it be the result of unsuccessful action in the Middle East over the previous decades or the 'neo-Marxist decadence' and 'pseudo-humanism' of Western democracies, which favour 'newcomers' over their domestic workforce. This was complemented by criticisms of the support for LGBTQ rights and other post-modern phenomena (Máca 2016). There were also narratives that talked of a 'global Zionist conspiracy' and employed other anti-Semitic motifs (Tydlitátová 2017, pp. 317–429). Thus, the rejection of the existing Czech relations to the West, and sympathies for Putin's consolidated authoritarian regime, seen as a fully fledged, systemic alternative, have become an obvious context for these debates.

The Czech Republic was affected by the complicated relations Russia has with other countries. Yevgeniĭ Nikulin (an arrest warrant was issued on him in the USA) was detained by the Czech police in 2016. Allegedly, he hacked LinkedIn and Formspring networks as well as the Dropbox file hosting service in 2012, obtaining a large amount of their users' personal data. Russia, which officially suspected him of internet theft in 2009, also asked for him to be extradited. A legal battle over Nikulin's extradition started in the Czech Republic; and in March 2018 Nikulin was extradited to the USA where he was charged. Russia sharply rebuked the Czech Republic for this (Česká tisková kancelář 2018).

The Czech Republic also became involved in the 2018 'Skripal affair', which scarred relations between Western democracies and Russia.[7] The Czech involvement concerned the following points: (1) After Sergei Skripal had fled to the West, he came to the Czech Republic in 2012, met up

with Security Information Service officials, who then met up with him in Britain (Kundra and Spurný 2018); (2) Acting in solidarity with the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic expelled three Russian diplomats from Prague; Russia then expelled three Czech diplomats from Moscow in retaliation (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí 2018b); (3) The NATO JCBRN Defence Centre of Excellence (based at the Czech town of Vyškov) was involved in investigating the Skripal case (Kundra 2018); and (4) In March 2018, Russia named the Czech Republic as the possible source of Novichok (the nerve agent thought to have been used to murder Sergei Skripal). Although the Czech government denied this, President Zeman ordered the intelligence services to investigate the manufacture of the nerve agent in the Czech Republic, a step which was convenient for the Russian interests in the affair.[8]

Thus, at the time of writing in 2018, Czech–Russian security relations are undergoing some complicated developments. In order to grasp their nature and their importance, in the sections that follow, these relations will be presented at three analytically separate levels. At the strategic level, relations will be put in the broader context of security and the importance of the Czech region for global geopolitics. Then selected forms of pro-Kremlin subversion in the Czech Republic will be analysed in some detail—a threat from the viewpoint of officially declared Czech interests—and countermeasures. Finally, we note a contradictory dimension to security relations, namely mutual collaboration on promoting the security interests of the two countries.

## Contemporary Czech–Russian Security Relations: The Strategic Level

In terms of Europe's geopolitical arrangement, the Czech Republic is important due to its central position on the continent, and from the military viewpoint this has been manifested throughout history in a number of important military operations, in which Russian or Soviet armed forces were involved (the Battle of Austerlitz, 1805; the final operations of the Red Army during World War II, 1945; and the expected use of the Czech lands as a theatre of war should the Cold War become hot; cf. Luňák 2007). Its position at the centre of the continent is also important in terms of the radar control of the trajectories of aerial weapons, including ballistic missiles, as well as for controlling the oil and gas pipelines that run through the region. Thus, there has been a strong and traditional German geopolitical

interest in the Czech lands—today this is expressed largely in the sphere of commerce. The USA has also long been aware of the strategic importance of the country; but under the last two US presidents, this has weakened.

Russia's interest is similarly intense and traditional. For Moscow, the Czech lands are an important 'wedge' into Western Europe, over which it needs to have at least some control. First, the area must not become a platform for anti-Russian campaigns; second, it would allow advancing Russian operations in the centre of Europe.

During the first two decades of the Czech Republic, Czech politics was aimed at dealing with this geopolitical reality by establishing a broad consensus on how to ground the Republic—its organisation, interests and values—in Western political and military structures. Of the relevant (in Sartori's sense) political parties, the only one to disrupt this consensus was the anti-system KSČM. The consensus lasted for more than two decades. In the 2010s, however, pro-Russian voices became louder, tending either towards an undisguised Eastern geopolitical orientation or asserting a traditional (in terms of propaganda, very effective) notion of the Czech lands as a 'bridge between the West and the East'. In the context of the migration crisis and the criticisms Western political leaders were subjected to, visions of a separate bloc of Visegrád Group countries or the Czech Republic acting in isolation with no fixed international belonging, were also proposed.

We believe that this change was primarily caused by a change in the Czech society—in its political preferences and its values—in other words, by a transformation of politics, naturally responding to stimuli emanating from the international environment. The original pro-Western majority became divided to some extent. Seen from the outside, the dividing lines (determining the relationship with the USA, the EU and their leaders, and positions on individual policies) might look as if they could be overcome; but they make sense from the viewpoint of the Czech political traditions. Some of the directions outlined above (advancing the Visegrád group or isolationism), by contrast, entirely lack party-political representation. They do, however, illustrate the tendency to search for alternatives to belonging to the West; as disillusionment can take various forms and motivations. Pro-Russian sympathies are the most conspicuous alternative (Holzer 2015, pp. 91–95).

Nonetheless, the Czech Republic is a NATO member, and as such is seen as an adversary by Russia. Indeed, the country gradually replaced its Russian armaments with domestic products or imports from the West (with the exception of Mi-24 combat helicopters). For this reason, pressure is made

to weaken Czech support for, and its position in, NATO. Russia maintains strong official representation in the Czech Republic (its embassy in Prague is oversized in personnel terms). It also uses energy to exert influence, as shown in particular by its efforts to become involved in modernising Czech nuclear power plants. From the Russian point of view, the existence of a strong pro-Russian support is extremely advantageous, as it can use its activists for various purposes (for example as delegates in 'observer missions' organised by Russia in Crimea or the Donbass).

Today, the deployment of Czech troops to the NATO mission in the Baltics is seen particularly negatively by Russia and pro-Kremlin forces. Should there be a military attack against NATO, the first strike would probably go through the 'Suwałki Gap' to secure the Kaliningrad region and capture the Baltics. Then, the speculation goes, traditional Cold War era plans would be dusted off, and an attack would be mounted via Poland and the Fulda Gap (Sokov 2017). Another—possibly complementary—option is an attack on northern Europe, including neutral Sweden and Finland (Gotkowska and Szymański 2017, pp. 3–4). If the offensive were to turn south with the aim of striking fear in Western Europe and force the states there to capitulate without a fight, Russian troops could make a southern assault via Poland and—probably through the Moravian Gate—arrive in the Czech territory. Russia denies it has these plans, but undertakes massive military manoeuvres (allegedly including training for a nuclear bombardment of Warsaw; Stoicescu 2017, p. 2). Direct, mass military confrontation is not the only alternative, however. Another course is the internal weakening of the European Union, because it co-creates the security environment and its policy has negatively responded to many Russian measures (see the anti-Russian sanctions after the annexation of Crimea).

From a Russian viewpoint, the Czech Republic is also interesting as an actor in various regions of the world. For example, Czech relations with Israel and Syria are watched with respect to Russian interests in the Near and Middle East. The pro-Kremlin forces in the Czech Republic support the Russian intervention in Syria. The role of the JCBRN Defence Centre of Excellence in Vyškov, mentioned above in connection with the Skripal affair, is important to the deployment of chemical weapons in Syria. Czech–Russian relations also have overlaps with relations with other countries and regions, including China, Iran and Latin America.

## Subversive Activities of Pro-Russian and Pro-Kremlin Forces in the Czech Republic

There is a surprising multitude of forms and actors used by Russia and/or Czech pro-Kremlin groups to weaken the pro-Western position of the Czech Republic and to disrupt its defensive capacity as a NATO and EU member. It is often difficult to identify whether specific Czech entities act on direct Russian instruction or for Russian money, or whether they are acting from their own genuine convictions.

In terms of the ideologies of the pro-Kremlin groups, one can identify among ethnic Czechs the advocates of the communist-Slavic legacy; left-nationalist politicians and organisations of a non-communist persuasion (for example, Jiří Vyvadil, the chair of the informal group Friends of Russia); an anti-EU circle (e.g. around the website *Protiproud*); and the nationalist pro-Slavic extreme right (e.g. Adam B. Bartoš's National Democracy). Proponents of several ideologies can coexist in one organisation; as is the case of Friends of Russia (Máca 2015). Furthermore, there are pro-Putin forces in the Russian diaspora; some Ruthenians also take a pro-Kremlin position, expecting Russia to support separatism and weaken Ukraine; and so do some Serbians living in the Czech Republic, because of their traditional mutuality with Russians.

Clandestine forms of the Russian regime's involvement (under the cover of the diplomatic corps, in the Russian diaspora or among Czechs) include espionage and influencing operations, within Czech Republic and abroad. The Russian civil intelligence agency, the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) and the military intelligence agency, the Main Directorate of the General Staff (GRU) operate in the Czech Republic. The Federal Security Service (FSB) also has its interests—for example, with respect to the Chechen diaspora.

The fact is that an important part of pro-Putin politics in the Czech Republic takes place in the open, in the form of political proclamations by leaders of legal political parties and organisations, including the relevant ones. In specific debates and disputes, it is often very difficult to distinguish openly pro-Kremlin organisations from those actors that criticise the Western political mainstream but do not express sympathies for Putin's Russia. In any case, the number of public rallies and meetings of pro-Kremlin organisations has increased. For instance, since 2015, the pro-Putin biker gang Night Wolves has repeatedly visited the Czech Republic (Mareš 2016a, pp. 128–129). Recently, the *No to the Bases!* initiative has

become active again, though some who were involved in its anti-radar campaign now distance themselves from the initiative, pointing to its openly pro-Kremlin direction (Redakce Deníku referendum 2015).

Some paramilitary units in the Czech Republic are also pro-Russian. 2015 saw the emergence of 'Czechoslovak reserve soldiers against the war planned by NATO command', which aimed to take action if there were an anti-Russian military campaign. Various militias are focused on acting against illegal migration (Vejvodová et al. 2016, pp. 30–36). Apart from groups that are publicly active and proclaim their adherence to the law, there are also hidden militant groups. For instance, in 2015 threats were made on social networks of a violent attack on a US military convoy passing through the Czech Republic (there was no attack; Mareš 2017b, p. 86). There are also Czech volunteers in separatist units in the Donbass; two of them were allegedly killed in 2014 (Mareš 2017a, pp. 77–78). However, no direct Russian military activity against the Czech Republic (with the exception of espionage) can be confirmed. Official Czech websites were hacked from Russia, but their perpetrators could not be identified. The biggest known hack, by attackers from multiple countries (including Russia), targeted the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2017. Many emails and documents were stolen (Česká televise 2017).

Furthermore, Russian commercial firms and their Czech partners help to promote Russian state influence, especially in the energy sector. A pro-Putin commercial pop-culture (T-shirts with pictures of the Russian president, symbols or parts of the kit used by Russian *Spetsnaz*, the special operations forces, traditional Russian products, etc.) also has some (growing) importance in 'winning hearts and minds'.

An important (undoubtedly the most visible and the most media-attractive) arena for pro-Kremlin forces is provided by cyberspace, especially trolling (voluntary and directed) and alternative media, where the 'alternative' means different from the pro-Western mainstream. The first websites disseminating a mixture of true information and manipulative articles, outright disinformation and fake news were established at the turn of the 2000s and 2010s. In 2014, there was a breakthrough in their activism. A typical example of these new generation websites is *Aeronet*. A large base of supporters on social networks helps to disseminate the messages through the alternative media.

The Czech Republic has taken several countermeasures against these Russian activities, especially since 2014. The country has had a basic structure for uncovering Russian espionage from its inception, thanks to the

specialised sections in its own intelligence services. Public reports by the Security Information Service describe Russian espionage activities. Since the mid-1990s, reports by the Ministry of the Interior noted extremist all-Slavic organisations (Mareš 1999, p. 19). As a result of the events in the Ukraine and more intense pressure, the government adopted a new security strategy in 2015. The strategy document pointed to the 'weakening of the cooperative security mechanism and of political and international legal commitments in the area of security' as the first threat. Without naming Russia directly, it was obvious that the strategy referred to Russian expansionist tendencies and the means used to achieve their goals:

> Some states seek to achieve a revision of the existing international order and are ready to pursue their power-seeking goals through hybrid warfare methods combining conventional and non-conventional military means with non-military tools (propaganda using traditional and new media, disinformation intelligence operations, cyber attacks, political and economic pressures, and the deployment of unmarked military personnel). These countries build up their military potential and seek to carve out for themselves exclusive spheres of influence by means of destabilising neighbouring countries and taking advantage of local conflicts and disputes. (Vláda České republiky 2015, p. 13)

In 2016, the Czech government carried out a national security audit. Expert teams verified the readiness of the country to counter security threats in various sectors. One chapter was dedicated to the activities of foreign powers, another to hybrid threats. These were understood as the 'DIMEFIL (Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economic, Financial, Intelligence, and Law Enforcement)' model—that is, as threats affecting the diplomatic/political, information, military, economic, financial, intelligence, and legal sectors (Vláda ČR 2016, pp. 127–128). Prompted by the audit, the Ministry of the Interior created the Centre Against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats in 2017. The Ministry of Defence also developed structures to wage hybrid warfare. Cybernetic security is being strengthened generally (in 2017, an independent National Office for Cybernetic and Information Security was created) and military forces are being reorganised for cybernetic defence (Feix and Procházka 2017). Some non-governmental organisations and academic researchers have also focused on fighting the hybrid campaign (Mareš 2016b, p. 26).

The Czech Republic has also taken legal action; for example, it started to prosecute its citizens who fight in the separatist units in eastern Ukraine.

However, in Czech law, the fact that the DNR and LNR are unrecognised states is a problem. When attempts were made to prosecute under anti-terrorism legislation, it was disputed whether the DNR and LNR were in fact terrorist organisations (Mareš 2017a, pp. 79–80). In April 2018, the High Court in Olomouc, acting on the instigation of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, disbanded the association 'Representation Centre of the DNR', as it made a confusing impression that it was the official representative of the Donetsk People's Republic in the Czech Republic (Krajský soud v Ostravě 2017).

The Czech Republic conducts extensive activities internationally. In spring 2015, a US army convoy—Operation Dragoon Ride—crossed the country to reinforce the defences of Poland and the Baltics (Velvyslanectví USA v České republice 2015). This was used for propaganda. In 2017, Czech troops went to Lithuania as part of the Training Bridge group and since June 2018 Czech contingents have been in Lithuania and Latvia as part of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group (Ministerstvo obrany 2018).

## Security Cooperation Between Russia and the Czech Republic

Despite the many problems in mutual relations as described above, the Czech Republic and Russia do cooperate in security. At present, this mainly concerns internal security in both countries. In 2011, the two governments signed an agreement to collaborate in fighting crime and to cooperate in police, customs and similar areas (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí 2013). In 2017, the Russian deputy interior minister, Igor Zubov, visited the Czech police president, Tomáš Tuhý, to discuss closer cooperation between the two countries in the areas of organised crime, the illegal narcotics trade, currency counterfeiting, terrorism and extremism, cybernetic crime and illegal migration (Ministerstvo vnuternych del Rossijskoj federacii 2017). However, so far one cannot speak of true cooperation with tangible results.

For the Czech Republic as an EU member, Russia is important as a potential illegal migration route (Delegation of the European Union to Russia 2017). If the Mediterranean and Balkan routes were to be closed, not just Central and East Asian, but also some Middle Eastern and African migration, could move through Russia. This would require increased cooperation.

Since the early twenty-first century, cooperation has developed between Russia and the Czech Republic in fighting neo-Nazi extremism and Islamic terrorism. For example, in 2013 Russia's security forces worked with the Prague police on uncovering a branch of the Russian neo-Nazi organisation, Wotan Jugend. Here, too, different views of some issues persist, however (Úřad pro zahraniční styky a informace 2017).

Together with Austria, the Czech Republic is a member of a joint project with Russia entitled 'Development of Joint Principles, Procedures and Standards on the Integration of Immigrant Labour between the Russian Federation and European partners (ERIS)' (The Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic; Federal Ministry of Interior and Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria; and the Federal Migration Service of the Russian Federation 2016).

Economic exchange between Russia and the Czech Republic is a distinctive area of their mutual relations. Trade activities of forces close to President Zeman, especially of people around his adviser, Martin Nejedlý, and a group surrounding a former army officer and ex-communist, Zdeněk Zbytek, have attracted significant (and critical) media attention. More relevant are the activities of Czech firms in Russia, most prominently Petr Kellner's PPF, but also others (Alta, Škoda Auto, Hamé, Moravské naftové doly, Unistav, Farmtec, PSJ, Sitel, Favea, Chemoprojekt, Koh-i-noor, AGC Flat Glass Czech, EGAP and ČEB). Also active are the Trade Chamber for CIS States and the Russian–Czech Mixed Trade Chamber (founded in 2014). These contacts can be viewed differently: one might emphasise the risks implied in Russia's interests in the Czech Republic (Chmelařová 2017, pp. 12–13). More importantly, Russia is not an important Czech partner in terms of either trade or investment (see Chapter 4). It is true, however, that Putin's regime treats the economy as inferior to politics.

Because of international developments and the Czech military's switch from Soviet equipment to that of domestic and Western equipment, as noted above, there is not much military cooperation between the two countries at present. There is some with respect to history—for example, remembrance events for World War II Soviet soldiers. In 1999, the two countries pledged to tend each other's military graves (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí 1999). In 2018, the Russian ambassador to the Czech Republic attended the opening of an exhibition on 'The Holocaust: extermination, liberation, rescue', staged in Terezín/Theresienstadt by the Czech Centre for Genocide Studies and the Russian Research and Educational Holocaust Centre (Krbec 2018).

That the politics of history is important was shown in 2017, when shortly before President Zeman's visit to Russia an article was published on the website of the Russian army TV station *Zvezda* justifying the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and attacking Czech actions during World War II. Following Zeman's protestations, Prime Minister Medvedev distanced himself from the article (ČTK 2017).

More symbolic, yet not irrelevant, have been meetings between the leaders of the two countries. President Zeman attended the 'Dialogue of Civilisations' conference, organised by the Russian businessman and Putin's close associate Vladimir Yakunin in Rhodes (in 2016), which was seen as a spite to the Davos World Economic Forum (*Lidové noviny*, 9 August 2016). The first year of the Czech–Russian Discussion Forum, held in Prague on 7 June 2018, did not live up to expectations. It was organised by the Czech Institute of International Relations and the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, as an 'apolitical, open platform for discussion among academics, experts and other non-government figures' (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí 2018a). The forum was supposed to develop cooperation among universities and discuss historical issues, including opening the Russian archives on sensitive matters (e.g. the fate of Czechoslovak citizens who ended up in the Gulag). The forum proved politically controversial in the Czech Republic (Kenety 2018).

## Notions of Hybrid Competition

It is evident, then, that current developments in the Czech–Russian relations are accompanied by numerous issues, which primarily consist of Russia's present efforts to promote its foreign policy objectives in Czech domestic politics, and to do so using unorthodox, even inimical methods and instruments. For this purpose, Russia either collaborates with or directly or indirectly uses that part of Czech society and the political community that is either openly pro-Kremlin in its outlook or at least critical of various aspects of Western policy.[9] It needs noting that in this chapter we have not compared Russian methods of exerting influence with those employed by other powers vis-à-vis the Czech Republic; indeed, there is no reason to deny that Western countries also seek to establish their influence in the country, sometimes using concealed (quasi-hybrid) methods.

This promotion of Russian interests is not merely intuitive or occasional; according to many authors (e.g. Mickiewicz 2018, pp. 281–310) it is a well thought-out strategy or doctrine based on the needs of Putin's regime in

terms of power and its ideological preferences. This doctrine is also thought to employ a progressive understanding of waging conflict internationally, itself based on erasing the differences between the state of peace and the state of war. Wars are no longer formally declared; the classic Clausewitz models are abandoned; ideological influence is desirable. This was supposedly proven most recently by the events of the 'Arab Spring', seen in Russia unambiguously as a subset of 'coloured revolution'. A practical manifestation in current Russian foreign-security policy is the 'Gerasimov doctrine', conceived by the chief of the general staff of the Russian armed forces, Valery Gerasimov (2013).

Its fundamental thesis is that in achieving political and strategic goals today, the role of non-military means increases, as they are more effective than military instruments. These non-military means vary widely, from political, economic, information and humanitarian acts, and are combined with clandestine military means. A particularly important, even crucial, role is played in asymmetrical conflict by information, which is linked with the incredibly fast development of communication technologies. (Of course, information has always been important in warfare.) By contrast, classic frontal clashes between large military groups are supposedly a thing of the past, on both strategic and operational levels. In other words, the differences between the strategic, operational and tactical levels of waging conflict are supposed to fade way. The geography of conflict is also undergoing change—the importance of borders between states is generally declining, as is the states' ability effectively to control them. In the military, operations of special forces are increasing. The use of armed military units is only resorted to if it is indispensable to achieve final success in the conflict; but even then, it is desirable for such troops to be presented as peacekeepers.[10] Peacekeeper-type forces naturally require a different sort of training than an army built for classic frontal (symmetrical) conflicts. All of this may be supplemented with efforts to activate internal opposition in the adversary's population, which might help the intervening external actor to create an information 'front', ideally one that is blanket and permanent.

The search for the terminological grounding of this new conception of conflict has been active since the 1990s if not longer, and became much more concentrated in response to the Russian activities in eastern Ukraine. In the 'new wars' school (Kaldor 2006, 2013; van Creveld 1991), several terms started to be used, such as: hybrid warfare (Wasiuta and Wasiuta 2017), non-linear warfare, fourth-generation warfare, or 4GW (Lind et al. 1989; Lind 2014; Hammes 2005), as well as secret warfare and covert oper-

ations.[11] Many critics of the new wars school argue that the phenomenon is nothing but a variant of non-conventional warfare or asymmetric war, examples of which can be dated to antiquity (see e.g., Schuurman 2010; McDermott 2016; Stojar 2017). The fact that the only real empirical case of Russian hybrid warfare is the conflict in eastern Ukraine (including the annexation of Crimea) is also seen as problematic.[12] And even this case is disputable, not least because the decisive phases of the conflict were waged using classic, conventional methods, even according to Soviet textbooks of military strategy and tactical-operational methods (cf. Stojar 2017).

This book's aim is not, however, comprehensively to deal with the complex issue of hybrid warfare, even though we do become involved in the discussion of this notion, as signalled by this chapter and particularly this section on 'hybrid competition', a concept that aptly combines classic security terminology with that of the political sciences. We believe that the blending of traditional violent instruments with a more socio-politically defined rivalry is the primary attribute of the situation to which this book responds. Thus, we respect the following fundamental characteristics of hybrid conflicts, on which there is a consensus in the security community:

1. The presence of an adversary that is difficult to grasp, complex and flexible;
2. (Physical) asymmetry between adversaries;
3. Important role of non-state actors;
4. Use of both conventional and non-conventional methods of combat;
5. Use of highly developed information technologies;
6. An extension of the theatre of war, largely outside classic theatres (into the general population, the international environment, the economy);
7. Use of instruments of mass communication and propaganda; the important role of influence operations;
8. Criminalisation of conflict and its actors (cf. Grant 2008; McCuen 2008; Hoffman 2009; McCulloh 2012; Kilcullen 2013).

This understanding of hybrid warfare is compatible with the definition provided by Cullen and Reichborn-Kjennerund:

> Hybrid warfare uses coordinated military, political, economic, civilian and informational instruments of power that extend far beyond the military realm. National efforts should enhance traditional threat assessment activity to include non-conventional political, economic, civil, international tools

> and capabilities. Crucially, this analysis must consider how these means of attack may be formed into a synchronised attack package tailored to the specific vulnerabilities of its target. (Cullen and Reichborn-Kjennerund 2017, p. 4)

This definition is broad, including various types of conflict among a range of actors. Crucial for this book is the fact that the term 'hybrid warfare', as used in the context of Russian foreign-security policy and elsewhere, tends to be used specifically in order to describe actions against countries with which the active pursuer of the strategy is not formally in conflict with, or might not even be described as an enemy. Focusing now on Russia, naturally these are, first of all, Western countries, understood as its geopolitical and ideological adversaries. And this also concerns the Czech Republic as an EU and NATO member.

In this context, the term 'hybrid campaign' seems useful and inspiring. Its definition is not yet fully established; it evokes the use of some traits of hybrid warfare, with the proviso that military force is not used (but, importantly, adequate military force is a necessary prerequisite for conducting an effective hybrid campaign), there is no classic theatre of war and there is no classic state of war, *de jure* or de facto. The characteristic traits of the Russian hybrid campaign were described by Christopher S. Chivvis (2017) as follows:

1. The use of information operations in both classic and new media and on social networks, with 'trolling' as an original instrument. The trolls, coming from both the target population and domestic sources (in Russia, consider the 'troll farm' near St Petersburg) are tasked with spreading information chaos and help make the local information milieu appear confused, causing general mistrust of any media and information, which ultimately helps to promote the desired version and interpretation of events. Another objective is to escalate local political debate, to undermine political stability and to cause mistrust in democracy (cf. Chivvis 2017). The use of disinformation is also typical ('fake news'; Gregor and Vejvodová 2018). Some disinformation is crafty and difficult to unmask; other, which is largely spread on the internet and described as hoax, can be exposed more easily. However, the originator of the hoax relies on the consumer's inattention, inability or unwillingness (or laziness) to verify (Gregor and

Vejvodová 2018, pp. 45–46). Forming a conspiracy theory is a traditional method.[13]

2. Attacks in cyberspace: in effect, this opens new theatres of war without activating classic, conventional military force. The Baltics, Ukraine and Georgia were repeatedly at the receiving end of cyber attacks benefitting Russia. In the Ukraine and Georgia, this was combined with other hybrid warfare methods; in the Baltics, which are NATO member countries, cyber attacks were primary. Possible Russian interference in the US presidential elections has been much discussed.
3. Espionage and secret operations as a traditional strategy. Generally speaking, the secret services have always played a strong role in Russia, including its foreign and security policies; in certain periods (NKVD in the Stalin era; KGB in the Brezhnev era), their role was crucial. Indeed, President Putin himself comes from the intelligence community, where he spent his pre-political career. Russia recruits agents in foreign territory; bribes, blackmails and otherwise influences selected figures of political and social life in the target countries. This feature of the hybrid campaign is, however, problematic in the sense that it is a classic strategy used in relations not just with enemies or rivals, but also often in relations with allies, and it is one that democratic countries also use. In other words, the differences between democratic and non-democratic countries, visible in other areas, fade away in the spy world.
4. Proxies. Chivvis (2017) cites the bikers gang Night Wolves, which presents its nationalist ideology and its loyalty to President Putin, as a typical proxy. Putin openly endorses the Night Wolves, and regards their leader, Aleksandr Zaldostanov, as his personal friend. In certain social circles in target countries, proxies may serve the aims of Russian propaganda well. One Czech figure cited as an example is the deputy chair of the governing party ČSSD and a member of parliament, Jaroslav Foldyna. However, crime structures and gangs, often enmeshed with intelligence services and firms, or local firms that have trade interests in the Russian market can also serve as proxies. Non-governmental organisations can be exploited likewise (see the initiative *No to the Bases!*).
5. Economic influence and pressure: As noted above, in recent years, Putin's policy has changed, in the sense that political interests once again take precedence over the economic ones. This is a return to the Soviet-era parameters, because in the 1990s and during Putin's first

term (2000–2004) economic interests were preferred over political interests (most conspicuously in arms and mining industries, i.e. the most strategic branches of the economy). From Putin's second term as president, the situation started to change (see his elimination of some oligarchs). Today, the Russian economy is secondary to political interests. This was first manifested in the 'gas wars', when Russia used the fossil fuel industry as a tool of foreign policy. The issue of energy raw material supplies is where Russian economic pressure most typically appears (see the current developments in Russo-German negotiations over the Nord Stream gas pipeline and its impacts on countries located between Germany and Russia—that is, Poland, the Baltics, the Ukraine and possibly Belarus). However, Russia also seeks to strengthen its economic influence in other areas: banking, the media and sports business (via sponsoring and ownership of sports clubs).

6. Political influence: Russia supports selected political parties and candidates (by having them visit Russia, and also by propaganda and funding) who promote a policy friendly to Russian interests. Of course, these activities might be hard to prove, and not necessarily informed by profit-seeking motives. Worthy of note in this respect is the presidency of Miloš Zeman and the unclear funding of his presidential campaigns. Naturally, communist parties—both in the former Eastern bloc and in the West—are relatively reliable supporters of Russian interests. Nonetheless, Russia also seeks to sustain individuals or factions in parties whose main streams are critical of the Russian political regime.

Thus, it can be noted that the Russian conception of hybrid war, or the 'Gerasimov doctrine', is a specific form of non-linear warfare, one that emphasises the information and propaganda aspects of conflict and intelligence operations in the target countries, with the aim of achieving such domestic political change in these countries that promotes the Kremlin's interests, without involving military action.

With respect to the Czech Republic, Russia reactivated the defence of its traditional interests in Central Europe. Throughout the existence of the independent Czech Republic, influence operations have been escalated three times: (1) before and shortly after the accession to NATO (this was linked with a campaign against NATO operations against Yugoslavia, around 1996–1999); (2) at the time when the US radar was planned (about 2005–2009); and (3) in connection with the crisis in the Ukraine (since

2014). The notion of 'hybrid war' only appeared in the third period. It needs emphasising that—unlike in the Ukraine—Russia has not used direct military force against the Czech Republic, nor has it unleashed a large cybernetic campaign (as it did against Estonia in 2007). Czech Military Intelligence does not see substantial risks at the moment, not even among paramilitary groups (unless there appears a new impulse for their development; Vojenské zpravodajství 2017, p. 15). Thus, it is not defensible to describe this situation as a *war*—which would be an escalated situation where force is used (or threatened), and where actors are involved openly presenting themselves as regular troops.

In the subsequent chapters of this book, we will apply the term 'hybrid campaign' to the various levels of Czech–Russian relations and verify or disprove the presence of its characteristics as described above. One needs to bear in mind that, from the Russian side, this is in fact a continuation of traditional Soviet, or Russian, influence operations, which have received a new impulse from the ideological contestation between liberal democracies and 'modern authoritarianisms' (Gerschewski 2013; Roylance 2014) and a new dimension and efficiency thanks to contemporary social networks. These allow the dissemination of 'alternative information' and have disrupted the mainstream media's ability to set the agenda. Social networks have failed to fully control public opinion; rather they have cemented groups that have hitherto felt unsupported and underrepresented. The Russian campaign aims both at achieving direct declarations of support for the policy of this great power, and at creating chaos and polarisation in society (which will ultimately undermine the supporters of pluralism and play into the hands of the advocates of Putin's 'iron fist'). Many controversial steps taken by Western political leaders (for example, EU migration policy) facilitate this process. Again, it needs emphasising that not all actors who oppose the Western establishment have pro-Russian agendas and intentions. Cas Mudde (2016, pp. 23–28) has pointed this out with respect to European extreme-right parties, and rejected sweeping statements in this domain; though other authors have demonstrated Russian influence (Reimon and Zelechowski 2017; Shekhovtsov 2018).

As part of the countermeasures taken by the Czech Republic, the terms 'hybrid war' and 'hybrid campaign' are used as buzzwords—as they are in NATO and partially also in the EU. This allows the build-up of various forces to combat the 'new threat', or to use this threat in order to justify the modernisation and innovation of own capacities, especially in the domains of cybernetic security and defence. It is also important to deal with disin-

formation campaigns and convince the majority in society that the chosen course is the right one.

However, impacts on the public are difficult to measure and it is a reality that a segment of the Czech population does embrace pro-Kremlin positions. Nonetheless, the majority is pro-Western. According to a CVVM poll in January 2018, 58% were satisfied with NATO membership, 19% were dissatisfied and 23% did not know (Čadová 2018). Disregard of an alarmist view of Russia, at least in the context of an ability to distinguish a cultural Russia from a political Russia, is another matter. According to a survey by the Focus agency, in 2016, 58% of respondents did not consider Russia to pose a military threat to the Czech Republic, 27% expressed the opposite view. For 15% it was difficult to say. The same poll found that 40% of those surveyed found it difficult to say whether Czech soldiers should defend NATO members Poland and the Baltic states if they were attacked by Russia. 35% would send the soldiers to help, one-quarter would not (Focus 2016, pp. 8–9).

Thus, the Czech domestic political spectrum is divided concerning Russia. At the same time, Russia is a security partner in some sensitive domains, such as the fight against terrorism and, prospectively, against illegal migration as well (which is an important political topic in the Czech Republic). In a situation where President Trump has questioned the anti-Putin direction of the West following the Helsinki summit in 2018, this aspect presents another challenge for the process of seeking models for Czech–Russian relations.

## Notes

1. We use the term 'pro-Kremlin' as meaning support for Vladimir Putin's regime.
2. In Kyjov, South Moravia, in 1914, the authorities apprehended a group of people who were distributing pro-Russian leaflets; they were given death sentences, later mitigated to life imprisonment (Kyněra 1929, pp. 47–66).
3. Consider Aleksei Kosygin's 1968 statement: 'You only have one border on the west and that is also our border. It is the border of World War II, from which we shall never withdraw. For us, this is a matter of principle.' Cf. Sborník textů (2008).
4. In 1996, the Czech Republic asked the signatories of the Potsdam Agreement (including Russia as the successor to the Soviet Union) for their views as to its validity. The reason for this was that the country was negotiating the Czech–German declaration at the time and needed an argument to use

with Germany that would provide an international legal defence of the displacement of the Sudeten Germans. Russia's response was that it considered the Potsdam Agreement an important international document and that the 'implementation of the Potsdam Agreement is a real historical fact and its importance cannot be weakened or abolished by any attempts at arbitrary interpretation of this Agreement, wherever they might come from' (Ruská federace 1996). This argument remains available to the Czech Republic to use vis-à-vis Germany and the Sudeten Germans in the future.

5. However, the implementation was accompanied by controversies (Drahný 2013) including the involvement of organised crime groups of post-Soviet and Czech origin (Šmíd and Kupka 2011).
6. In Czech–Russian relations during the first years of the new millennium, less attention was given to the secret services, despite the fact that there were several scandals. In 2009, there was the escape of the Czech spy Robert Rachardžo, who in the preceding decade penetrated the higher echelons of the armed forces and was suspected of spying for Russia (Kundra 2016, pp. 9–25). In 2011, Military Intelligence uncovered a mole in its ranks, Milan Š who, motivated by money, supplied secrets to the embassies of Russia, Ukraine and North Korea (Městský soud v Praze 2012).
7. Former Russian secret service agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia were found poisoned in Salisbury in Britain. According to British sources, both had been exposed to the nerve agent A-234, which is one of a group of 'Novichok' chemical warfare agents made in the Soviet Union. The United Kingdom accused Russia of an assassination attempt; Russia denied involvement. Both Skripals survived the attack, but in late June two unrelated people were accidentally poisoned by the same agent in Salisbury, one of whom died (dos Santos and Vonberg 2018).
8. The president's press release stated: 'On the basis of assignment received by the intelligence services, the president of the republic was informed by Military Intelligence about a case when in 2017 in VVÚ s.p. [Military Research Institute, a state enterprise] several milligrams of a mixture were legally made by micro-synthesis, which contained agent A-230, described as Novichok. The sample was destroyed after testing. According to available information, this was a different agent of the Novichok group from that which was used in the attack in Salisbury, Britain' (Prezident ČR 2018). It should be noted that the Military Research Institute aids the CBRN [chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear] units of the Czech military, and the Czech Republic has long specialised in these issues within NATO (Procházka 2009, p. 26).
9. This most often implies a distance from the 'neo-Marxist narrative', which is allegedly preferred by many leaders in Western European countries. We are aware that the term 'neo-Marxist' is disputable, but we use it here because it is often used by Czechs who are pro-Kremlin or critical of the West.

10. See the Russian 'peacekeeping operations' in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria and partially also in Nagorno-Karabakh. Russian units also present themselves as peacekeeping forces in Syria (internally they are divided into humanitarian, rescue, evacuation and patrol units).
11. Incidentally, General Gerasimov does not use the term 'hybrid war'. One might well ask whether this can be called a specific doctrine, since from the theoretical viewpoint it brings nothing new (Galeotti 2018).
12. Other actual cases of hybrid warfare are few: the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah is the most-often mentioned.
13. Here again it needs adding that this method of weakening an adversary is in no way specifically contemporary, and, specifically in the Russian case, is an old, traditional way of working of its intelligence services, irrespective of the type of regime ruling in Russia. Indeed, one of the most famous conspiracy theories of all time—the Protocols of the Elders of Zion—most likely emerged from the Tsarist *Okhrana*—the then intelligence service—in the late nineteenth century.

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CHAPTER 3

# Russia as Viewed by the Main Czech Political Actors

*Jan Holzer, Martin Jirušek and Petra Kuchyňková*

Russia is and always has been a classic, constitutive topic for Czech politics and Czech political thought. In the Czech environment, Russia has been the subject of dichotomous—welcoming and rejecting, intellectual and popular—reflections, which have been enlivened by events both in Russia (the revolutionary cycle of 1905–1917, the consolidation of the Soviet regime from the 1920s onwards, World War II during 1939–1945 and *perestroika* from 1985) and in the Czech lands (the emergence of an independent republic in 1918, Munich in 1938, the liberation from Nazi

J. Holzer (✉)
Department of Political Science, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic
e-mail: holzer@fss.muni.cz

M. Jirušek · P. Kuchyňková
Department of International Relations and European Studies, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic
e-mail: jirusek.martin@mail.muni.cz

P. Kuchyňková
e-mail: kuchynko@fss.muni.cz



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Germany in 1945, the rise of the communist regime in 1948, the 'Prague Spring' of 1968 and the fall of communism in 1989). Simply put, Russia has always posed a challenge for Czech politics, and served as a natural counterpart to the topic of Germany. Indeed, we argue that once Germans were expelled from the Czech lands after World War II, Russia took over the position of the major external reference frame in which the 'Czech question': What does it mean to be Czech? What is the Czechs' relationship with Europe and the world? was shaped (Havelka 1995, 2006).

In this sense, the aim of this chapter is to describe and characterise the contemporary Czech political discussion of Russia. It proceeds from a short description of the basic ideological variants of Czech thought about Russia, as they emerged out of specific historical events and long-term experiences of generations in the Czech polity. It was on this basis that certain images of Russia were created by the Czechs, which were variously modified depending upon who it was that created them—and for what purpose—in the political and public discourses. In the media and in the public debate generally, we encounter certain schools of thought and specific politicians who are described as 'pro-Russian' (understanding Russia as a friend), or, by contrast, as 'anti-Russian' (understanding Russia as an enemy). But is reality actually such a simplistic dichotomy, so black and white? In order to answer this question, this chapter combines two levels of analysis. First, it presents an analysis of the discourses by the three presidents of the independent Czech Republic in 1993–2017. And by identifying meta-narratives related to Russia in the arguments of the successive presidents—privileged actors of Czech politics—it shows both positive and negative notions entertained by Czech political actors with respect to Russia. In the spirit of the book as a whole, this analysis focuses on discourses of security, i.e. seeing Russia as a potential threat or, by contrast, as a partner.

On a second level of analysis, the chapter focuses on ideologies represented by contemporary Czech political parties, as far as these can be gleaned from their pronouncements on historical and contemporary Russia. Here the subsections work with data related to the perception of Russia by Czech political parties in the context of the developments in Eastern Europe over the past five years (i.e. 2013–2018), specifically with respect to the conflict in Ukraine and the legitimacy of the behaviour of Vladimir Putin's authoritarian regime. In conclusion the chapter discusses the main clashes of opinion that have long informed Czech public debate on Russia.

## Czech Debate on Russia—Its Main Historical Characteristics

Simply put, two views of Russia—one realist and inimical, the other consensual and friendly—can be identified in modern Czech politics. Both have their traditions and numerous advocates. In the nineteenth century, there was mistrust among liberal Czech political leaders of the autocratic model in place in tsarist Russia; but there was also a circle of Czech politicians who preferred a Slavic, or even pan-Slavic, direction for the 'national revival' in the Czech lands (Kořalka 1996, pp. 90–137). But even that segment of the Czech political community, which initially had been willing to seek in Russia a force balancing German influence, was subsequently largely disillusioned, as its pro-Russian sympathies collided with the intransigent position of the Slavophile intellectual circles in Moscow, who insisted that Russia had to have a privileged position in any Slavic alliance. It was also disappointing in the official indifference towards them shown by the tsarist regime (for the position of Russian pan-Slavism towards small Slavic nations generally, see Vlček 2002, pp. 139–199). In any case, with respect to the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, this was an essential discrepancy in the emancipating politics of contemporary Czech leaders, where sharp opposition was somewhat artificially created, between Slavophilia, suppressing freedom but saving the nation, on the one side; and Europeanism, offering political liberty but potentially at the expense of national identity, on the other. This polarisation in Czech society was also interpreted as a clash of rationalism (Western orientation) with irrationalism (Russian orientation). In this context, it makes eminent sense that the celebrated 1867 Czech 'pilgrimage' to Russia—i.e. an ostentatious visit to St Petersburg and Moscow, understood as a grandiose response to the Austro-Hungarian compromise—was described as the 'first crisis of Czech Europeanism' (Pfaff 1996, p. 153).

The Czech discussion of the primary source and inspiration for the domestic socio-political mentality (was it Western civilisation, Western Christian tradition and Europeanism generally, and awareness of belonging to a common European culture; or was it, by contrast, the Eastern tradition of Saints Cyril and Methodius, and Slavonic mutuality?) was naturally also projected into the nascent Czech party-political spectrum and its ideological background. The liberal circle was pro-Western. But the conservative current around the later Prime Minister, Karel Kramář, consciously evolved a long-term programme based on close proximity to tsarist Russia (Doubek 2004, pp. 214–260; Serapionova 2009). Finally, prior to World War I the

Czech left was not particularly interested in the question of East vs. West, as it attended to its own internal conflict between nationalism and internationalism.[1]

After World War I, the phenomenon of Russia was discussed in the context of the rise of the Bolshevik regime in the country and its incompatibility with Czech[2] political leaders' majority views of both the political model and the foreign-policy orientation of the new, independent Czechoslovak Republic. However, within the Czech polity a key future pro-Russian actor was already emerging: originally a radical wing within the Social-Democratic Party, from 1921 it existed as the independent Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Czech communism's embrace of the Eastern inspiration was gradual: it survived the failure of post-war, radical-left political projects in Central Europe (the phenomenon of the 'soviet republics') and, enchanted by the alleged successes in building communism in Soviet Russia, after 1929 it decided to join its political future with Russian bolshevism for good (Fiala et al.1999, pp. 18–27). One might also say that ideologically it shifted from Marxism—based on the premise of successful communist revolutions in developed, industrialised Western countries, where class antagonism was expected to be the most dramatic—to Leninism, which produced a doctrine of Russia as 'the weakest link', endowing the country with a specific historical mission in terms of putting communist ideals into practice.

Concurrently, the pro-Western self-identification of Czechoslovakia eroded throughout the twentieth century. The Munich Agreement (1938) came to symbolise the West's 'betrayal'. The liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Red Army in 1945 was seen as proof of Slavonic mutuality, triumphant over the German element. President Edvard Beneš's argument that there could be political convergence of Western liberal democracies and Soviet 'socialism' (Beneš 1948, pp. 247–273), represented in Czech public discourse by the celebrated slogan 'Czechoslovakia as a bridge between the East and the West', showed the acceptance of Soviet Russia by Czech political leaders. And finally, what was the emergence of the communist regime in 1948 if not proof of the Czechs' growing away from the West? The forty-year-long experience of the totalitarian communist regime that followed has nonetheless rendered this pro-Russian affinity fundamentally problematic. The August 1968 invasion by the 'allied armies' was in this respect an iconic moment.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, a 'return to the West' became a key imperative of Czech domestic policy, espoused across the

political spectrum. Many political scientists saw the Czech accession to NATO (1999) and the European Union (2004) as completing the country's transition to democracy. Indeed, the contemporary Yeltsin regime in Russia posed no threat to the Czechs' self-identification with the West; it did not create any new Eastern temptations. In other words, the civilisat dilemma of the Czech polity seemed resolved,[3] with the Western political, security, cultural and economic identity of the Czech Republic representing the final consensus of Czech politics post-November 1989.[4]

Summing up the fundamental characteristics of the historical Czech discussion of Russia, we note that as far as the ideological-doctrinal spectrum is concerned, the positions can be ambiguous. Neither the consensual approach towards Russia, nor the realist one, can be easily interpreted on the basis of the left-to-right party-political scale in Czech politics. Simply put, affection for Russia is not a priori leftist and nor is affection for the West a priori rightist.

A second and more important characteristic is the following: pro-Russian arguments in Czech politics have historically varied and been largely dependent on the West. Historically, an inclination towards Russia as a fully fledged alternative was always articulated at points of Czech or European crisis: during World War I in connection with Austro-Hungarian disintegration; in connection with the Great Depression at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s, when the Soviet statist model, allegedly immune to crises of capitalism, was appreciated; at the moment of 'betrayal by the West' in Munich; and at the time when the Soviet Red Army vanquished Nazi Germany and the West accepted Soviet oversight over Central Europe.

## Czech Presidents on Russia

The consensus about the Czech Republic's European or Western identity nevertheless proved to be only temporary. In fact, the conditions under which this consensus emerged gradually changed too. The political regime in Russia itself underwent a transformation, with Vladimir Putin coming to power as president in 2000. Step by step, the Russian vision of the West altered. And the West itself mutated as well. The effect of these changes was a tension between Russia and Western countries, symbolised by the 'colour revolutions', understood by some observers as a fourth wave of democratisation—in this instance, the abandoning of 'post-communism' (McFaul 2005).

Understandably, all of this also influenced the political preferences in Czech society: the NATO intervention in countries of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s was controversial; and the 'Orange Revolution' in Ukraine and the Russo-Georgian war in 2008 were ambiguously interpreted. From the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Czech policy as it had become established after the 'Velvet Revolution' of November 1989 gradually started to change its foreign-policy preferences and sympathies. The Czech general public proved particularly sensitive to the changing security and economic conditions in Europe. Some people mobilised in opposition to the country's integration into NATO and the EU and during the discussion about the placement of missile defence facilities in Central Europe, particularly salient in 2007; others took careful note of the dispute between Russia and Ukraine over gas supplies in 2009. We seek to describe this gradual transformation and return of pro-Russian narratives into the Czech political debate by focusing in the following sections on two topics: the foreign-policy discourse of three successive Czech presidents, Václav Havel, Václav Klaus and Miloš Zeman, and discussions of the foreign-policy orientation of the Czech Republic, instigated by the events in Ukraine since late 2013.

The Czech president can be considered a privileged actor of both domestic and foreign policy. Certainly, the powers given to this office are rather limited, as befits the fact that Czech Republic is a parliamentary republic. In the Czech constitutional system, the president's most important role is in representing the state abroad, while the government is the top executive body (Art. 67 of the Constitution). The constitution does give some powers to the president with respect to foreign and security policies: the president negotiates and ratifies international treaties, is the supreme commander of the armed forces, receives, appoints and removes the heads of missions (Art. 63). And the position of the president de facto was strengthened by the introduction of direct election to the post: the first president so elected was Miloš Zeman in 2013.

On an informal, symbolic level, however, the potential of the presidential office in Czech politics is extraordinary, and steeped in history; what we mean is the president as an authority, a symbol, a co-creator of popular opinion. The tradition of strong Czechoslovak presidents was founded by the 'President-Liberator' Tomáš G. Masaryk (elected four times, in 1918, 1920, 1927, and 1934). But his successors also embody their respective historical eras as well as specific, tragic and euphoric moments in modern Czech history. Although Czech presidents cannot themselves create the

state's domestic and foreign policy or decide its direction, they are key political actors. This is why the Czech political understanding of Russia can be analysed—among other possible foci—by studying the discourse of three Czech presidents: Václav Havel, Václav Klaus and Miloš Zeman (the last was studied during his first term; his second began in spring 2018).

The sections that follow therefore offer a diachronic comparative analysis of how the topic of Russia has been securitised by Czech presidents. Specifically, their speeches and appearances in international organisations, forums, conferences, state visits and such like—that is, when they were representing their country—were included in the analysis.[5] Given that the study employed the concept of securitisation, we have primarily concentrated on those statements in which the presidents touched upon security issues in some way. However, the analysis studied possible securitisation not only in the sense of hard-security issues, but also topics linked with such matters as the economy and energy.

Theoretically, the analysis employs the classic operationalisation of securitisation according to the Copenhagen School, but it also uses terms proposed for discourse analysis by Thomas Diez (2001), specifically, discursive nodal point and meta-narrative. A discursive nodal point, according to Diez, is a point where various discourses overlap; they exist as meta-narratives, developing, clashing and combining over a longer period of time in a certain environment. Their evolution is therefore the result of a longer experience of discursive actors, situated in that environment. Appearing at the nodal points are the subjective positions; this is where specific notions of and attitudes to particular topics are formulated, and multiple notions about a particular topic can be formulated concurrently—the topic can be concurrently understood in various ways.

In our case, the nodal point is the securitisation of Russia. Our aim was to identify the various specific forms and ways of this securitisation in Czech presidential discourses. In other words, the aim was to establish whether—and under what circumstances—the presidents saw Russia as a threat that required specific measures. If the opposite was the case—i.e. where presidents did not securitise Russia—then Russia was not seen as a threat, or such a view was negated. In their discourses concerned with Russia (and other matters) the presidents used various arguments, referring to various pre-existing meta-narratives. This approach to discourse analysis thus also allows us to understand the various ways in which an actor argues—these arguments can often be contradictory or incompatible—as well as to grasp the continuity or discontinuity of discourse across time (for

more detail, see Diez 2001; Braun 2008). Of the aspects of the concept of securitisation as proposed by the Copenhagen School (Buzan et al.1998), we focus on three out of the five fundamental sectors, namely, the political, military (security) and economic sectors.

## President Václav Havel (1993–2003)

Typical of Václav Havel's discourse throughout his two terms as Czech president was that one can find both speeches that are to a large extent dedicated to Russia (e.g. Havel 1996a, b, 2001, 2002a, b) and those where Russia is present implicitly, especially in security contexts and in particular in connection with the first wave of eastern Nato enlargement in the 1990s (e.g. Havel 1997a, b, 1999a, b, c). Although Havel does not explicitly name Russia in these, he does use implicit references or periphrasis. This is typical of Havel's style, which is lexically rich, with copious use of metaphors and other linguistic devices, contrasting with both the matter-of-fact expression of the second Czech president, Klaus, and the repetitive nature of President Zeman's speeches.

As far as discourse content is concerned with respect to the elements observed here, during Havel's first term, 1993–1998, one can find in his discourse references to Russia as a potential source of threats, largely in connection with the overall instability of the post-Soviet region. Havel particularly pointed to the conflicts that accompanied the disintegration of the Soviet Union (especially during the first half of the 1990s) and, with increasing emphasis, to the risks connected with the internal developments in the country (e.g. Havel 1995). A stable securitising characteristic of Havel's discourse in relation to Russia was pointing out the allegedly persistent Russian ambition to act as a 'great power' (e.g. Havel 1996a, b, c). Havel saw this mainly in relation to smaller states, in a tendency to decide the geopolitical fate of these countries or in negotiations with other powers without the participation of the smaller countries concerned.[6] An emphasis on this tendency as a disturbing behavioural trend—one that, according to Havel, Moscow had not given up after the end of the Cold War—then appears frequently in connection with the eastern enlargement of NATO, Russian disagreement with this Western policy and the tendency to understand smaller European states, formerly belonging to the Soviet sphere of influence, as 'objects', whose geopolitical place is a historical given. Russian resistance to former Soviet satellites' aspirations to integrate (primarily in the domain of security) and its tendency towards expansionism in what was

formerly the 'sphere of influence' were thus for Havel important manifestations of security-political concern, or threats, emanating from this area.

Another interesting trait that appeared in Havel's discourse on Russia from 1993 onwards was his description of Russia's 'otherness', of its belonging to a specific political-cultural area and tradition. For instance, in speeches at Vilnius University in 1996 (where he received an honorary doctorate) and in Washington (where he was awarded the Fulbright Prize), Havel spoke of Russia as a Eurasian power (Havel 1996a, 1997b). It was to differences in political culture and a difficult Russian search for identity after the Soviet Union's demise that he often ascribed the troubles in democratising its political regime. A typical example of this narrative is a speech given in Bratislava in 2001 at a conference on 'Europe's New Democracies: Leadership and Responsibilities' (Havel 2001). Havel explicitly noted the difficulties Russia was having in finding its place after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. This complicated the situation not just for Russia itself but also for its neighbours, because this Russian 'search for oneself' is the reason, Havel argued, that post-Soviet Russia found it difficult to accept the finality of its borders and in its political thought remained grounded in a Cold War paradigm. Havel made similar arguments in the first half of the 1990s[7] and also later.

Havel's understanding of Russia as a source of threat for former Soviet satellites including the Czech Republic led him to formulate the desired political steps that ought to be taken in response to these threats. Certainly, as has been noted above, the president was not the primary creator and arbiter of Czech foreign and security policy. Despite this, there is no doubting the influence of all Czech presidents and their recommendations on the Czech domestic debate. In any case, Havel's recommendations underwent a certain amount of development. Initially, he spoke of active Czech participation in building a new, post-Cold-War European security architecture on an international basis, relying in this respect on structures such as the then-Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)—see his speech at the CSCE summit in Budapest in 1994 (Havel 1994). Apropos of this, this position was not fundamentally different from that assumed by Russian foreign-policy leaders.

From 1994, however, a shift began. Havel started to combine his internationalism in the security area with calls for integrating the Czech Republic into existing regional systems, NATO included. This, let us emphasise, was not meant to exclude Russia, according to the first Czech president. Havel called for supporting cooperation between NATO and Russia, that would

nevertheless involve delimiting 'clear boundaries for Russia' in terms of the decisions made about the future directions of the Alliance, especially as far as its enlargement was concerned (Havel 1996b, c). Havel did not support the idea of extending NATO membership to Russia; this was clear from his later speeches as well (Havel 2001, 2002a).

Another stable and well-known motif in Havel's discourse was his support for human rights, not just generally but also as applying to Russia and the post-Soviet area. Havel thought that protection for human rights was a desirable practical step in countering potential threats from the East. He often emphasised that he saw as possible threats or sources of concern not Russia as such, but some of the steps taken by its government. These included the disturbing or regressive tendencies in the transformation process noted above, and, later, the course of action taken by the Russian government during the Chechen war, which was subject to Havel's frequent criticism. This criticism was often accompanied by explicit support for former and contemporary Russian dissidents and human-rights campaigners, by which he (apparently) sought to demonstrate that he was no Russophobe but a critic of specific policies and steps taken by post-Soviet Russian leaders (see, e.g., Havel 1995, 1999b, c).

In the second half of the 1990s, as the eastern enlargement of NATO approached and negotiations were held concerning its conditions and timing, Havel added occasional critiques of the West's approach and the reserved position of some Western countries towards enlarging the alliance. Havel pointed out that the West's vacillation merely supported persistent stereotypes in Russian thought, relating to Central Europe.[8] In speeches that addressed the eastern enlargement of NATO and potential models for cooperation between the alliance and Russia, the securitisation of Russia (Russia was seen as a potential security threat) was mixed with the idea that Russia ought not to be identified with the erstwhile Soviet Union. When Havel spoke both of the eastern enlargement of NATO and of support for cooperation between NATO and Russia, he urged that the eastern enlargement of the alliance ought to help to overcome 'Cold-War thinking'. The accession of the Czech Republic and other Central European countries to NATO, and the start of institutionalised cooperation between NATO and Russia (without, however, Russia actually joining NATO) should, the Czech president argued, lead to the beginning of cooperation between the East and the West as equals (see, e.g., Havel 1996a, 2001). Similar rhetoric was typical of Russian liberal politicians of the early 1990s.

With the end of President Havel's first term and in his new term after 1998, the idea of Russia's being unique resurfaced in his discourse; he perhaps emphasised even more that this uniqueness should not be read as inferiority. A typical example is Havel's 1996 speech at Vilnius University, noted above where he said:

> Now and then I hear questions as to whether this or that state should belong to the West or the East. These are very wrong questions, for at least two reasons […] The second reason why such questions are wrong lies in their undertone which seems to tacitly imply that the West is the better one and the East the worse and that the decision to be made is about who can join the better ones and who will be left with the worse group. Such a perception is again a road to hell. Nobody is *a priori* worse or *a priori* better. We are simply different in different ways. (Havel 1996a)[9]

In Havel's second term (1998–2003), his discourse on Russia to a large extent reflected the fact that the Czech Republic had joined NATO (in 1999), and also the rise of new threats in the world at the turn of the millennium. Thus, in the late 1990s, there was an increasingly conspicuous emphasis in Havel's speeches on threats that were different from those of a bipolar world, when the West had 'a visible and powerful strategic adversary' (Havel 2001). The Czech president saw new threats mainly in local clashes (including civil wars) that could explode into larger-scale conflicts; in attacks using modern weapons from various directions; and in organised crime and terrorism. In a speech given to the US Congress in 1999, Havel called for a rebirth of NATO as a security organisation able to protect not just its members but also the broader international community from these threats, and to do so even by taking preventive measures—something that, from the Russian perspective, was controversial (Havel 1999a).[10]

From a certain perspective, some elements of desecuritisation, as discussed by Lene Hansen (2011) among others, can be discerned in Havel's discourse during his second term. What matters for us here is that Russia was no longer articulated as a threat, not least because there were other, greater and more pressing threats on which one needed to focus.[11] Such arguments are explicit in the speeches of Havel's successors, Klaus and Zeman—with Havel this tendency is more implicit. In his second term Havel often said that the threats that the world, Europe and the Czech Republic faced in the new century were of a new kind and very varied; that the twenty-first-century world was no longer bipolar, but, rather, multi-polar (Havel 1999a,

2001, 2002a). Incidentally, this is rhetoric also employed by modern Russian foreign-policy leaders, including the former Foreign Minister, Yevgeny Primakov, and later the new President, Vladimir Putin.

And yet, Havel did not stop discussing his persistent concerns about Russia. In the political and partially also the security domain, he was particularly troubled by the problem of the Russian search for identity and the country's policy of the 'near abroad' (see note 7), which Russia chiefly applied in its relations with the newly independent states that were formerly parts of the Soviet Union. This policy, Havel believed, meant to disregard the own wills of these states; to belittle their sovereignty and their decision as to which system of political integration they wanted to adopt. Thus Russia contributed to the creation of new lines of division in the post-bipolar world. A desirable step towards overcoming these risks, Havel believed, was Czech support for partnership between Russia and the already enlarged NATO—but not for Russian membership of the alliance (Havel 2001).

Naturally, Havel's emphasis on human rights persisted into his second term. He considered rights violations as a threat that was not limited to Russia. The only possible step towards overcoming this threat was to continue with a policy of human-rights protection in various international organisations or forums of which the Czech Republic was then a member (for example, the Visegrád Group 1999c). Havel also argued that one must listen to the voices of dissidents and human-rights advocates, including those in Russia. Typical in this respect was his appearance at the November 1999 summit of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), where he spoke about, among other issues, Russian dissident Sergei Kovalev's criticism of the Russian government's actions in Chechnya (Havel 1999b).

An important speech at the close of Havel's second term as Czech president that had Russia as one of its topics was presented at the conference on 'Europe's New Democracies: Leadership and Responsibilities' in Bratislava in 2001. The Czech president repeated that Russia was a specific entity, different from the political and cultural area to which the Czech Republic had historically belonged. This understanding of Russia, however, did not mean we should consider the country 'a leper, an invalid or a child' (Havel 2001); we should not treat it with contempt. But neither should we tolerate the mistakes or dangerous steps taken by the Russian government. This is in sharp contrast with the discourse of Havel's successor, who quickly distanced himself from such sermonising of Russia.

## President Václav Klaus (2003–2013)

The second president of the independent Czech Republic, Václav Klaus, differed fundamentally in many respects from his predecessor; and his view of Czech-Russian relations was a typical example of this; it was a topic on which he assumed a distinctly different position from Václav Havel's. This was evident from the beginning of Klaus's political career in the 1990s, when he encouraged market mechanisms and deregulation in the economy and realism in foreign policy. After November 1989, Klaus belonged to the more pragmatic group of Czech politicians who were less keen on symbolism in their discourse than the group personified by Havel and other politicians who emerged out of anti-communist dissent. In the spirit of Klaus's overall approach to foreign policy, which he largely viewed through an economic lens, Russia was no fundamental threat—rather, it was a potentially interesting partner with whom one had to conduct a dialogue. Unsurprisingly, then, throughout Klaus's two terms as president (2003–2008 and 2008–2013), there was virtually no securitisation of the relations with Russia; indeed, Russia tended to be desecuritised.

In terms of Hansen's typology, noted above, Russia was desecuritised in three main ways in Klaus's discourse: rearticulation, replacement and silencing. An example of the first is the argument that Russia was no longer a threat because, firstly, it could not be identified with the Soviet Union (a systemic change had occurred and the erstwhile bipolar conflict was de facto resolved), and secondly, it was successfully pursuing economic and political transformation and the evolution of Russia was therefore positive. This is an important difference from Klaus's predecessor. Havel criticised the shortcomings of Russia's transformation, whereas Klaus often spoke about the country successfully overcoming the 'historical burden' and managing its transformation well (Klaus 2007a). A replacement—that is a type of argument according to which the topic is not deemed a threat because the real threat lies elsewhere—is found in those of Klaus's speeches where he emphasises that one has to fear phenomena other than Russia. These were not to be the new security threats of the post-modern era, of which Havel often spoke, but, rather, situations where Czech national interests and the nation's ability effectively to pursue them might come under threat. The Czech Republic, Klaus argued, should therefore protect itself against any form of external 'diktat' contradictory to its interests, and he often referred to the potentially negative impact of EU membership (e.g. Klaus 2005). An example of the last form of desecuritising Russia in Klaus's discourse,

silencing, or the intentional pushing out of the topic from the securitisation discourse, is provided by Klaus's exhortation that there was no reason to demonise, ostracise or isolate Russia and if this was taking place then it was purposive behaviour, informed by 'domestic political calculations' (e.g. Klaus 2010).

An analysis of Klaus's appearances at international forums shows that, during his first term in particular, his approach tended to be antithetical to Havel's. This is true of policy, security and, of course, the economy. In his speeches, Klaus sought to avoid making normative judgements and lecturing Russia, which can be seen as parting from Havel's emphasis on such policies as active support for human rights and democratisation (Klaus 2005).

When President Putin arrived in Prague in 2006 for a state visit, Klaus described the relations between the two countries as 'good, partner-like and friendly' (Klaus 2006). The next year, Klaus was the first Czech president to visit Russia and spoke of the political and economic importance of Russia for the Czech Republic and the necessity for a 'close dialogue at the highest level'. He used expressions such as a 'new level in relations' and pointed out that his was the first visit to Moscow at the highest level since the independent Czech Republic was created out of Czechoslovakia in 1993. Implicitly, this signalled that with a new president a new era of closer relations with Russia had arrived, and that the Czech Republic wished to pursue a more active eastern policy (Klaus 2007a).

Although we have suggested above that economic matters provided the main theme of Klaus's discourse, during his first term his speeches did not cover only economic relations. By contrast, Klaus often highlighted the historical tradition of relations and positive historical experience (for example, the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union from German occupation in 1945). Another positive aspect of the relations emphasised by Klaus was linguistic and cultural proximity. This can be read as rejection of the discourse of Russia's 'otherness' posited as a reason for fearing the country; rather characterising Russia as a 'known quantity', highlighting its nearness and positive moments in its history (Klaus 2006). If there were in Klaus's discourse about Russia's references to more regrettable historical experiences, it was solely in the context of Russia's communist past, within the Soviet Union (for example, in connection with the year 1968). And even when Klaus did mention these historical connections, he tended to call them matters that had muddied relations in the past, while what

was needed now was to look forward and to overcome these past burdens (Klaus 2007a).

Havel considered the Western orientation of Czech foreign policy as decidedly desirable. Klaus departed from that and increasingly warned against a one-sided orientation of Czech foreign policy, and against succumbing to pressure from the European Union. When visiting Russia or other countries of the post-Soviet region, Klaus often said that, despite having acceded to the EU, the Czech Republic wished to 'maintain and develop as much as possible' relations with partners outside the EU, and to be 'more open to the rest of the world' (Klaus 2004). Frequently he also noted that within the EU the Czech Republic should advocate greater openness of the Union towards third countries, for example, Russia (Klaus 2004).

An absence of securitisation in the political area had its logical counterpart in the application of the same approach in the security area. Klaus stated that contemporary Russia was involved in resolving current security problems and noted that in this respect Russian and Czech interests were in agreement (Klaus 2007a). He stressed the importance of developing friendly relations between Central European countries and Russia, even after they had joined NATO (Klaus 2007a). In 2007, when the issue of deploying components of a missile defence system in Central Europe was discussed, Klaus in his speeches promoted the idea that NATO and the USA in particular should seek to dispel Russian concerns over placing a radar system in the Czech Republic (Klaus 2007a).

Nor would we find securitisation discourse among Klaus's pronouncements on energy policy—an area that in the second half of the 2000s in particular was a key area of dispute between some European countries. Klaus, by contrast, saw energy relations as stable, and Russia as a reliable and long-term supplier of gas in particular (Klaus 2007a). Even after the gas supply crises of 2006 (Klaus 2006, 2007a) and more importantly 2009, when the most serious disruptions of gas supplies were caused by disputes between Russia and Ukraine, it cannot be shown that Klaus saw energy relations as a threat or even a concern, or that he would make pronouncements to this effect. As far as the economic dimension of relations was concerned, during his first term Klaus often described Russia as a 'priority territory and one where we traditionally have interests' (Klaus 2005); he argued that the Czech Republic had past comparative advantages in Russia with which it could reconnect (Klaus 2006) and which it should not obstruct (see, for example, his recommendation to simplify visa administra-

tion; Klaus 2007a). Nor did he see Russian capital in the Czech Republic as a threat (Klaus 2006), but rather as an opportunity and enticement for further cooperation.

The desecuritisation of relations with Russia was apparent in Klaus's speeches in both of his terms, despite the substantial qualitative changes in relations between the EU (and the West broadly) and Russia, as they occurred over the years, particularly affecting security.[12] Klaus said that one had to cooperate with, not balance, Russia.[13] Indeed, he had many opportunities to do so, given that compared with Havel's era bilateral visits were much more frequent, not only to Russia itself but also to other former Soviet states.

When Klaus mentioned Russia, he sought to 'de-demonise' it. For example, at an Eastern Partnership summit in Prague in May 2009, he stressed that the activities of the Eastern Partnership were not aimed against anyone in particular (Klaus 2009), clearly primarily meaning Russia. An interesting feature of Klaus's approach was that he separated (and hence also showed desecuritisation as re-articulation) Russia from communist totalitarianism. He argued that the Russian nation was a victim of a totalitarian regime, as the Czech nation was, and given that this regime was a thing of the past, there was no reason to fear it.[14] Typical of Klaus, then, was that he resisted attempts to identify contemporary Russia with the communist Soviet Union and, since there were no problematic issues in Czech–Russian relations, urged his people to overcome the past, and made efforts to build stable relations with Russia (Klaus 2007b).

Generally speaking, however, Russia was not the central theme of Klaus's foreign-policy discourse. Throughout most of his two terms, Klaus's leitmotifs were the importance of national sovereignty and the suggestion that by being an EU member the nation would lose some of it.[15] In these positions, President Klaus was consistent, and so he was in his criticism of the ongoing climate-change discussion. In his second term, especially at the time when the Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe and subsequently the Lisbon Treaty were being adopted, Klaus's resistance to the EU grew.[16] Here the duality of Czech foreign policy was apparent, with the president frequently at odds with the foreign minister. And since the election of Miloš Zeman as president, this political ambiguity has become much more pronounced.

## President Milo Zeman: The First Term (2013–2018)

If the period of Václav Klaus's presidency was seen as a turning away from the style and content of Václav Havel's presidency in that there was increased pragmatism and a stronger emphasis on economic topics, then the rise of President Miloš Zeman did not just affirm but also accentuated this trend, at least rhetorically. There were new topics too, especially in that area of security concerned with international terrorism. Another conspicuous trait of Zeman's first presidential term was limiting his appearances at international forums, compared with Havel and Klaus. Appearances signalising his foreign-policy positions were thus less frequent than was the case with his predecessors, and they were also relatively repetitious. In terms of Hansen's typology, we observe in Zeman's discourse largely a desecuritisation of the topic of Russia via silencing, with the president avoiding the topic, even in situations that were clearly linked with Russia, such as the crisis in Ukraine.

That there would be an even greater shift towards a pragmatic perception of Russia was suggested by Zeman's election campaign, when his entourage included aides who had non-transparent links to Russia and Russian firms including the oil company Lukoil (see Chapter 4), such as Miroslav Šlouf, a lobbyist and Zeman's prime ministerial adviser, and Martin Nejedlý, also a lobbyist and later Zeman's adviser. Both were key in Zeman's return from a political 'retirement' that lasted seven years, following his failure in the 2003 presidential election. This situation, with personnel who had unclear interests, attracted attention, particularly in connection with Zeman's liking for Russia and President Putin.

As noted above, given the Czech constitution, the president's options to influence domestic and foreign policy and to introduce specific agendas are largely dependent on the strength of their personality, as well as on the forcefulness of other political leaders (the foreign minister in the case of foreign policy). The duality of Czech foreign policy had been apparent previously, during Václav Klaus's presidency, and particularly manifest in his relationship to the EU. During Zeman's first term, this duality strengthened tremendously. The new president made it quite clear that he would not follow the established convention in exercising foreign policy or in accentuating particular foreign-policy topics. He demonstrated his determination to influence the direction of Czech foreign policy right at the beginning of his mandate, when he pushed through his own candidates for

ambassador in Slovakia and Russia, despite the foreign minister's resistance (Ovčáček 2013; Golis 2013).

With respect to the theme of Russia's securitisation, Zeman's speeches from 2014 onwards—especially after a conflict had flared up in eastern Ukraine—are interesting. This was his second year as president. Particularly remarkable is the fact that, as noted above, the president usually sought carefully to avoid the topic of Russia and the lines of conflict between the West and Russia. If Zeman did speak about the crisis in Ukraine, he avoided discussing its emergence or the causes of its escalation, ignoring the prevailing Czech public discourse in which the crisis was seen as a conflict between the central Ukrainian government and the (pro-Russian) forces in the east. Rather, the president focused on suggestions for resolving the crisis: calling presidential and parliamentary elections, federalising Ukraine and amending some laws which allegedly complicated the coexistence of Ukrainians with other nationalities (Zeman 2014a).

In this respect, Zeman's appearance at a conference on 'Czech Republic as seen by Europe, Europe as seen by Czech Republic' in April 2014 was extraordinary. First, in line with his appeasing posture towards Russia, the president declared that 'Crimea is lost', that it 'after all never belonged to Ukraine' and that the sanctions led nowhere (Zeman 2014b). But then he expressed the wish that the EU and NATO would adopt a deterrence policy, precluding a Russian invasion in eastern Ukraine. Given his later downplaying of the situation, this statement was surprisingly harsh towards Russia. And yet, given that it was a one-off statement, we cannot argue that Zeman showed a clear tendency towards securitising Russia and posing the topic as a security threat. Two weeks later, the president made a similarly surprising comment at a press conference during a meeting to mark the fifth anniversary of the Eastern Partnership—supporting the withdrawal of Russian troops from near the Ukrainian border to facilitate de-escalation (Zeman 2014c). In retrospect, it is interesting to note how direct the president was in addressing the role of Russia in the conflict, something that he normally sought to avoid.

The ambivalence in Zeman's discourse throughout 2014 can be explained by his efforts to adjust his expressions to the public to whom they were addressed. However, no similar statements were made by Zeman in the subsequent years of his first term. When he spoke about the crisis in Ukraine, he resorted to generic proclamations on security matters. Most often he spoke of the necessity of discussion and the danger of conflicts spilling over borders. In an evident allusion, he noted several times the inef-

fectiveness and unsuitability of sanctions, without naming Russia directly (see, e.g., Zeman 2014a, b, d, 2017).

One of the few international forums that Zeman regularly attended during his first term was the 'Dialogue of Civilisations' conference, held on the Greek island of Rhodes early every autumn by Vladimir Yakunin, a Russian businessman close to Putin. At the 2014 conference, Zeman criticised the sanctions against Russia as counterproductive. What is more, he indirectly desecuritised Russia's actions by trivialising its involvement in eastern Ukraine as a mere 'flu'. Zeman argued that Russia was no threat and the sanctions had to be lifted. Instead of the allegedly imaginary Russian threat, he recommended a focus on suppressing international terrorism (linked in Zeman's understanding chiefly with the so-called Islamic State), which he judged to be the primary threat to the Czech Republic and Europe alike, and which became a leitmotif in his security discourse (Zeman 2014d). Zeman continued with this line of argument—downplaying the role of Russia in the conflict in Ukraine and insisting that the sanctions were ineffectual and unwarranted—throughout the rest of his first term.

Thus we note that during his first term Zeman did not deem Russia to be a security threat. In line with Hansen's typology, we note frequent desecuritisation via silencing. A minor departure from Zeman's consistent position on Russia can be observed during a short period in spring 2014, when he suggested a joint EU-NATO deterrence policy and recommended that Russia withdraw its troops from the Ukrainian border. It needs noting that even then he did not openly criticise Russia as a security threat. Rather he warned against the escalation of a conflict already underway and its spilling over into other countries. These speeches bear no comparison with the forthrightness of Václav Havel's criticism. Yet one also has to bear in mind that Zeman's predecessors had acted in a different international political context.

Overall it can be said that the prevailing message in Zeman's speeches was that Russia was no threat. Thus the sanctions imposed on Russia needed to be abolished and a dialogue had to be supported. What the president did not say about Russia is perhaps more interesting than what he did. Given the international events that unfolded during Zeman's first term, it is surprising how little attention he paid to Russia, even during the tense times of the Crimea referendum and the turbulent phase of the conflict in eastern Ukraine. This was in the context of stable, good relations between President Zeman and the Kremlin and Kremlin-linked figures.

## The Current Czech Debate About Russia

The preceding sections on three Czech presidents' discourses on Russia outlined and documented how these privileged Czech political actors gradually changed their views of contemporary Russia. Naturally, the dramatic events in Ukraine after late 2013 contributed to a fundamental change in the debate about the foreign-policy orientation of the contemporary Czech Republic. The developments in Ukraine stimulated not just political leaders, but also, unusually, the general public, to show interest in international politics, Russia in particular. By its aggression in eastern Ukraine, Putin's regime revealed its internal authoritarian consolidation, its defences against the 'virus' of coloured revolutions (Ó Beacháin and Polese 2010) and the revitalisation of its great-power ambitions (Mankoff 2011; Heinrich 2013), manifest in a new assertiveness and the employment of economic and energy pressures in foreign policy (Högselius 2013).

At the same time, the context of the foreign-policy debates in the West importantly changed as well. Generally, this transformation was characterised by a world economic crisis (from 2009), increasing tensions of various sorts within the EU, and change in the US foreign-policy line under President Barack Obama. In arguments as well as in the exercise of policy, there had been a turn towards a paradigm of promoting worldwide democracy, consciously transcending the borders of nation-states, accentuating extensively understood human rights and embodying itself in the doctrines of the colour revolutions and the Arab Spring. All of this caused intense debate about the political, and subsequently also the cultural, identity of the West.

Czech politics could not but consider all of these phenomena. And so, 25 years after the fall of communism, one could observe in the Czech Republic a revival of the fundamental domestic-political discussion about the character of modern Czech politics, even of the legitimacy of the direction Czech polity had taken in the post-communist era. In what was at the outset primarily a domestic political debate, focused on such phenomena as a crisis of Czech political partisanship, the public domain becoming oligarchic and crisis of public media, the question of Czech foreign-policy priorities became an important topic (Balík et al. 2017). The Russo-Ukrainian crisis provided a natural opportunity for various proposed amendments to these priorities.

With respect to Russia, the following questions were articulated in the debate: What is contemporary Russia like, and what are its ambitions? Given

the contemporary strategy employed by the elite of the Russian authoritarian regime, what picture do the concepts of friend and enemy provide? Is there a revival of Russia's expansionist goals dating to the totalitarian era, which might affect Central Europe? Some politicians and members of the public have asked, and continue to ask, directly: do we, Czechs, have to fear Russia?

Others in the debate formulated the questions differently: Is Russia truly the main problem that the Czech Republic has to face? Is it appropriate to rely on the guarantees provided to us by our membership of the EU and NATO (i.e. by Western democracy, or symbolically speaking, the West) as far as the current geopolitical situation in Eastern Europe is concerned? Is the West actually ready for action? Is it not, rather, the West which is the source of instability in the international system? By contrast, does not Russia once again offer a fully fledged alternative to Czech Republic's position in the West, as chosen by Czech leaders after 1989?

The sections that follow seek to describe and comment upon the model arguments that clash in this debate. The emphasis is placed on 2015–2016, which is the time when most of these arguments were proposed. Today these discourses are less vehement, not least because the situation in Russia and Ukraine seems relatively stable.

## *The Czech Left*

The Czech left is split in its views of Russia. In the left segment of the Czech party-political spectrum, which since November 1989 (the Velvet Revolution) and January 1993 (the proclamation of an independent Czech Republic) has been represented by two relevant parties, the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) and the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM),[17] as well as among left-wing intellectuals, one can identify both pro-Russian and anti-Russian positions. The more important, traditional segment of the Czech left tends not to share the prevailing Western view of the developments in Ukraine and the majority Western distancing from Russia's actions. Some of the more decidedly opinionated people even question the information published about the situation in Ukraine, considering it propaganda and misinterpretation,[18] and naturally they do not support the Western response—especially the sanctions—either. In this interpretation, Russia's actions in Ukraine are seen as essentially legitimate, because they respond to the majority preference of the (largely Russian-speaking) population in the east of the country and reflect the defence of

Russian interests in Ukraine, thus balancing Western interference in the wider Eastern Europe. This argument is voiced particularly by Czech communists, but also by those social democrats who feel close to the current President, Miloš Zeman (re-elected in January 2018), who has largely come to symbolise the pro-Russian camp (see above).

A second segment of the Czech left, consisting of that part of ČSSD that tends towards social liberalism, as well as environmental and feminist organisations and left-wing intellectuals, see the just-described position on Ukraine as uncritical. They believe that this position puts the interests of the population in Ukraine's east above those of the Ukrainian population as a whole. And in this sense, they argue, it is not really a position of the left; indeed, its black-and-white geopolitical vision is actually damaging, because it delegitimises an otherwise justified criticism of the West's approach towards Russia and to the political processes in post-communist Europe generally. In this argument, the contemporary problems of Ukraine simply do not give Russia the right to military intervention, not to speak of the annexation of any of Ukraine's territory (Crimea). On the other hand, according to this position, criticism of Russian activities in eastern Ukraine should not mean giving up criticism of the allegedly absurd portrayal of Russia as the greatest threat in the contemporary world; it should not mean giving up analysing the meaningfulness of the sanctions imposed on Russia, uncovering the actual (especially economic) interests of the West (and the USA in particular) that are concealed behind the artificial doctrine of promoting democracy. By contrast, what Russia allegedly needs from the West is support for its own model; an absence of pressure, whether exerted via power, the military, the economy or culture; and a dialogue that recognises Russian interests and values. This interpretation reflects the general distance of the left from the negative political-economic and socio-cultural consequences of globalisation.

This position—let us call it a liberal-left one—feels excluded from the public debate and decision-making processes in Czech Republic, which are allegedly dominated by a neoconservative anti-Russian stream, according to which every critic of the West is a Putin agent or at the very least a Russophile. In reality, the liberal-left camp has not been under-represented: one of its figures was Lubomír Zaorálek (ČSSD), the foreign affairs minister in the government led by the social democrat, Bohuslav Sobotka (2014–2017). The left liberals are, nevertheless, weakened by the energy they have to expend on differentiating themselves from President Zeman, who is close to the 'conservative' wing of the Social Democrats. Having

twice won the office of president, Zeman has caused a fundamental split in the left. The conflict in the foreign-policy debate on the left, thus, has its source in a pre-existent tension in domestic politics.

### *The Czech Right*

For the Czech right, the Russo-Ukraine conflict was a welcome impulse for mobilisation. A series of failures of Czech right-wing parties, that is the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) and TOP 09 in presidential and parliamentary elections in 2013,[19] was interpreted by the majority as a combination of: (1) popular defiance to the post-transition political and socio-economic model established after 1989 and (2) emptying out the potential of anti-communist rhetoric, to which the Czech right continued to resort even more than two decades after the fall of communism.

For this reason, some on the Czech right welcomed the more assertive foreign-policy line of Vladimir Putin's authoritarian regime as proof that the danger of the Czech Republic and the broader Central Europe turning away from democracy was not over yet, and that there were both domestic and external actors who were invested in it. Thus the crisis in Ukraine served to bring together the Czech right, helping it to self-defend and to revive its own potential. However, the models for interpreting the causes of this crisis, the motives of the actors involved, and the appropriate strategy for exiting the crisis, do divide the Czech right.

Above we have mentioned a 'neoconservative' intellectual current in Czech foreign policy. If we use this adjective, it means the current that after 1989 adopted the values and the practical strategies of US foreign-policy doctrine. Since the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, a readiness to 'export democracy' has been a key component of this doctrine. But what does that mean in the context of Russian, or Russo-Ukrainian reality? It means supporting 'Maidan', the alleged manifestation of a recurrent capacity to democratise within Ukrainian society,[20] and its right to choose whether it wants to go to the West and obtain EU and NATO membership—irrespective of Russia's position. By contrast, this interpretation sees Russia as an aggressive, anti-democratic actor, which by abetting the separatist desires of some in eastern Ukraine aims to disrupt the democratising trend of the majority. Ideologically, this neoconservative current respects the positions of the USA first of all; seeks to honour the EU line (though it is discomfited by the inconsistent actions of its members); and is nervous about NATO's declining ability to act. In terms of post-1989 Czech

developments, this current, which we might call liberal-Atlantic rather than neoconservative,[21] was personalised by President Havel[22]; in the 2010s this symbolic role was taken over by the former foreign minister and failed presidential candidate, Karel Schwarzenberg (TOP 09). According to critics, the bulk of Czech journalists also take this position.

This current has its opponents not just on the left but equally on the national-conservative right. The latter oppose the uncritical adoption of the viewpoints of Western states and organisations, which they see as weakening the autonomy of nation-states in Europe and beyond, and even as an external diktat. Conservative nationalists also see the ethos of the liberal position, as described above, as a fundamental problem: the human-rights agenda, they say, is both its symbol and its contents, and its instruments are the human-rights NGOs and supranational structures. The conservative critics on the right see this democracy promotion agenda as a triumph of a progressive neo-Marxist mainstream of the contemporary Western cultural, political and media elites, who, they allege, are—consciously or unconsciously—at work destroying the West. This segment of the Czech right claims that the extent of Western interference in Ukraine's matters is at least equal to that of Russia. They also describe every Ukrainian government since the 1990s as corrupt and oligarchic, and claim that the uprising in eastern Ukraine is a legitimate backlash, motivated by an understandable hope of finding a more stable (albeit non-democratic) political environment.

This is precisely the environment that Putin has managed to build in Russia over the last fifteen years. Rather than a modern liberal, neo-Marxist, human-rights ideal, which allegedly ends up as autocratic liberalism, totalitarianism even, the Czech conservatives prefer traditional, conservative authoritarianism. In this segment of the Czech right, Russia is seen as an actor in the international system balancing the influence of the West, which is increasingly (self-)destructive in terms of its aims, values, instruments and methods. Russia is also seen as engaged in combating the Islamic threat, which the West ostentatiously ignores (see the phenomenon of migration). This conservative anti-Western current is seen as embodied in the second Czech president, Václav Klaus (see above), and his advisers, including Jiří Weigl and Jiří Hájek.[23]

## Russia as Seen by Czech Political Actors: A Clash of Perspectives

In light of the above, the following question arises: how should we evaluate the contemporary Czech debate about Russia and the West, that is, a debate about the long-term foreign priorities of Czech policy? This is a debate in which all key domestic actors—including President Zeman, Prime Minister Andrej Babiš, and the opposition, most vocally the chair of the strongest opposition party, ODS, Petr Fiala—are involved.

First of all it is evident that this debate has called into question the consensus about the pro-Western foreign-policy identity of the Czech Republic, as symbolised by President Havel.[24] Despite the frequently changing government coalitions, this consensus has been a constant in the foreign-policy line of the independent Czech state. Let us remind ourselves that Havel's discourse on Russia was consistent in terms of its perception of security threats: Russia and the post-Soviet world were seen as potential sources of instability and Russian policy had gradually once again tended towards 'otherness' (which, according to Havel, was not to imply inferiority or backwardness), opting for 'great power' and a 'Cold War' style of thinking and of expansionism. For that reason, the Czech Republic had to integrate itself into the Euro-Atlantic structures and, as their member, to defend human rights, which implied, among other things, appreciating Russian dissidents and human-rights champions. It is true that in the 2000s President Klaus distanced himself from this discourse by desecuritising Russia; Klaus explicitly claimed discontinuity with the preceding Soviet era, allowing for historical prejudices to be overcome and opening the option of establishing qualitatively new relations that would reflect the tradition of friendship and not be moralising. Thus Klaus saw Russia as an opportunity, especially an economic one. But this position of Klaus's had no fundamental impact on the distribution of power in the Czech political landscape.

This consensus is now a thing of the past. Since 2013 a thoroughgoing reconstruction has been underway in the Czech political landscape, started in June 2013 by the fall of a right-wing coalition government headed by Petr Nečas. This was characterised by: (1) a crisis of traditional political parties (this means parties present in Czech politics since the early 1990s and with established ideological profiles) and a vigorous rise of non-ideological parties,[25] which has been seen by critics as a sign of the nature of Czech politics becoming oligarchic and (2) the regrouping of power potentials

of the key institutions in the Czech constitutional system: consider primarily the strengthening of the president's position that came from direct election. The president's new legitimacy tends to come into conflict with the legitimacy of parliament as the primary political arena.[26] In this atmosphere, one can speak of a crisis of the system; of mistrust in politics as an instrument for seeking ways out of clashes of interests and values in the public domain; and even of calling into question democracy as a preferred type of political regime, to which there is no alternative.

This abandonment of consensus on the pro-Western orientation of post-communist Czech foreign policy is evidently a phenomenon caused by a dramatic change in domestic politics. For this reason, themes that had long been dormant were reopened. Thus a number of Czech political actors took Russia's and the West's response to the fall of Viktor Yanukovich's regime in Ukraine as an opportunity to renew their search for friends and enemies, domestically and internationally. The basic, revived historical position was that which we termed in the introduction to this chapter a consensual view of Russia. Connecting now the preceding analysis of Czech presidents' discourse with the overall context of the Czech public debate about Russia, we note that positive images of Russia have re-emerged: Russia as a guarantor of security; as a protector (historically chiefly from German influence, be it linguistic, cultural or political); as a liberator; as a culturally and historically close partner (linguistic propinquity and Slavophilia); as a model ('order' or 'firm hand'); and as a business opportunity. President Zeman's discourse has been typical in this respect: with the exception of two ambivalent speeches in 2014, and despite events such as the Ukrainian crisis, Zeman variously desecuritised Russia, expressed sympathy and support for Russia's position, supported the lifting of sanctions, and trivialised potential threats, softened them or silenced them, or replaced them with others (political Islam).

What all this means is an acceptance of contemporary Russia as a political alternative to the West, and hence an acceptance of Vladimir Putin's authoritarian model of governance; the traditional Czech cultural and historical attachment to Russia has once again been supplemented with a political and ideological attachment. In the context of both history (the existence of a Bolshevik regime in Russia and of a communist regime in the Czech lands) and the present, it is fitting to rename this view of Russia in Czech politics a traditional, left, pro-authoritarian position.

The vigour shown by this current in asking for the floor has evidently been a surprise in Czech politics. Understandably, this view defines itself

chiefly in opposition to the liberals, who dominated Czech foreign policy after 1989. The liberals continue to deploy negative images of Russia, with slogans such as 'Russian imperialism', 'the Czech Republic in the Russian sphere of influence' (a reminder of 1968 and Soviet Russia as an 'occupier') and the 'otherness of Russia', i.e. Russia as a culture, or even civilisation, different from the Czech. Explicitly, this discourse names specific political threats (non-democratic regime, secret service activities and disinformation) as well as non-political threats (clientelism, oligarchic and criminal intrusions in the market, and the weaponisation of energy). The term 'hybrid campaign', employed by this book, adequately encompasses this choice of words.

Interestingly, the liberal current does not have support in the historical Czech ideological-doctrinal spectrum; it is a current dependent on an ideological concept formulated and adopted by the West over the past thirty to forty years. It is also important that for this current the topic of Russia is not primary, let alone constitutive. The current is mainly characterised by its view of the nature of democracy. Thus, it is a liberal-democratic position, which is ideologically critical of Russia.

Beyond this fundamental cleavage there are other lines of conflict in Czech politics, both on the left and the right. On the left, the consensual, left, pro-authoritarian current is criticised by the liberal left current. Here again it is Putin's authoritarianism and his exercise of power, and not any relationship with Russia as a culture or civilisation, that divides the two currents. Thus it is not Russia as a cultural entity (rather the opposite—a democratic Russia would be welcome as a partner to balance the globalisation desires of the West, especially the USA), but Russian authoritarianism that is unacceptable, as in a liberal-left interpretation it is always reactionary and obscurantist.

On the right, the liberal current is criticised by the conservative right, which is historically traditional, but currently weaker than the other currents described here. Here again it is a conception of democracy that serves as the criterion for distinguishing. Conservative criticism focuses on what it sees as dysfunctional pressure exerted by the West in order to make other regions (here, the post-Soviet, Slavic region) accept Western values and institutions, as proposed by liberal democracy promotion. In this view, Russia provides some alternative, especially political and economic, and partially also cultural. But it is not an alternative to the West as a whole but that part of it which, in the conservative understanding, comes closer to a totalitarian understanding of politics (because of its radical progres-

sivism, its expanding of the catalogue of human rights, multiculturalism, an inadequate response to migration flows and other social experiments) than the allegedly traditional, albeit populist, but non-experimenting Putin dictatorship does.

Thus we note that the Czech dispute about Russia is not primarily about foreign policy, but about domestic policy, and that the nature of democracy has come back as a matter of contention. Czech debate about Russia is strongly ideological; it uses the terms 'democracy' and 'non-democracy' (authoritarianism, totalitarianism) more often than geopolitical terminology. It is also diversified internally. This chapter has identified four positions: traditional, left and pro-authoritarian; modern liberal-left; liberal-Atlantic; and traditional right-conservative. It continues to be true that affection for Russia is not a priori left-wing, nor is affection for the West a priori right-wing. The chief natural context of this debate is the extent of Czech loyalty or belonging to the West. For some actors in Czech politics, Russia truly is an alternative today; but typically this is directly dependent on the condition of the West.

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## Notes

1. The lucidity of this model is upset and rendered problematic by political Catholicism, which avoided the East-West dilemma by embracing a third, centrist perspective, which was Austrian up to 1918 and Central European afterwards.
2. For the period from 1918 onwards, it is pertinent to distinguish 'Czech' from 'Czechoslovak' and 'Slovak'. The more so as the question of Western or Eastern tendencies was an important topic of the Czecho-Slovak discussion. However, in what follows we only use 'Czech', since our chapter focuses on the Czech situation only.
3. One is tempted to write 'forever', but this expression has acquired a pejorative meaning in Czech public political discourse, as it was used during

the communist era in connection with the allegedly indissoluble friendship between Czechs and Slovaks and their brotherly nations in the Soviet Union.

4. Only one relevant (in the Sartorian sense) actor of Czech politics stood outside this consensus: the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, which, however, entirely lacked coalition potential. There were no other relevant pro-Russian voices in Czech politics.
5. By contrast, the analysis excluded newspaper articles, essays, books etc., of which Presidents Havel and Klaus penned a great number.
6. Historically, this is a highly symbolic narrative for the Czech domestic political debate, summed up as 'about us without us', and referring among other things to the 'Munich syndrome', i.e. the events from autumn 1938, which led to the seizure of Czech territory with a majority German population by the Nazi Third Reich.
7. In this period Havel also alluded to the first post-Soviet Russian foreign-policy doctrine of 1993, which formulated the concept of the 'near abroad', causing concern among former Soviet satellites in Central Europe, which gradually began to seek NATO and, later, EU membership.
8. An example is provided by a 1996 speech on the occasion of receiving an honorary doctorate from Vilnius University, which was importantly dedicated to Russia and the Soviet past. Havel described the Soviet Union as an 'empire of evil'; with its collapse the threat of a world war disappeared too. By contrast, Havel directly identified NATO with the values of democracy, individual freedom, human rights, and so on. In this context he described the idea of American post-Cold-War isolationism as dangerous. Havel went on to describe the continued American participation on security in the Euro-Atlantic area, including the process of the eastern enlargement of NATO, as crucial (Havel 1996a).
9. In a 2001 speech at a Bratislava conference on 'Europe's New Democracies: Leadership and Responsibilities', Havel said: 'The term "West" thus became, both unwittingly and knowingly, a synonym for advancement, culture, freedom and decency; "East", on the other hand, a synonym for underdevelopment, callous authoritarianism and omnipresent nonsense. Needless to say, this hidden perception of Western superiority and Eastern inferiority – even though it can be historically explained a hundred times over by the contrast between the circumstances in the West and everything that came from Moscow, that is, from the East – is untenable in the long run, nor does it constitute a good starting point for a new arrangement of the world. No single geographical and cultural territory must be considered a priori better than any other once and for all, or as a matter of principle.' (Havel 2001).
10. Here we note Russia's disapproving response to the April 1999 NATO summit that commemorated the 50th anniversary of the alliance. At the

summit, NATO adopted a new strategic concept, which allowed conflict management and crisis response operations even outside the alliance's territory. Also controversial was the abandonment of a clause that said that the alliance was purely defensive in character, and the issue of linking alliance actions to the preceding mandate of the UN Security Council (in connection with a precedent concerned with the war in Kosovo and alliance intervention against the then-Yugoslavia in 1999). Cf. Arms Control Association (1999).

11. Hansen distinguished four forms of desecuritisation, of which one is 'replacement', i.e. a situation where the original topic is desecuritised and another topic is securitised in its place.
12. Beyond the gas supply crisis of 2009, noted above, and the conflict in Georgia in 2008, this included, on the positive side, the 'reset' of relations during Barack Obama's first administration, with the subsequent signing of the New START treaty in Prague in 2010 (Tran 2010).
13. Klaus took a similarly dispassionate view of Serbia; unsurprisingly, then, with his negative position on the declaration of Kosovan independence he came close to the Russian view (Klaus 2008).
14. A speech during a 2006 visit to Moscow provides another example, with Klaus going as far as claiming that under communism the Russian nation 'suffered the worst of all' (Klaus 2006). He took a similar position in a speech at the commencement of the plenary session of the presidents of the Central European Initiative in May 2007 in Brno, Czech Republic (Klaus 2007b). This approach was also noticeable in Klaus's second term.
15. Here we can again see Klaus's prevailing desecuritisation of a topic by replacement, in the key question of threats.
16. The idea of Russia as an alternative to the EU only appeared more prominently in Klaus's – and more often in his sympathisers'—discourse later, when he was no longer president.
17. When we speak of 'relevant' parties, we mean it in Giovanni Sartori's sense. Since 2013, the electoral performance of these two parties has declined dramatically. In October 2013, ČSSD won the parliamentary elections, taking 20.45% of the vote, and subsequently formed a government coalition with two partners. However, in 2017 it placed sixth in the elections, polling a mere 7.27% of the vote. KSČM placed third in the 2013 elections (14.91% of the vote) and in the 2017 elections took only 7.76% of the vote. Data indicate that most left-wing voters shifted to the ANO protest party, also described as a business-firm party (Kopeček 2016), which won the 2017 elections, taking 29.64% of the vote. However, the government led by ANO includes ČSSD and relies on KSČM's tacit support. Some other new successful parties in Czech politics, notably the Pirate Party (10.79% of the vote in the 2017 elections, coming in third place) are often described as left wing, though some political scientists dispute this.

18. At the various stages of the conflict, this concerned various incidents: these people denied the presence of Russian soldiers in Ukraine; rejected Russia's responsibility for shooting down the MH-17 airliner; and, most frequently, commented about the alleged presence of extreme-right actors in 'post-Maidan' Ukrainian politics.
19. ODS won 7.72% of the vote in the 2013 parliamentary elections (a drop from 20.22% in 2010) and TOP 09, 11.99%. In the 2013 presidential election, TOP 09 candidate Karel Schwarzenberg failed against Miloš Zeman in the second round. Only in the 2017 elections did ODS register a rise (it placed second with 11.32% of the vote), which was later confirmed by its success in the autumn 2018 senate elections.
20. Consider the anti-Soviet movement in Ukraine in the second half of the 1980s and the 'Orange Revolution'.
21. The adjective 'neoconservative' is intelligible from the point of view of the intellectual background out of which it emerged in the USA. It does not have much in common with Czech conservatism, however.
22. Who really cannot be described as a right-wing politician.
23. Cf. the website *Protiproud* (http://protiproud.parlamentnilisty.cz). In terms of the ideologies present in US politics, this Czech current shares some traits with libertarianism (for example, Ron Paul's circle).
24. Voices from abroad are also heard in this debate: see the 2015 criticisms by the then US ambassador to the Czech Republic, Norman Eisen, and Carl Gershman, director of the Endowment for Democracy (NED), addressed to Petr Drulák, then Czech deputy foreign minister, over the latter's reservations about Václav Havel's foreign policy.
25. Most important among them is the ANO party, which, having been founded only two years earlier, placed second in the 2013 parliamentary elections with 18.65% of the vote, and went on to win the 2017 parliamentary elections. The ANO leader, Andrej Babiš, is currently (2018) the prime minister. The owner of the Agrofert group, he is one of the most important businessmen in the country and owns several media outlets, including daily newspapers *MF Dnes* and *Lidové noviny* and the radio station with the largest audience, *Rádio Impuls*.
26. Czech scholars also discuss Czech politics dominated by judiciary, responding to activism by the judiciary, specifically activist verdicts of the Constitutional Court and the assertive actions of public prosecutors, which among other things caused the fall of Nečas's government.

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CHAPTER 4

# The Big Partner with a Small Turnover: Czech–Russian Economic Relations and Their Dynamics

*Lucie Coufalová and Libor Žídek*

## Introduction

This chapter aims firstly to describe economic relations between Russia and the Czech Republic as they influence the more general relationship between the two countries, and secondly to apply the concept of 'hybrid campaign' to these economic relations and to describe its benefits and limitations in this case.

Despite the close economic ties in the past between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, relations between their successor states nowadays are

L. Coufalová (✉) · L. Žídek
Faculty of Economics and Administration, Masaryk University,
Brno, Czech Republic
e-mail: 174064@mail.muni.cz

L. Žídek
e-mail: zidek@econ.muni.cz



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relatively modest. The Russian Federation is one of the world's biggest economies and one might have expected those strong political and economic connections from the communist era to have continued into the present, even though, in the past, they were forged for political or ideological rather than economic reasons, and certainly not as a result of market forces. Hence, at the end of the communist era, Czech trade was artificially biased towards the Eastern markets, foremost among them the Soviet Union, and the fall of the communist regimes was followed by a speedy territorial reorientation by the Czechs towards developed Western countries.

Despite this, the current economic relations between the Czech Republic and Russia are not negligible. Russia is on the list of countries of great potential benefit for the Czech economy. This applies especially to Czech exporters, as Czech economic diplomacy tries to restore the busy trading partnerships of the past with Russia and the other former Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, or Comecon, countries. The Czech government has developed several strategies that focus, among other things, on support for exports, as well as on investment in Russia, in order to diversify Czech trade (e.g. Ministry of Industry and Trade [MIT] 2012). Russia is also an important source of tourists visiting the Czech Republic.

In spite of the obvious potential of the Russian economy, it also suffers from many maladies. The most important of these is its dependence on the price of oil. During the period under consideration, that is, since 2000, the year when Vladimir Putin became the Russian president, the country suffered from two economic crises. Both of these were linked to a crash in oil prices, which led to a considerable fall in Russians' purchasing power. The most recent economic downturn coincided with the start of the Crimean crisis and the consequent imposition of economic sanctions and other restrictive measures by the major Western economies, including the European Union as a whole, on Russia. Moscow did not hesitate in responding with its own retaliatory measures. These factors together have affected economic relations between Russia and the Czech Republic, and it is not always possible unambiguously to determine which factor has been involved in causing which particular phenomenon.

The chapter is organised as follows. First, we pay attention to the main indicators of the Russian economy and subsequently to economic sanctions. Then we move to the evolution of trade between the Czech Republic and Russia. The next section provides an analysis of the movement of foreign direct investment into and out of Russia. After that we note migra-

tion flows and consider in particular the influx of Russian tourists into the Czech Republic. The last section presents the conclusions of our research including a confrontation of the hybrid campaign concept with empirical economic data.

## The Main Factors Behind the Evolution of Czech–Russian Economic Relations

In order to assess the influence of the Russian economy on the Czech one, we note the main economic indicators of the former (see Table 4.1).

Russia is geographically the biggest country in the world. In terms of economic power, its GDP in purchasing power parity in 2016 was almost 11 times greater than the Czech one and comparable with that of Germany (World Bank [WB] 2018b). However, in GDP per capita Russia lags well behind the richer developed countries. For example, in 2016 the Russian GDP per capita in purchasing power parity was 43% of the level of the US, 51% of Germany and 59% of Japan. Moreover, it amounted to only 71% of the Czech GDP per capita (ibid.).

The Russian economy certainly offers many opportunities for foreign exporters and investors. However, it also has many weaknesses. Its major problem is its dependence on oil and gas revenues. Alexey I. Balaev (2017) estimates that in recent years, these natural resources have provided from 22 to 28% of government budget revenues, and between 40 and 50% of the revenues of the federal budget, with an even greater effect on their total variation (from 60 to 70% is explained by the variation in oil and gas revenues). This fact makes the economy extremely vulnerable, as shown by the economic crises in 1998, 2008 and most recently in 2014.

As can be seen in Table 4.1, in 2015, Russian GDP fell by 2.8% as a consequence of drops in private consumption and investment that declined by 9.8 and 9.9% respectively (*Focus Economics*, 1 August 2017). In the same year, inflation climbed to 15.5%. The Russian economy particularly suffered from the crash in oil prices in 2014, which was followed by a fall in the value of the Russian currency. For example, by March 2016, the rouble had lost 50% of its value against the dollar, as compared with July 2014 (Bloomberg 2017).

Another drawback of the Russian economy is the influence of oligarchs. The oligarchs are entrepreneurs who became rich and powerful by acquiring state property at a nominal or very low price. They simply took advantage of the opportunities offered by Russian privatisations, their political

**Table 4.1** Macroeconomic indicators of the Russian economy from 2000 to 2017 (data for 2016 and 2017 are estimates; GDP in US$)

| *Russian Federation* | *2000* | *2008* | *2009* | *2013* | *2014* | *2015* | *2016* | *2017* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| GDP, const, prices, % change | 10.0 | 5.2 | −7.8 | 1.8 | 0.7 | −2.8 | −0.2 | 1.8 |
| GDP per cap., const, prices, PPP | 14,092 | 23,992 | 22,115 | 25,576 | 25,754 | 25,021 | 24,967 | 25,427 |
| Inflation, % change | 20.8 | 14.1 | 11.7 | 6.8 | 7.8 | 15.5 | 7.0 | 4.2 |
| Unemployment rate | 10.6 | 6.2 | 8.2 | 5.5 | 5.2 | 5.6 | 5.5 | 5.8 |
| Imports of goods and services, % change | 9.6 | 22.2 | −32.6 | 0.9 | −7.6 | −25.0 | −4.2 | 4.6 |
| Exports of goods and services, % change | 3.1 | 6.0 | −6.7 | 5.8 | −1.9 | −0.5 | 0.1 | 4.6 |
| General government gross debt, % of GDP | 55.7 | 7.4 | 9.9 | 12.7 | 15.6 | 15.9 | 15.6 | 17.4 |
| Current account balance, % of GDP | 16.2 | 5.8 | 3.8 | 1.5 | 2.8 | 5.0 | 2.0 | 2.8 |
| *Czech Republic* | *2000* | *2008* | *2009* | *2013* | *2014* | *2015* | *2016* | *2017* |
| GDP, const, prices, % change | 4.3 | 2.7 | −4.8 | −0.5 | 2.7 | 5.3 | 2.6 | 3.5 |
| GDP per cap., const, prices, PPP | 20,953 | 29,221 | 27,598 | 28,116 | 28,889 | 30,349 | 31,090 | 32,101 |
| Inflation, % change | 3.8 | 6.3 | 1.0 | 1.4 | 0.3 | 0.3 | 0.7 | 2.3 |
| Unemployment rate | 8.8 | 4.4 | 6.7 | 7.0 | 6.1 | 5.0 | 4.0 | 2.8 |
| Imports of goods and services, % change | 14.5 | 3.1 | −11.0 | 0.1 | 10.1 | 6.8 | 3.4 | 4.2 |

(continued)

**Table 4.1** (continued)

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Exports of goods and services, % change | 14.8 | 4.2 | −9.8 | 0.2 | 8.7 | 6.0 | 4.5 | 4.0 |
| General government gross debt, % of GDP | 17.0 | 28.6 | 34.0 | 44.9 | 42.2 | 40.0 | 36.8 | 34.5 |
| Current account balance, % of GDP | −4.4 | −1.9 | −2.8 | −0.5 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 1.1 | 0.6 |

*Source* International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database (October 2017)

positions or contacts (Laqueur 2016). Many of those who benefited under Boris Yeltsin fell into disfavour in the Putin era. Those who managed to hold onto power were supplemented by a new group strongly linked with the current president (ibid.).

In contrast, the Czech Republic is a small, open economy, with strong trading ties to other European Union countries. Like the Russian economy, the Czech economy suffered from the 2008 global economic crisis and registered another small slowdown in 2012–2013, when its GDP fell by 0.8 and 0.5% in the two years. However, in contrast to Russia, the current Czech economic situation is positive, with a growing GDP, falling unemployment and a decreasing gross government debt as a proportion of GDP, as well as rising living standards. The weak points of the Czech economy are the country's poor infrastructure and under-investment in high-tech production.

At a time when the Czech economy started to grow and the Russian economy to contract, trade, mutual investment and migration flows were expected to be influenced by the restrictive measures imposed on Russia by the US and other developed countries, as well as by the retaliatory measures taken by the Kremlin. The US first imposed sanctions on Russia in April 2013 as a reaction to the events in Syria and the arrival of Edward Snowden in Russia, at a time when the Russian economy was already suffering an economic slowdown. These restrictions included some export bans, as well as sanctions against the Russian space industry (Kazantsev 2017).

Subsequently, on 14 March 2014, a new set of measures was approved in response to the Crimean crisis; these were endorsed by the major Western economies, including the European Union, and further extended in the following months. Ultimately, sanctions targeted 150 individuals and 37 legal entities involved in the events in Crimea and later in Eastern Ukraine. Initially, they were focused on the export and import of goods by these individuals and companies, and on the handling of their assets and dividends. Later on, new measures were approved including the prohibition of investment in Crimea, restrictions related to the access of some Russian banks and companies to international financial markets, as well as restrictions on the purchase of industrial and military technologies (Romanova 2016).

At the same time, the Russian government introduced an embargo on a wide range of food products coming from the EU, USA and other developed countries. This ban mainly concerned agricultural products such as fresh fruit and vegetables, dairy products and meat (BBC, 15 September 2014). In 2017, when the EU tightened existing restrictions, Mr. Putin swiftly extended the Russian retaliatory measures until 31 December 2018 (ČTK, 30 June 2017).

## Czech–Russian Trade

When assessing the magnitude of current trading activities between the Czech Republic and Russia, we cannot fail to mention the levels of exchange they maintained during the period of socialism.

After the communist coup in Czechoslovakia (1948) and for political reasons, a quick reorientation of Czech (at that time Czechoslovak) trade in the Soviet Union's markets occurred (see Table 4.2). This development, which was reinforced by the creation of Comecon in 1949, had serious consequences for Czechoslovak trading competitiveness. At that time, Czech goods were able to compete in developed international markets. For example, in 1948, only 39.7% of Czech trade was done with centrally planned economies (CPEs), 60.3% with market economies. Nevertheless, by 1960, business with market economies accounted for only 28% of the total—the bulk now going to CPEs (Nezval 1997). In the following period, the major share of Czech trade—estimates say up to 70%—was done in Comecon markets, with the largest share of business being with Bulgaria and the Soviet Union (Zeman et al. 1990). In consequence, during the 1980s,

**Table 4.2** Territorial orientation of cross-border trade of Czechoslovakia between 1948 and 1985 (%)

| | *1948* | *1953* | *1960* | *1970* | *1980* | *1985* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Socialist countries* | | | | | | |
| From which: | 39.7 | 78.5 | 71.8 | 70 | 69.9 | 78.8 |
| CCCP | 16.2 | 35.5 | 34.4 | 32.5 | 35.8 | 44.8 |
| Other comecon countries | – | 36.4 | 29.4 | 32.8 | 29.7 | 29.3 |
| Other socialist countries | – | 6.6 | 8 | 4.9 | 4.4 | 4.7 |
| *Non-socialist countries* | | | | | | |
| From which: | 60.3 | 21.5 | 28.2 | 30 | 30.1 | 21.1 |
| Developed capitalist countries | 45.5 | 14.9 | 17.8 | 22.4 | 23 | 15.5 |
| Developing countries | 14.8 | 6.6 | 10.4 | 7.6 | 7.1 | 5.7 |

*Source* Průcha (1988)

only 3–5% of Czechoslovak products were estimated to be of world-class quality (Pulpán 1993).

After the disintegration of the Comecon markets, the volume of exchange between their successor states declined considerably. Czech business was almost completely redirected to developed Western markets, especially to the European Union, which in 2017 bought 83.4% of Czech exports and provided 65.6% of the country's imports (Czech Statistical Office [CZSO] 2018).

Russia is now a relatively small trading partner. Figure 4.1 shows the evolution in the volume of trade with Russia, as well as its share of total Czech exports and imports. It is obvious that the relative importance of Russia to Czech trade is far lower than it was at the end of the communist era.[1]

In 2000, Russia accounted for 6.46% of Czech imports and 1.33% of the country's exports, whereas in 2017, Russia provided only 3.04% of Czech imports and consumed 1.96% of total Czech exports. Overall, during the period under consideration, Russia took on average 2.40% of Czech exports and supplied 4.60% of imports (CZSO 2018). By contrast, in 2015, the Czech Republic provided 1.70% of Russian imports and the Czechs bought 1.20% of Russia's exports (Observatory of Economic Complexity 2017).

During the whole period covered by Fig. 4.1, the Czech Republic's current account with Russia has been hugely in deficit, caused mainly by the purchase of Russian oil and natural gas. Unlike the trade in goods,


**Fig. 4.1** The volume of Czech exports to and imports from Russia (left axis, CZK thousand) and the Russian share of total Czech exports and imports (right axis, %) (*Source* CZSO 2018)

a stable surplus was registered by tourism (Czech National Bank [CNB] 2003–2018).

From 2003 to 2012, there has been a considerable increase in Russia's share of total Czech exports. An especially important period was the world economic crisis of 2008, when almost half of new export insurance contracts supported by the Czech government's Export Guarantee and Insurance Corporation (EGAP 2009, 2010) were for deals with Russia. Almost the same happened with the financing of export credits provided by the Czech Export Bank (CEB 2009, 2010). Subsequently, Russia became one of the priority countries as set by the *Export strategy of the Czech Republic for the period 2012–20* (MIT 2012).

Nevertheless, in recent years, the deficit has dwindled and the positive trend in the relative importance of Russia as a Czech trading partner has turned negative since 2013, and especially in 2014, when the volume of mutual exchange in absolute terms began to decrease significantly. As previously noted, a large decline in mutual trade was expected as a consequence of the introduction of restrictions and the Russian counter-sanctions against Western countries. However, the declining trend in Czech exports to Russia

started well before the sanctions came in, especially as a consequence of the crisis that hit the Russian economy, which went hand in hand with a crash in oil prices and the depreciation of the Russian rouble.

Table 4.3 gives an overview of the commodity structure of trade between the two countries. It is obvious that on the Czech import side, SITC1 class 3 commodities—mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials—are particularly important. Imports of these raw materials accounted in the period under consideration for 32–54% of total Czech imports of that class and they represented 66–87% of Czech imports from Russia. On the other hand, the most important Czech export commodities were of class 7—machinery and transport equipment—which made up 41–72% of Czech exports to Russia. Nevertheless, they represented only 1–5% of the total Czech exports of that commodity class.

Immediately after the introduction of sanctions, apolitical and public debate on their effectiveness began. As part of the hybrid campaign mentioned in Chapter 2, some Czech media started to foresee catastrophic scenarios, predicting the disastrous effects of sanctions on the Czech economy. For example, according to the executive director of the Chamber of Trade and Industry for CIS Countries (CIS Chamber), František Masopust, Czech exporters stood to lose out, as Russia would import goods from countries that did not burden it with restrictions (*Hlas Ruska*, 14 October 2014). The Association of Exporters expected the sanctions to cause a loss of up to 40,000 jobs in the Czech Republic (*idnes.cz*, 18 March 2014). Moreover, Ivan Mládek, the minister of industry and trade, predicted a fall in all trade between the countries, including goods not subjected to the Russian counter-sanctions, as a consequence of a loss of mutual trust (e.g. Parlamentní listy, 20 October 2016).[2]

The Czech President, Miloš Zeman, repeatedly opposed sanctions (e.g. *idnes.cz*, 24 August 2016; Nádoba 2017). Sanctions against Russia, according to the president, were damaging Czech industry, and the Kremlin's countermeasures were negatively affecting Czech farmers (*idnes.cz*, 24 August 2016).[3]

In reality, after the imposition of economic sanctions, the most important drop in exports was registered in SITC1 class 7 goods, even though there were no Russian counter-sanctions on this class of merchandise.[4] Despite the fact that the Russian retaliatory measures concerned mainly class 0 goods—food and live animals—there was no large drop in the exports of these categories. On the import side, the greatest change was a

**Table 4.3** Czech exports to and imports from Russia (CZK million; SITC1 classification), Russia's share of total Czech exports and imports in each category of goods and each category as a proportion of total exports and imports to and from Russia

| | 2000 | | 2007 | | 2013 | | 2014 | | 2015 | | 2016 | | 2017 | | Russia 2000–2017 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *EXP* | *IMP* | *EXP* | *IMP* | *EXP* | *IMP* | *EXP* | *IMP* | *EXP* | *IMP* | *EXP* | *IMP* | *EXP* | *IMP* | *EXP (%)* | *IMP (%)* |
| 0 | 864 | 63 | 1091 | 90 | 1586 | 254 | 1994 | 366 | 1576 | 242 | 1742 | 304 | 1844 | 314 | 2.08 | 0.12 |
| | 2.62% | 0.13% | 1.52% | 0.09% | 1.37% | 0.17% | 1.53% | 0.23% | 1.11% | 0.14% | 1.23% | 0.17% | 1.33% | 0.18% | | |
| 1 | 50 | 3 | 535 | 16 | 584 | 67 | 600 | 83 | 378 | 83 | 404 | 83 | 497 | 86 | 0.62 | 0.03 |
| | 0.59% | 0.04% | 3.70% | 0.10% | 2.58% | 0.34% | 2.19% | 0.42% | 1.14% | 0.35% | 1.13% | 0.33% | 1.35% | 0.31% | | |
| 2 | 201 | 3672 | 511 | 7207 | 545 | 5137 | 662 | 5208 | 661 | 4288 | 638 | 3683 | 584 | 4079 | 0.62 | 4.90 |
| | 0.51% | 9.33% | 0.79% | 12.36% | 0.64% | 6.56% | 0.75% | 6.50% | 0.77% | 5.64% | 0.78% | 5.00% | 0.63% | 5.08% | | |
| 3 | 69 | 64,316 | 232 | 90,525 | 276 | 125,784 | 275 | 103,412 | 174 | 75,815 | 167 | 56,649 | 231 | 76,118 | 0.31 | 79.04 |
| | 0.20% | 53.63% | 0.34% | 47.32% | 0.28% | 43.03% | 0.28% | 38.38% | 0.15% | 33.23% | 0.22% | 32.35% | 0.30% | 36.68% | | |
| 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 9 | 13 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 22 | 5 | 17 | 5 | 20 | 0.00 | 0.08 |
| | 0.05% | 0.00% | 0.02% | 0.06% | 0.10% | 0.20% | 0.07% | 0.07% | 0.04% | 0.24% | 0.04% | 0.15% | 0.05% | 0.25% | | |
| 5 | 2435 | 1736 | 6082 | 3271 | 8938 | 5507 | 9923 | 5339 | 822 | 4561 | 7359 | 3644 | 7064 | 5774 | 10.22 | 3.59 |
| | 3.06% | 1.25% | 4.22% | 1.32% | 4.41% | 1.70% | 4.12% | 1.44% | 3.42% | 1.17% | 3.08% | 0.91% | 2.75% | 1.39% | | |
| 6 | 2998 | 6211 | 10,106 | 10,901 | 11,764 | 9781 | 10,945 | 10,377 | 9618 | 10,915 | 8997 | 12,007 | 9289 | 17,063 | 12.87 | 816 |
| | 1.05% | 2.41% | 2.02% | 2.18% | 2.14% | 1.93% | 1.83% | 1.85% | 1.57% | 1.84% | 1.47% | 2.03% | 1.46% | 2.68% | | |
| 7 | 6625 | 412 | 3334 | 157 | 8244 | 5,062 | 75,783 | 4215 | 49,265 | 6267 | 46,227 | 5854 | 53,444 | 10,652 | 63.14 | 3.63 |
| | 1.33% | 0.83% | 2.48% | 0.15% | 4.82% | 0.44% | 3.79% | 0.30% | 2.29% | 0.39% | 2.07% | 0.37% | 2.23% | 0.61% | | |
| 8 | 1673 | 115 | 5709 | 468 | 10,045 | 504 | 12,828 | 487 | 8914 | 1523 | 9671 | 1646 | 9203 | 461 | 10.08 | 0.45 |
| | 1.19% | 0.09% | 2.12% | 0.19% | 2.69% | 0.18% | 2.99% | 0.14% | 1.87% | 0.40% | 1.83% | 0.38% | 1.68% | 0.10% | | |
| 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| | 0.00% | 0.02% | 0.04% | 0.00% | 0.01% | 0.00% | 0.01% | 0.00% | 0.01% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.02% | 0.00% | | |
| Total | 14,915 | 80,237 | 57,608 | 114,049 | 116,188 | 15,211 | 113,018 | 129,494 | 78,812 | 103,715 | 7521 | 83,887 | 82,164 | 114,566 | 1,085,320 | 1,966,995 |
| | 1.33% | 6.46% | 2.32% | 4.77% | 3.66% | 5.39% | 3.11% | 4.05% | 4.05% | 4.05% | 1.89% | 2.40% | 1.96% | 3.04% | | |

The corresponding SITC1 categories are: 0—Food and live animals; 1—Beverages and tobacco; 2—Crude materials, inedible, except fuels; 3—Mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials; 4—Animal and vegetable oils, fets and waxes; 5—Chemicals and relates products, n.e.s.; 6—Manufactured goods classified chiefly by material; 7—Machinery and transport equipment; 8—Miscellaneous manufactured articles; 9—Commodities and transactions n.e.s. in the SITC

*Source* CZSO (2018)

fall in the relative importance of SITC1 class 3 goods from 83% of Russian imports in 2013 to 68% in 2016 (CZSO 2018).

Along with the recovery of the Russian economy in 2017, the volume of exports of machinery and transport equipment, as well as oil imports, increased considerably. The same was true with respect to the total Czech exports to Russia and imports from Russia, which registered year-on-year increases of 9.25% and 36.57% respectively.

We have previously argued (Coufalová and Žídek 2017b) that factors other than sanctions may be considered when analysing the drop in Czech–Russian trade. The heavy fall in the price of oil, the most important source of the latter country's revenues, as well as the depreciating rouble, which made Russian imports from the Czech Republic more expensive, both had an important influence on trading relations.

## Czech–Russian Foreign Direct Investment

Investment is an important part of economic relations. Our analysis here will focus primarily on foreign direct investment (FDI), as it is less liquid than other forms of investment and tends to be more stable. First of all, we consider the evolution of the patterns of outward FDI /OFDI/; then we note the Czech inward FDI /IFDI/. Economic sanctions were expected to influence Czech–Russian investment, as they did other areas of trade; and as such they deserve special emphasis. The nationalisation of Czech companies in Russia or an outflow of Russian FDI from the Czech Republic, were seen as possible negative effects (*idnes.cz*, 18 March 2014).

## Czech Outward Foreign Direct Investment in Russia

According to data on Czech FDI abroad (see Table 4.4), Russia is not a sought-after country for Czech investors.

However, these official data—provided by the CNB (2003–2018)—are somewhat misleading because the central bank's figures are based on the principle of an immediate investor. A large amount of Czech investment (and we will see below that the same happens with Russian investment) flows abroad via countries with favourable tax legislation. For example, in 2002, FDI to Liechtenstein, the British Virgin Islands, Cyprus, Luxembourg and the Netherlands amounted to around half of the total Czech OFDI.[5]

**Table 4.4** The stock of Czech OFDI in Russia and Russia's share of total Czech OFDI

| | *2000* | *2001* | *2002* | *2003* | *2004* | *2005* | *2006* | *2007* | *2008* | *2009* | *2010* | *2011* | *2012* | *2013* | *2014* | *2015* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Czech FDI in Russia (mil. CZK) | 170 | 328 | 95 | 1047 | 3062 | 4844 | 4127 | 4544 | 4462 | 3152 | 1706 | 2226 | 4656 | 5387 | 4442 | 4031 |
| Share of Russia on total Czech FDI (%) | 0.61 | 0.80 | 0.21 | 1.79 | 3.64 | 5.46 | 3.94 | 2.94 | 1.84 | 1.16 | 0.61 | 0.84 | 1.41 | 1.31 | 1.07 | 0.87 |

*Source* CNB (2003–2018)

**Table 4.5** Major Czech investors operating in the Russian market in 2013

| *The Czech company* | *Branch* |
|---|---|
| Škoda Auto | Manufacture of automobiles and their components |
| PPF (home credit) | Banking, financial and insurance services, portfolio investments in various companies |
| Hamé | Production of durable and refrigerated food |
| Škoda Holding | Engineering, production of means of transport, energetics |
| Alta | Supplies of investment units mainly from the field of mechanical engineering, metallurgy and power engineering |
| PSG International | Supplies of investment units in construction, energy and petrochemistry |
| Moravské naftové doly | Oil and gas extraction |
| PSJ | Commercial, industrial and residential construction |
| Chemoprojekt | Supplies of chemical plants |
| Farmtec | Construction of modern agricultural farms on a turnkey basis |
| Favea | Reconstruction and supply of equipment for pharmaceutical and medical facilities |
| Sitel | Production and sale of technologies and elements for the construction of routes and cableways |
| Koh-i-noor | Production of writing and office supplies |
| AGC Flat Glass Czech | Manufacture of flat glass |
| Unistav | Commercial, industrial and residential construction |

*Source* Hospodářská komora České republiky (2013)

Despite this obstacle, we can observe that immediately after the Czech Republic's accession to the EU, Russia became one of the ten most prominent countries in terms of its official Czech OFDI (ibid.). As has already been mentioned, since then Russia has become one of the priority countries in which great potential was seen not only for Czech exporters but also for the allocation of domestic FDI. Nevertheless, its share of total Czech outward investment has been only modest.

The main areas of interest for Czech investors in Russia are manufacturing industry, as well as the financial sector and metallurgy (Hospodářská komora České republiky 2013). The major Czech investors in Russia are listed in Table 4.5.

Although the Russians are aware of the need to attract investment, whether domestic or foreign, especially since the most recent Russian economic depression, such investment entails many drawbacks and risks. According to the CIS Chamber (2018), there is no federal agency for invest-

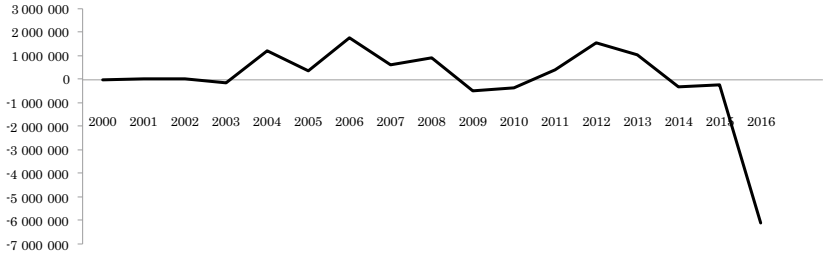


**Fig. 4.2** Net flows of Czech OFDI to Russia (CZK thousand) (*Source* CNB 2003–2018)

ment, nor are there uniform conditions for investment in Russia. Hence, investment options in the various regions of the country can vary considerably, as do the risks associated with them.[6] In addition to regional differences in legislation, law enforcement, corruption, insufficient protection of intellectual property rights and state intervention in the economy, are also problematic (Samsoyan 2009). From an economic point of view, the dependency of the Russian economy on oil prices and hence the uncertainties of its long-term production growth are also a risk. Of course, this risk has political, security and other aspects and consequences as well.

Recently, since the introduction of sanctions, great emphasis has been put on the development of Czech FDI in Russia. Restrictive measures concerned only Crimea and Sevastopol (European Council, 7 August 2017). However, the interest of Czech companies in investing in these areas was marginal. Figure 4.2 shows the evolution in flows of Czech FDI to Russia. The negative trend in recent years could also have occurred as a result of the deterioration of the institutional environment in Russia (WB 2018a) or a decline in mutual trust, as well as the poor economic performance of the country.

Despite the net outflow of Czech OFDI from Russia, some Czech companies are nowadays trying to transfer their production activities directly to Russia and to locate their production there, in order to benefit from more favourable conditions. This has occurred due to changes in Russian legislation and an import substitution strategy adopted by the country (CIS Chamber 2018). Now, if a business is considered to be Russian, it can gain a direct competitive advantage in the form of price and other benefits. In 2016 this was the case for the Brano company, which opened a plant in

Nizhny Novgorod, as well as for the spark plug producer, Brisk, which did the same in Samara. Apart from manufacturers, some food producers tried to avoid the sanctions and also moved their production to Russia (*idnes.cz*, 14 March 2017).

In sum, there are many factors influencing the volume of Czech investment in Russia. First of all, the Russian government is trying to attract foreign investment, although the conditions vary considerably across regions. In addition, the Russian economic restrictions stimulate Czech companies to move to the local market in order to get more favourable conditions or to avoid the economic sanctions. By contrast, Russia's poor political and investment climate, as well as its recent economic crisis, work in the opposite direction.

## Czech Inward Foreign Direct Investment from Russia

Many of the factors related to Czech investment in Russia also influence investment coming in the opposite direction. As can be seen from Fig. 4.3 the official statistics provided by the CNB (2003–2018) show Russia's negligible share of the total inflow of IFDI into the country.

However, CNB's 2015 report, for instance (CNB 2003–2018), points out that the official numbers are misleading. This is because a considerable part of the Russian capital flows into the Czech Republic, as well as into many other countries, are channelled via offshore centres, especially Cyprus (ibid.).[7] This routing allows Russian investors to avoid paying tax in their home country or to allocate capital of doubtful origin. Investing via offshore centres also makes the money less transparent and helps to avoid the negative attitudes that Russian investment arouses in its former satellites. The Czechs' negative views are the result of their substantial historical experience and of their fear that they might again come under the political influence of Russia (*The Economist*, 9 December 2004). Other important reasons include the misconduct of Russian firms abroad and their links to espionage, bribery and political intrigue (ibid.).Kalotay et al. (2014, p. 26) point out that '[t]he activities of Russian-owned firms in the Czech Republic are not always transparent, follow the oligarchic practice of the home country and sometimes do not fulfil legal requirements'.

Russian investment in the Czech Republic consists almost exclusively of acquisitions or joint ventures—these are not green-field investments. As far as the structure of Russian investments in Central Europe is concerned,

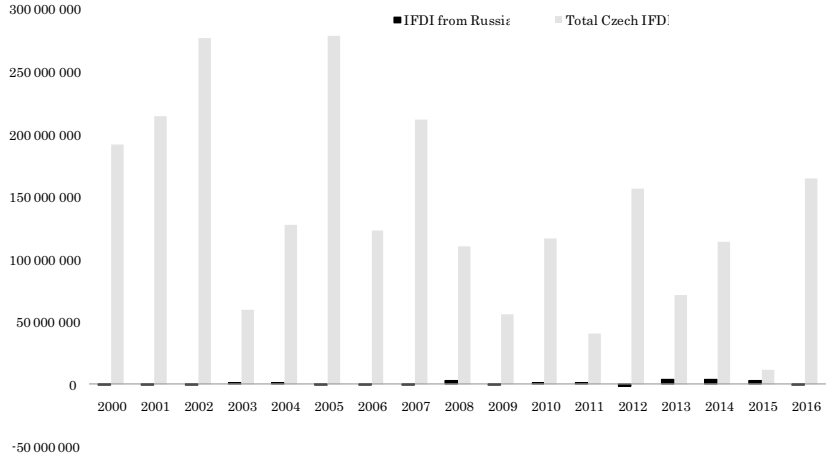


**Fig. 4.3** Total IFDI into the Czech Republic (CZK thousand) and the volume of IFDI from Russia (*Source* CNB 2003–2018)

investment in the energy industry generally predominates. This situation raises fears in these countries of Russian dominance in the sector, as Russian companies often own assets that are crucial to the functioning of their economies. This fear is often due to these firms' ties to the Russian government, which has a major stake in the company Gazprom, for example. The same holds for the oil industry. For example, Lukoil, a big player in the industry, is known for its good relations with the Putin regime. These facts create negative emotions among Central Europeans. In contrast, FDI from the pro-Western Yukos was welcomed in Central Europe. After the fall of the company and the subsequent distribution of its assets under government supervision, however, the domestic economies strived to buy back the shares bought in the country (ibid.).

The most important Russian investments in the Czech Republic up to and including 2014, together with the form of the acquisition, are reported in Table 4.6.

Here we want to document the impact of the economic sanctions on Czech IFDI from Russia, as these were expected to negatively influence investment. Figure 4.4 shows data provided by the CNB (2003–2018).

The figure shows that the flow of Russian IFDI into the Czech Republic has been positive since the implementation of sanctions and hence no

**Table 4.6** Russian investments in the Czech Republic and their type

| *Russian company* | *Direct or indirect investment* | *The name of the Czech company* |
|---|---|---|
| Sberbank | Indirect, via Austria | Volksbank offices |
| ChTPZ Group | Indirect, via Luxemburg | MSA |
| Vostok-Service | Direct | Cerva Export Import a.s. |
| Ural Mining and Metallurgical Company | Direct | Aircraft Industries a.s. |
| OMZ | Direct | Skoda |
| Lukoil | Indirect, via the Netherlands | Jet petrol stations |
| Lukoil | Direct | Aviation Czech s.r.o. |
| Gazprom | Indirect, via Germany | Vemex |
| TVEL Fuel Company | Direct | ALTA Invest |
| Evraz Holding | Indirect, via Cyprus | Vitkovice Steel |
| JSC NIIME & Micron | Direct | STROM Telecom—Sitronics |

*Source* Kalotay et al. (2014)

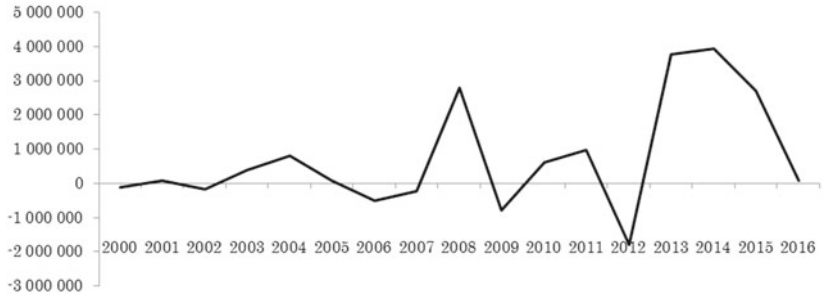


**Fig. 4.4** The long-term trend in IFDI from Russia and Cyprus into the Czech Republic (CZK million; the principle of an immediate investor) (*Source* CNB 2003–2018)

huge Russian disinvestment has occurred. The observed fluctuations are not particularly noteworthy, because in general investment is characterised by high short-term fluctuations around its long-term trend.

We find many reasons for the absence of the predicted huge Russian disinvestment. The most important one is profit. The Czech Republic offers safe and profitable opportunities for investing money. The country's diversified trade and its geographical proximity to core European regions are also major factors. According to Kalotay et al. (2014), if Russia wishes to create business ties with advanced European industries, it cannot ignore Central Europe, because the principal transport corridors run through the region. What is more, in 2013, for example, German Gref, the leader of the Russian Sberbank, claimed the Czech economy was more stable and had a better outlook than the EU-15 countries (BBC Monitoring European, 28 March 2013).

On the other hand, the start of the Crimean crisis worsened still further the already poor indicators of Russian institutional environment (WB, 2018). As a consequence of this investment-hostile environment, Russian OFDI continues to be larger than inward investment, resulting in a net capital outflow (The Central Bank of the Russian Federation 2018). In general, there seems to be a lack of confidence. Russians fear that money invested in the domestic economy might be confiscated and capital owners might be severely penalised (Laqueur 2016). Therefore, many Russian investors prefer to put their money abroad into less risky projects.

The sanctions may not have had any negative influence on either the good quality of the Czech investment environment or on the poor-quality Russian investment environment. Sanctions may therefore affect investment in Russia, rather than in the Czech Republic. Central Europe still remains more attractive and safer than Russia.

## The Cross-Border Movement of People

There are two different aspects of the cross-border movement of people to be considered in this section. First, we note the in- and outflows of Czechs to and from Russia, as well as the number of Russians living in the Czech Republic. Second, we are interested in the inflow of Russian tourists into the Czech Republic and the impact of economic sanctions on this tourism.

As can be seen in Fig. 4.5, with the exception of 2001 and 2003, the year-on-year change in the number of Russian people living in the Czech Republic was always positive. Contrary to this tendency, during the whole

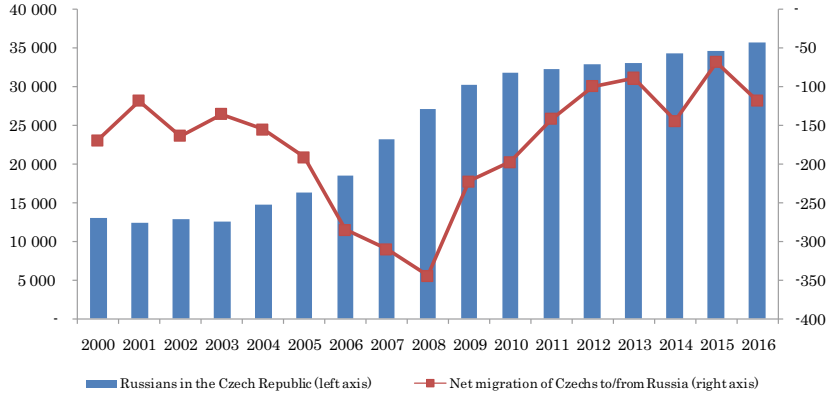


**Fig. 4.5** Czech migration from/to Russia and Russians living in the Czech Republic (2000–2016) (*Source* CZSO [2018] and Federal State Statistics Service [2018])

period, the number of Czechs leaving Russia outweighed the number of those who decided to move there. Hence, throughout the period analysed, the Czech Republic seems to have been considerably more attractive for Russians than Russia was for Czechs.

At the same time, the number of Russian tourists coming to the Czech Republic increased considerably. There were, however, two important periods with negative year-on-year changes, corresponding to the economic slowdowns of the Russian economy. The first one occurred in 2009, when almost 22% fewer Russian tourists arrived in the Czech Republic than in 2008. The second and more dramatic drop started in 2014, with the most important year-on-year fall of 37% taking place in the following year. These dynamics continued in 2016. Nevertheless, according to the CZSO (2017), which monitors the number of overnight stays in hotels and other accommodation, in the first quarter of 2017, guests from Russia became the second largest group among foreign tourists in the Czech Republic. This positive trend in the number of Russian tourists arriving in the country had already started in the second half of 2016 and has become stronger at the beginning of 2017, when a 35% year-on-year increase was registered (CZSO 2018). The number of guests from Russia in the Carlsbad spa city and region—the Russians' favourite area of the Czech Republic—followed the same pattern (see Fig. 4.6).

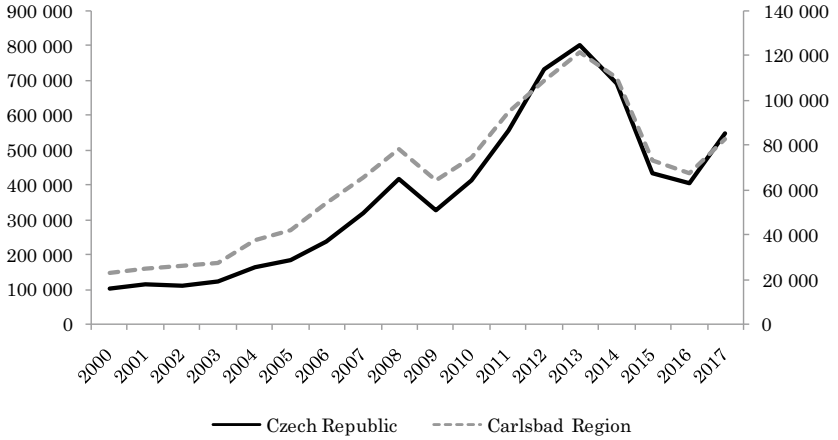


**Fig. 4.6** The number of Russian tourists staying overnight in the Czech Republic(left axis) and the Carlsbad region (right axis) in the period 2000–2017 (Since 2012, the methodology used by the CZSO has been improved and therefore the data series starting in that year are collected in a different way. Nevertheless, as data obtained in both ways are available for the year 2012 and 2013 and the differences between the two methods are very small, we consider the series to be uniform)

It has been argued that the noted drop was a consequence of the economic sanctions. Moreover, those restrictions were supposed to cause a loss of 20,000 jobs as a consequence of a drop in the inflow of Russian tourists to the country, especially to the Carlsbad region and to Prague (*idnes.cz*, 18 March 2014). As we previously noted (Coufalová and Žídek 2017b), there was some decrease in employment in the accommodation, catering and hospitality industries in both regions after sanctions were imposed. Nevertheless, overall unemployment in these regions changed in line with the national average, especially improving in Carlsbad.

These facts lead us to the conclusion that if there were job losses in the accommodation sector caused by the drop in Russian tourism, it was more than balanced by the growth of jobs in other sectors, i.e. people were able to find jobs elsewhere.

Moreover, Russians also travelled considerably less to countries which did not impose any restrictions on Russia. For example, in the summer of 2015, their trips to the Dominican Republic and Mexico fell by 63 and

58% respectively. At the same time, 34% fewer Russian tourists travelled abroad to Europe generally. The decreasing number of Russian tourists in the Czech Republic was therefore rather a consequence of the huge rouble depreciation that made foreign travel more expensive than in previous years (*The Moscow Times*, 22 October 2015). Subsequently, Russians more often opted for domestic destinations for their holidays. For example, in 2014, there was an increase of 30% over the previous year (Lossan, 10 June 2015). This dynamic again testifies to the fact that the decline in Russian tourism was probably a consequence of the economic crisis in Russia rather than the imposition of economic sanctions.

## Conclusions

Contrary to the common view or quasi-economic interpretations in the media, we can conclude that economic relations between the Czech Republic and Russia in the period under study were very limited. This conclusion is true for any aspect of economic relations–trade, investment, migration and tourism. However, we have detected fluctuations in the relations. The main cause of the fluctuations was the business cycle. Therefore, contrary to the opinions of those agents who tried to discourage the Czech government from introducing economic sanctions in line with advanced Western countries, their impact was limited. The relatively weak Czech–Russian economic relationship reflected the deep integration of the Czech economy into European structures. But such a statement, of course, has certain political and security implications.

There are some grounds for applying the concept of 'hybrid campaign' to contemporary Czech–Russian economic relations. The inclusion of information operations into economic strategies, appeals in local political debates, attacks in cyberspace with the intention of promoting Russian economic interests, and economic and technological espionage can all be labelled as traditional tactics that have always been used by realistically behaving actors in international trade. Further, the politicisation of Czech–Russian economic relations is currently undergoing a certain transformation. 'Something' has changed on both sides. Mr. Putin's policy has changed, and now there is a renewed emphasis on political interests, to which economic interests are to be subordinated. The Czechs, however, are also involved in the political dimension, with their country's participation in EU economic sanctions against Russia following the events in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine. Despite this, contemporary economic rela-

tions between the two countries are less susceptible to an analysis using the hybrid-campaign framework than one would expect.

## Notes

1. In an earlier publication we showed that Czech exports do not follow any strong political agenda and are not artificially biased towards the country's former trading partners (Coufalová and Žídek 2017a).
2. However, the e-journal *Parlamentní listy* is, according to some interpretations, a strongly pro-Russian voice among the Czech media.
3. One possible explanation of the Czech president's position is the strong influence wielded by his interpreter and chief adviser Martin Novotný, who has economic interests in Russia.
4. Indeed, there was a discussion on the possible ban on automobile and textile imports, as well as the confiscation of foreign assets in Russia and many other restrictive measures, but they were never approved (Romanova 2016).
5. On the other hand, the most important source countries of Russian IFDI in 2015 were Cyprus (28.8%) Luxembourg (11.5%), the Netherlands (10.7%), Ireland (7.7%), Bahamas (6.9%) and Bermuda (4.3%) (Central Bank of the Russian Federation 2018). It can be assumed that in many cases money from tax havens is a reinvestment of Russian capital. Ledyaeva et al. (2013) use the term 'round-trip investment' to describe this practice.
6. The Expert Rating Agency constructs two indicators related to the investment capacity and risk of the different Russian regions. The investment potential ranges from 1 (high) to 3 (low). Risk is marked on a scale of A-D, with 'A' being the lowest risk. In 2017, there were only four Russian regions with the rating '1A', whereas 14 regions received ratings ranging from '3C1' to '3D' (Expert RA 2018).
7. According to Kalotay et al. (2014), 37% of Russian capital flowed through Cyprus, 16% through the Netherlands and 11% through the British Virgin Islands.

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CHAPTER 5

# Business as Usual or Geopolitical Games? Russian Activities in Energy Sector of the Czech Republic

*Martin Jirušek, Petra Kuchyňková and Tomáš Vlček*

Compared to the majority of other European post-communist countries, a characteristic of the Czech Republic is the relatively low politicization of the energy sector. This is especially true when we compare the situation to the states of south-eastern Europe, where the economic transition has been slower than in the central part of the continent. However, the low level of political meddling in the energy sector is not typical even for central Europe where the economic and political transition was relatively smooth. Naturally, even in the Czech Republic, the energy sector, as a sensitive field,

M. Jirušek (✉) · P. Kuchyňková · T. Vlček
Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic
e-mail: jirusek.martin@mail.muni.cz

P. Kuchyňková
e-mail: kuchynko@fss.muni.cz

T. Vlček
e-mail: tomas.vlcek@mail.muni.cz



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has not avoided controversies and political meddling, but unlike in other post-communist European countries, the discussions on energy policy and its potential security dimension took a different path.

However, although Russian influence is, generally speaking, not considered an imminent threat framing Czech energy-related discourse, it would be inaccurate to assume that fear of Russia is entirely absent in the field. Given that the energy sector is one where Russian companies play an important role given the enormous reserves located within their homeland and the historically embedded ties to European countries including the Czech Republic, this chapter focuses on determining the main factors instigating concerns about Russian influence in the Czech energy sector.

First, this chapter aims to present an overview of the formative events in the Czech energy sector in relation to Russia and Russian companies, which have taken place over the last 25 years since the fall of the Iron Curtain. To provide the reader with a complex understanding of the situation, the overview will not be confined to the presentation of important events and facts in the energy field. Rather, attention will be devoted to the way these prominent events were presented in political and public discourse. Second, a section follows mapping the presence of Russian companies in the Czech energy sector. The chapter concludes by evaluating the presence of Russian capital in the sector and the way in which potential Russian influence on Czech energy policy and general security in the Czech Republic are perceived.

The focus is predominantly on natural gas, oil and nuclear energy. The reasons for examining the aforementioned energy sources are their share in the country's total primary energy supply (TPES), their importance for the state's economy, the presence of Russian capital in individual sectors and the very nature of these energy sources. Apart from lignite (which forms the highest share of the country's TPES), which is produced domestically, oil, natural gas and nuclear energy form the largest portion of the country's energy consumption. Also, according to the current State Energy Policy of the Czech Republic, these energy sources will remain key ones in decades to come (Ministerstvo průmyslu a obchodu 2014, p. 105). At the same time, these energy sources are strongly related to Russia in terms of their origin or technology.

Although oil is a globally traded commodity and any country is, generally speaking, not dependent on a single source of supply, the functioning of the oil sector is to some extent restricted by transit infrastructure and the structural dependency of consumers. In terms of infrastructure, depen-

dency is affected by the fact that more than one-third of global oil supplies are delivered through pipelines (Osička et al. 2014, p. 38; Černoch et al. 2014, p. 119). This structural dependency essentially means that despite the fact that oil can be relatively easily stored, for the stability and optimal functioning of the economy, it is necessary that supplies are uninterrupted. Additionally, within the oil market, various types of crude appear, varying in terms of density and sulphur content. This essentially means that refineries adjusted to the mix of Ural and Siberian heavy sour oils commonly known as Russian Export Blend (REB) cannot easily switch to a supplier providing a substantially different crude without strongly affecting the economics of oil processing.

The natural gas sector is a different case. The market is not global but rather partitioned into regional markets, and more than two-thirds of the world supply is delivered via pipelines (Osička et al. 2014, p. 38). Also, some customers are dependent on a single supplier—as is often the case in post-communist Europe, where the principal supplier is Russia. Although new sources and means of transport are slowly changing this environment, rigid pipeline infrastructure and the traditional long-term, take-or-pay type of contracts that were introduced to offset the high initial costs of infrastructure are still often the case. To sum up, these factors constitute another kind of specific structural dependency.

The nuclear energy sector is a specific case of a strictly regulated sub-sector that is relatively restricted in terms of the number of actors that are capable of taking part in it. In the European post-communist region, nuclear energy was introduced[1] with the help of the Soviet Union and power plants here house Russian technologies. Given that the vast complexity of the sector influences a whole group of related industrial sub-sectors, a country that chooses a certain supplier is likely to follow that path for decades to come. This also applies to providers of nuclear fuel, that also tend to remain the same over many years for similar reasons. Therefore, speaking of the nuclear-based capacity of post-communist Europe the structural dependency here also plays into the hands of Russian companies.

All these characteristics of these particular sectors must be taken into account if we aspire to assess the topic of Russian presence and influence from the (energy) security point of view, as well as if we are to explore the perception of this influence in public discourse.

## Overview of Key Formative Events in the Czech Energy Sector

The following chapter will provide a brief overview of the key formative events in the aforementioned energy sub-sectors over the past 25 years and their reflection in public discourse. Attention will be devoted here also to the politicization (in the sense of the presence and resonance of this particular topic, not only in public and media discourse, but also in the ongoing debate among the key actors of the political, legislative and decision-making processes) and the securitization of topics connected with Russian presence and/or influence. The period examined stretches from 1993, when the Czech Republic emerged after the dissolution of the former Czechoslovakia, until the end of 2016.

The debate about Russia and Russian influence in the Czech energy sphere has included some elements from the broader discourse present in Czech public discussion. This discussion usually encompasses two antagonistic perspectives: The first one represents a rather cautious attitude towards post-Soviet Russia, especially Russia after 2000, in connection with the foreign and security policies of President Vladimir Putin, who is often criticized as neo-imperialist and revisionist (in relation to the post-Cold War European security regime). From this perspective, the policy of Putin's Russia is viewed as openly hostile towards the West, especially after events such as the Russian–Georgian war or the Ukrainian conflict. Apart from the concerns in the sphere of hard security, which were already present during the 1990s (especially in the connection with Russian negative attitudes towards NATO eastward expansion), there have been also concerns associated with the attempts of Russian capital to penetrate the Czech economy. In the energy sector, given its importance for the state's economy, these fears have been present as well (e.g. Kratochvíl et al. 2015, pp. 122–125).

The second perspective, which grew stronger especially after 2000, sees Russia as an important partner, predominantly in the economic area. Its proponents considered Russia as a prospective target of Czech "economic diplomacy", with the aim of diversifying Czech economic and trade policy, which was (according to this perspective) too dependent on Western markets. This viewpoint grew stronger during the global financial crisis (although the crisis also influenced the Russian economy and Czech–Russian economic relations) and during the subsequent crisis in the Eurozone.[2] This rather positive view towards Russia is not homogeneous though, as it

encompasses a number of variants influenced by the political and ideological orientation of their particular proponents.[3]

These opposing tendencies in Czech political and public discourse also found a reflection in debates about potential Russian influence in the Czech energy sector. In spite of the rather low politicization of the topic, there are examples of events which provoked debates on Russian influence or "Russian energy weapon", with the most notable examples being both gas crises (especially that of 2009), oil supply cuts (especially the event of 2008), and the participation of ZAO Atom Stroy Export in the Temelin tender.

The general topic of the growing interest of Russian investors in the Czech Republic, and energy sector in particular, became a focus of a public debate, especially since the late 2000s. The main question of these debates has been whether growing Russian investments should be perceived as an opportunity for stronger cooperation, or rather as a potential threat regarding the Russian geopolitical ambitions motivated by both economic and political interests. Fear of Russian attempts to spread its influence through energy-related deals was further highlighted by repeated warnings of the Security Information Service, the Czech intelligence institution, about increased activities of Russian secret services, particularly in the Czech economy and the energy sector (e.g. Bezpečnostní informační služba 2011, 2012, 2013). Therefore, the following section is devoted to mapping the situation in these particular sectors and determining potential Russia-related risks.

## The Natural Gas Sector

Similarly to the oil sector (see below), the natural gas sector in the Czech Republic has been subject to very little politicization, and thus also fears of Russian misconduct and Russian gas supplies have not been used as bargaining chips by the Russian government. The authors ascribe this to the fact that the Czech Republic managed to diversify its gas and oil imports as early as in 1996 and 1997 respectively. Rather, it constitutes an exception among most of other post-communist countries, which thus far have been more susceptible to politicization and misuse of supplies.

Unlike in Slovakia, which was united with the Czech Republic until the 1 January 1993, the Czech political scene in the 1990s perceived complete dependence on Russian supplies as a pressing issue that was potentially dangerous and which called for a solution. The only relevant Czech

political party that perceived such diversification as unimportant was the Communist Party, which was unsurprising, regarding their general inclination towards Russia and former ties to the Soviet Union. The biggest fears were related to the impact of potential supply curtailments to heating and industry. Additionally, the state administration at that time calculated rising demand, which would only highlight the sensitivity of the issue. Fears were further spurred by increased activity of various subjects backed by Russian capital aiming to become gas distributors in the mid-1990s. Although the majority of the political scene generally agreed that a second source of supply would be desirable, consent on timing was harder to find. The main line of arguments questioning the construction was based on the fact that supplies of Norwegian gas were expected to be generally more expensive, a feature considered problematic in times of looming economic crisis. Moreover, the Russian side also used the argument of lower prices while presenting itself as a reliable partner to discourage the Czech Republic from diversification.

The still rather uncertain position of Central Europe in the new geopolitical setting after the end of the Cold War added additional uncertainty to the equation. It was no secret that Russia wanted the region to remain neutral, effectively serving as kind of a "bufferzone" between former spheres of influence. Therefore, some Czech politicians feared Russian retaliatory actions should the country diversify its imports. However, as it turned out after the deal on Norwegian supplies was sealed on 14 April 1997 (Česká televize 2009), these concerns did not materialize. Probably partly due to the fact that the Czech Republic kept around three-quarters of the original supplies coming from Russia, but very likely also due to the relatively lower profile of Russia as an international power in the 1990s (Baev 2008, p. 34).[4]

The importance of a diversified gas import portfolio was manifested during the 2009 gas crisis. Unlike other post-communist states which were hit by supply cuts (especially in south-eastern Europe), the Czech Republic was not only able to get through the crisis practically intact by increasing supplies from Norway (coupled with supplies from the country's rather extensive storage capacity, equalling one-third of annual consumption; Vlček and Černoch 2012), but was even able to supply gas to Slovakia.[5] The aforementioned fact, that the diversification prevented any substantial damages in relation to Czech energy security, was eventually also reflected in public and political discourse, and even after the crisis, Russian gas deliveries were not seen as a particular source of security concerns. In the media, the

2009 gas crisis was portrayed in the overall context of energy security in Europe and also in the context of the coinciding Czech presidency of the EU. The Czech media thus often portrayed representatives of the Czech Republic among the main negotiators trying to find a solution to the crisis (e.g. iDnes.cz 2009a; Novinky.cz 2009). The actions taken by the Czech representatives were rather cautious at that time, reflecting the somewhat pragmatic relations of the then government of PM Mirek Topolanek. As an illustration of the government's ambiguous attitude, we can mention the support for the Nabucco pipeline, a project competing with the South Stream pipeline,[6] while simultaneously building the Gazelle pipeline connecting the country to the Nord Stream and enabling supplies of Russian gas from the North (Kratochvíl et al. 2015, p. 120). As the epitome of the pragmatic approach, the then-President Klaus (known for his long-term pragmatic stance towards Russia) openly characterized the 2009 crisis as a result of a bilateral Russian–Ukrainian economic problem and not a European energy security problem, clearly denying any fears of politicization and securitization of the topic (ČTK 2009).

On the other hand, the pragmatic approach had its boundaries as was shown by two rejections of Russian offers to buy the Czech gas infrastructure in 1994 and 2002. The first bid in 1994 was refused without providing any reasoning, but overall discussions of Czech foreign policy at that time suggested that due to historical experience and reorientation towards the West after the fall of communism, selling the perceived strategic asset to Russians was politically unacceptable. A second bid was refused in 2002, again due to political concerns. The apparent sensitivity of this issue was highlighted by the fact that the Russian offer was refused despite allegedly being worth the same amount as the competing bid of RWE and also included additional offsets in the form of investments in Czech oil and gas infrastructure.

Another example of the wary approach was shown when some voices in the Czech Republic, along with some other CEE and Baltic states, expressed their concerns in relation to the unbundling measures related to the implementation of the EU's third liberalization package. These countries feared the uncontrolled penetration of foreign companies into their energy sectors. Given their geographic location and historical experiences, these fears were related mostly to Russia and its state-owned enterprises. Concerning the presence of Russian companies in the Czech gas sector, there is no company representing Russian capital active in the Czech Republic with the ability to significantly shape the sector, and only a few

companies with ties to Russia are present. A mid-sized company, VEMEX, Gazprom's subsidiary, which was active in gas trading, is one of the examples.[7] The company entered the market in 2006 and focused mainly on supplying big industrial consumers and also to some extent households. The company was in majority ownership of Gazprom Germania,[8] a subsidiary of OAO Gazprom (Vemex 2012). Another important shareholder, owning 33% of the company, was Centrex Europe Energy & Gas AG,[9] a Vienna-based international investment group focused on the natural gas sector, which is believed to work closely with Gazprom, although often through a non-transparent network of subsidiaries registered in various tax-havens (Tillack 2007). However, it should be noted that activities of VEMEX in the Czech Republic[10] made perfect economic sense since the Czech gas market is liberalized and an effort to use this opportunity is thus understandable. Another company with Russian stakes is Wingas, Gazprom's daughter company, which entered the market in 2006 as a minor supplier (Wingas). Wingas took over the position and activities of Vemex when it closed its business in early 2018 for financial reasons (Brož 2018). However, there is basically nothing suspicious about this company or its activities. Similarly, business-as-usual seems to be the case in the 2013 deal signed between Gazprom and the Czech company MND Group to build an underground storage facility in the region of South Moravia. This move fits within the Gazprom's strategy to make its supplies to the West more predictable, which strengthens the impression that Gazprom is trying to be seen as a reliable supplier to its western customers (Gazprom Export 2016).

It can be thus stated that no significant Russia-related companies influence the Czech natural gas sector and that there is no objective need to fear Russian influence in this regard.

## The Oil Sector

Similarly to the natural gas sector, the oil sector was facing complete dependence on Russian supplies in the early years after the fall of communism in the country. In a pattern similar to the one that formed the sector of natural gas, the Czech Republic has been located on the main Russian supply route—the Druzhba pipeline. The dependence on a single source of supply was perceived as sensitive by the majority of political representation at that time, for basically the same reasons as in the case of the Brotherhood gas pipeline. Therefore, the first years of the 1990s were marked by an effort

to establish an alternative route to the Druzhba pipeline and to diversify the country's oil import portfolio. These efforts were further accelerated by concerns that the amount of oil supplied through the Druzhba Pipeline would also be insufficient due to the deteriorating situation of Russian producers (Vlček and Černoch 2012, p. 151). The idea of diversification was introduced in mid-1990 at the governmental level as a reaction to political changes and problems that Russian suppliers were facing due to the gradual deterioration of the Russian economy. The proposal was finally endorsed by the resolution of the Government of Czechoslovakia on 4 February 1992 (MERO ČR, a.s., n.d.). The actual construction was surprisingly fast and the IKL[11] Pipeline was put into operation in January 1996. Currently, the pipeline serves around 40% of Czech needs (Vlček 2015, p. 62).[12]

Similarly, as in the case of diversification of natural gas supplies, the IKL Pipeline was a practical manifestation of 1990s Czech political discourse, aimed at strengthening political as well as economic ties to Western Europe. By establishing a connection with Germany, the Czech Republic acquired access to oil supplies from various origins, thanks to a connection to the TAL Pipeline bringing oil from the Italian port of Trieste.

Again, Russian resistance towards the diversification plan was hardly palpable at that time. However, concerns that dependence on Russian supplies still might pose a threat to the country's energy security have been proven correct on several occasions. Several supply curtailments occurred in the 1990s (namely in 1990, 1991, 1994, 1995 and 1996). At first, some cuts took place due to the above-mentioned internal economic problems of Russia after the fall of communism. Subsequent interruptions were caused by technical problems along the pipeline and disputes between Russia and Ukraine over transport fees.

Czech public and media discourse reflected concerns especially with the disruptions of the supply of Russian oil via the Druzhba pipeline, which occurred at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century. A significant event was the curtailment that took place on 9 July 2008, as the supply cut occurred the day after the Czech Republic signed the SOFA agreement concerning a planned radar base of the US anti-ballistic missile defence system which should have been placed in the Czech Republic.[13] The significant reduction of deliveries came exactly at times of excited rhetoric, which also occurred on the Russian side (especially the rhetoric of the representatives of the Russian army, who mentioned several times the possible targeting of Russian rocket systems on the Czech radar base, in case it was constructed; e.g. ČTK 2008). The missing amount of

oil was easily replaced by increasing supplies from the IKL pipeline and the state reserves, but the event definitely supported the concerns of those who feared misuse of Russian oil supplies, although the responsible representatives of the Czech government were quite cautious at that time when commenting on the event for the media.[14] This example also shows a certain correlation between Czech public discourse concerning Russian oil supplies and the overall context of Czech–Russian relations or the general political-security situation in Central and Eastern Europe.

Concerns over the stability of Russian supplies were revived in late 2009, when Russia threatened to cut off supplies through Ukraine, once again as a result of on-going disputes over conditions of transit through Ukraine (iDnes.cz 2009b). This time, events did not affect supplies, but still they remained a reminder of the potential instability of this route (Vlček 2015, p. 21). The unreliability of the Druzhba pipeline and Russian suppliers was proved once again in April 2012 when a gradual decrease of up to almost 20% of the contracted monthly amount occurred. The chances are that Russian suppliers tested the situation and the potential reactions of transit countries should the original route be bypassed in favour of new routes. Another reason could be the effort to improve the position for renegotiations of supply contracts with consumers along the way (Vlček 2015, p. 23).

It is worth mentioning that although such events were generally important, after 1996 they did not spur much debate in the Czech Republic at that time, with the aforementioned exception of the disruption in 2008. Similarly to the situation in the natural gas sector, the fact that the country had acquired access to alternative sources of supply and was able to offset the supply curtailment from other sources has prevented any outbreak of panic.

If we explore the public and media debate concerning the Russian presence in the Czech energy market in the case of the oil sector, it is necessary to mention LukOil, one of the Russian oil majors. Although the company is officially a joint-stock company not owned by the Russian state, some authors argue that LukOil is connected with the Russian Government and its business activities comply with Russian national interests (Gorst 2007, p. 7; Kodousková et al. 2014, pp. 173–175; Korobochkin 2004).

At roughly the same time that Russia was opposing the plan to build an anti-ballistic missile defence in the Central Europe, LukOil expressed its interest in buying stake in one of the Czech refineries and potentially also in Česká rafinérská, one of the two refining companies active on the

Czech market (Vlček and Černoch 2012, p. 159; Kubátová 2008). For the reasons stated above, the intention raised concerns about the potential consequences. As LukOil served as a supplier of crude oil to Czech refineries and bought a network of 44 petrol stations from ConocoPhillips in 2008 (Sulejmanov 2008), the plan made economic sense. Should the company acquire a stake in refining, it would effectively complete the supply chain and shake off the dependence on Czech refineries. However, in 2014 the portfolio of LukOil petrol stations was acquired by Hungarian joint-stock company MOL (Indráček 2014)[15] and the company's interest in the acquisition of refineries waned.[16]

Apart from the LukOil's potential influence in the oil sector, concerns were also raised by its role in the Czech political scene. The influential lobbyist Miroslav Šlouf, who had close ties to the current Czech president Miloš Zeman and was behind several political cases in the past, was allegedly working for LukOil. Currently, Martin Nejedlý, a business partner of Miroslav Šlouf, is the president's advisor and also one of the people who helped him to raise the money to fund his presidential campaign. He is also an executive officer of LukOil Aviation Czech, a daughter company of LukOil, active in downstream fuel supply to Prague International Airport (Bloomberg, n.d.). When the company lost a lawsuit against the Czech state over non-delivery of supplies of aviation fuel and was ordered to pay a fine of CZK 28 million (ca. EUR 1 million; Hlaváčová 2016), it was the mother company which later paid the fine, effectively confirming a precarious link between the Russian company and one of the Czech president's closest collaborators (Srnka 2016).

## The Nuclear Sector

Speaking of nuclear energy, one has to say that the nuclear industry of the Czech Republic (and previously the former Czechoslovakia) was created with major assistance from the Soviet Union. As part of the deal for export of Czechoslovak-mined uranium to the USSR in 1945–1991 for Soviet military research, the USSR was not reluctant to share technology. Therefore, based on a 1955 contract, the USSR assisted Czechoslovakia with the creation of the first nuclear research institute in the country; later, it assisted with the construction of the first nuclear power plant (NPP) in the country (1958–1972, Czechoslovakia design A-1); and based on fur-

ther contracts, it assisted the construction of the Soviet-designed Dukovany NPP and Temelín NPP (Vlček and Suchý 2012, pp. 352–353).

Today, the Czech Republic is a nuclear country, housing on its territory two nuclear power plants with six units altogether. The Dukovany NPP commissioned in 1985–1988 comprises four units of the VVER-440 V213 type, with 440MWe original installed capacity. The newer Temelín NPP commissioned in 2002 has two VVER-1000 V320 units of 1000 MWe original installed capacity.

Between 2009 and 2014, a public procurement procedure took place that involved three bidders: Westinghouse Electric Company, LLC, Areva SA and a consortium[17] of Škoda JS, a.s., ZAO Atom Stroy Export[18] and OAO OKB Gidro Press. The strategic dimension of the Temelin procurement procedure was the subject of debate in the Czech Republic, which was extensively reflected in the media. The possibility of the victory of the Consortium raised concerns about growing dependence on Russian investments as well as on the Russian nuclear fuel supply.[19] The topic of the Temelin tender also resonated in Czech political and security debates. On the one hand, there were political representatives who did not conceal their reservations and security concerns, either generally in relation to the Russian attempts to penetrate into Czech economic sphere or explicitly in relation to the Temelin tender (e.g. the former Czech President Václav Havel, or the minister of Foreign Affairs and one of the candidates in the first direct presidential elections in 2013, Karel Schwarzenberg; ČTK 2010a; Šídlová 2013). On the other hand, there were politicians who explicitly refused these geopolitical concerns in relation to Russian participation in the procurement procedure and openly stood up against ostracism of the Consortium because of these reasons (e.g. Miloš Zeman[20] and former President Václav Klaus, whose positive comments regarding possible Russian investments in the CR and the reciprocal Czech investment opportunities in Russia were well-known during the periods of his presidency; ČTK 2010b).

It is also worth noting that Russian business and political representatives have more than once openly expressed interest in winning the contract, e.g. in the framework of meetings and negotiations with Czech representatives, which was also commented on by the Czech media. As an example, it is possible to name the open expressions of Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Zhukov, who said after the meeting of the Czech–Russian Intergovernmental Commission in October 2010 that the Russian side expects

the victory of the Consortium, regarding the advantageous character of its offer (ČTK 2010c). As another example, we could mention the visit of Valentina Matviyenko, the President of the Federation Council, the upper chamber of the Russian Parliament, to the ČR in March 2013. On the occasion of her meeting with the President of the Czech Senate, Milan Štěch, she underlined the new occasions of Czech–Russian cooperation in the sphere of nuclear energy and appealed to the "fairness" of the procurement procedure (ČTK 2013). The participation of the Czech–Russian consortium in the tender was thus accompanied by the active support of Russian business and state representatives. On the other hand, this practice is not typical only of Russian representatives; examples could also be found of similar expressions of support, e.g. for the Westinghouse project by American diplomats.

Even though the public procurement procedure was stopped in May 2014 for multiple reasons, the most pressing being the lack of any Governmental guarantees or stabilization mechanism for the future price of electricity (Osička and Černoch 2017, p. 12), the period of roughly 2007/8–2014 saw strong Russian subjects entering the industrial sector of the Czech Republic. The importance of the Czech nuclear industry for Russian companies and interests is illustrated in the following subchapter.

## Russian Companies in Czech Energy and Energy-Related Industry

Compared to the popular perspective and media representation of substantial Russian penetration into the Czech energy and energy-related industries, which is accompanied with concerns and fears of Russian control especially over the Czech nuclear industry, the Russian presence is rather limited in these sectors. In fact, the whole (not exclusively nuclear-related) manufacturing industry counts only for 16% and professional, scientific and technical activities only for 7% of major Russian business in the Czech Republic (over CZK 25 million) (Neovlivni.cz 2016).

However, there was a period of time when Russian interest in the Czech energy sector, particularly the nuclear one, was clearly visible, and that was the period of the aforementioned public procurement procedure for construction of the Temelín nuclear power plant units 3 and 4 (roughly 2007/8–2014). It was not just the project that was part of the tender, but the construction work itself, which made the entire endeavour a key

project (Vlček and Černoch 2013, p. 145). Seven major companies related to nuclear industry emerged with Russian capital or was purchased by a Russian subject: ALVEL, a.s.; ARAKO spol. s.r.o.; ČKD Blansko Holding, a.s.; MSA, a.s.; Rosatom Central Europe s.r.o.; STANOK s.r.o.; and Temac, a.s.

The reasons for this may be threefold: *contractual*, *political* and *economic*. Each bidder presented the idea that Czech companies should participate in a major way in the execution of the project. The Consortium calculated a minimum of 75% involvement of Czech companies, Westinghouse Electric Company, LLC identified the possibility of up to 70%, and Areva SA hoped for more than 60% (Český rozhlas 2012; České jaderné fórum 2012; Novinky.cz 2014). During the procurement procedure, the Consortium closed binding preliminary contracts with 10 major Czech industrial subjects to fulfil the promise (see Table 5.1). There were tens of memoranda for cooperation signed between the Consortium and a variety of companies; however, these are too vague compared with the binding preliminary contracts that defined in detail the conditions for cooperation with the Consortium in case of its victory.

Even though not all of the companies were actually Czech, we also cannot say that the Consortium supported companies with Russian capital to create a network of interest-relations to dominate the project with Russian enterprises. Besides Škoda JS a.s., which was already part of the Consortium, there was no Russian subject. It is also important to stress that these involvements of Czech companies and memoranda signed was nothing but public relations activities. No company could have guaranteed that such a thing would actually materialize because they would have been obliged to purchase services and products from the companies through procurement procedures. There was no guarantee that Czech companies would win the procurement process. Therefore it can be clearly stated that the process of Russian subjects entering the industrial sector of the Czech Republic does not stem from *contractual* obligations.

Another reason might be a *political* one, i.e. to create leverage on the contracting state and thus to influence the outcome of the procurement process. However, there are major structural differences in the nuclear sector compared to other energy sectors (oil, gas, etc.) that limit such behaviour by nuclear companies. For example, given the limited amount of contracts in the nuclear sector and the revenue implications of each one, contractors also need to proceed very carefully in order the protect their chances of winning future projects. The contractors' competition during a

**Table 5.1** Binding preliminary contracts of The Consortium

| *Subject* | *Ownership structure* |
|---|---|
| HOCHTIEF CZ a.s. | Fully owned by German company HOCHTIEF Aktiengesellschaft, whose majority (71.72%) is owned by Spanish Actividades de Construcción y Servicios S.A. |
| I&C Energo a.s. | Fully owned by PI 1 a.s., which is inturn fully owned by Poisson Investments a.s., which is likely to be owned by Martin Štefunko, the only member of the Supervisory Board of I&C Energo a.s. |
| KRÁLOVOPOLSKÁ RIA, a.s. | Ownership uncertain; allegedly 7% owned by Ctirad Nečas, CEO of the company, and 93% owned by Conoscenza a.s. The ownership of this company is unknown but probably consists of Czech businessmen. The company has been in insolvency since August 2017 |
| OSC, a.s. | 66% subsidiary of Czech dominant national supplier ČEZ, a.s. (69.8% owned by the Ministry of Finance of the Czech Republic) |
| PSG-International a. s. | Fully owned by KUS a.s., which is in turn fully owned by CLOUGH a.s., which is owned by a member of the Supervisory Board of PSG-International a.s. Rudolf Skaunic (50%) and Juraj Surovič (50%) |
| Sigma Group a.s. | Fully owned by SPL Holding a.s. (owned by Cyprus-based TZ Stones Mining Limited, which is in turn owned by Milan Šimonovský, chairman of the board of Sigma Group a.s.) |
| Škoda JS a.s. | Fully owned by OMZ Objedinennye Mashinostroitelnye Zavody (United Heavy Machinery Plants) owned 98.942% by CJSC Gazprombank |
| ÚJV Řež, a.s. | ČEZ, a.s. (52.46%), Slovenské elektrárne, a.s. (27.77%), Škoda JS a.s. (17.39%) and Husinec municipality (2.38%) |
| ZAT a.s. | 100% owned by Brixen Investments Czech Republic a.s. (with the only shareholder being Jaroslav Scharf) |
| ZVVZ Enven Engineering a.s. | Fully owned by ZVVZ GROUP a.s., which is in turn fully owned by Cyprus-based Ges Industry Europe Limited |

*Source* Compiled from public sources by T. Vlček

procurement process is usually a sensitive one, and attempts to use a nuclear contract as leverage on a particular country would cause substantial damage to contractors' reputations, and would weaken its position regarding future contracts. Additionally, no contractor can afford to be found guilty of misusing any particular project to assist the political goals of its domestic government, as it would essentially destroy not only its long-term future but also its immediate market capitalization (Jirušek and Vlček et al. 2015, p. 53).

Naturally, no one could guarantee that political pressure might not have taken place during the bidding and procurement processes. The rather scarce contracts are usually worth billions of Euros and it is thus natural that contractors give each potential contract high priority and are often supported by their home governments by various means (rhetorically, formally by officials during state visits, by foundations and partnership programmes, state guarantees, etc.). The character of garnering influence when proper public procurement procedures are followed is however difficult. It took three years for ČEZ, a.s. to prepare the documentation specifying the conditions of the project, and it was created by a group of several dozens of experts. Ultimately this documentation comprised of more than 6000 pages employing over 11,000 criteria to be met by the bidders in order to succeed in the procedure. This has left basically no room for any shadowy deals or backroom negotiations and it also strongly contradicts the idea that the Russian subjects were entering the industrial sector with the target of influencing the procurement process. The Russian subjects eventually tried to orient the lobbying and influence-gathering at politicians, decision-makers and local lobbyists, i.e. at those who could actually influence the procurement procedure, but with very questionable outcomes thanks to the detailed specifications of the public procurement documentation. To sum up, the process of Russian subjects approaching the companies in the industrial sector of the Czech Republic does not even stem from *political* reasons, i.e. from an effort to influence the decision in the procurement procedure.

This ultimately leaves us with the *economic* reasoning for Russian entry into the Czech energy industry. As stated above, between 2007 and 2014, several major companies related to the nuclear industry emerged with Russian capital or were purchased by Russian subjects. These were: ALVEL, a.s.; ARAKO spol. s.r.o.; Chladící věže Praha, a.s.; ČKD Blansko Holding, a.s.; MSA, a.s.; Rosatom Central Europe s.r.o.; STANOK s.r.o.; and Temac, a.s. (see Table 5.2). Besides the members of the Consortium, only ALVEL,

a.s., ARAKO spol. s.r.o. and Chladící věže Praha, a.s. were purchased by a Russian state-owned company—Rosatom State Atomic Energy Corporation in both cases. ALVEL, a.s. is a company aimed at marketing OAO TVEL's nuclear fuel products for VVER reactors in Europe, and towards engineering services and supplies for the nuclear industry. ARAKO spol. s.r.o. is a major manufacturer of industrial valves for the energy, chemical and petrochemical industries. Chladící věže Praha, a.s. was the biggest Czech constructor of cooling towers of all types and sizes, which fell into bankruptcy shortly after the tender was cancelled, when due to sanctions imposed against Russia, the company was unable to acquire new orders. The rest of the companies are privately owned or publicly traded and there is no clear link between their entry into the nuclear industry of the Czech Republic and the interests of Rosatom State Atomic Energy Corporation (or the Consortium).

It is rather the economic interest of these subjects and the potential to make money from downstream services and industries during construction, especially (but not exclusively) should the project be granted to the Consortium, that has driven their decisions to invest in the Czech Republic. Given the size of the Temelín 3 and 4 project and its budget—expected to be CZK 200–300 billion for the whole project—these companies expected to participate in the project no matter who would be the winner.

Russian investments in companies focusing on nuclear downstream industries—industrial gaskets and seals for power engineering, metal-working machines, industrial valves production, engines and turbines production—was thus a smart business decision rather than an instrument of leverage on the public procurement process.

Aside from the companies related to the public procurement process for the construction of the Temelín nuclear power plant units 3 and 4, there are several other energy industry related companies with Russian capital or ownership. Pilsen Steel s.r.o. and Vítkovice Steel, a.s., both primarily steel producers, have been purchased by Russian subjects in 2004 and 2005, respectively. Pilsen Steel s.r.o., having major financial problems, is currently owned by Vnesheconom bank. Vítkovice Steel, a.s. was sold by its Russian owner Evraz plc in 2014, even before the tender was cancelled. ÚJV Řež, a.s., the most important Czech nuclear research institute, focusing on design and engineering, fuel cycle chemistry, radioactive waste, operational support for nuclear and conventional power plants and nuclear research and development, has been partially owned by CJSC Gazprombank since 2001. The reason for that is in the fact that OMZ Objedinennye

**Table 5.2** Major energy-related companies in the Czech Republic with Russian ownership

| *Company* | *Sphere of busines* | *Russian entry* | *Russian ownership* |
|---|---|---|---|
| ALVEL, a.s. | Nuclear fuel, scientific and engineering services and supplies for nuclear industry | 2012 | Joint venture of OAO TVEL (a 100% subsidiary of Rosatom State Atomic Energy Corporation) and Czech ALTA Invest a.s. |
| ARAKO spol. s.r.o. | Manufacturer of industrial valves for the energy, chemical and petrochemical industries | 2007 | 100% AO Atomenergomash (80.6296% owned by OJSC Atomic Energy Power Corporation Atomenergoprom, which is fully owned by Rosatom State Atomic Energy Corporation) |
| Chladícívěže Praha, a.s. | Construction and repairs of cooling towers of all types and sizes | 2011 | 100% Gardea, a.s., which is 51% owned by AO Atomenergomash (80.6296% owned by OJSC Atomic Energy Power Corporation Atomenergoprom, which is fully owned by Rosatom State Atomic Energy Corporation). The company has been bankrupt since 2016 |
| CERVA GROUP, a.s. | Producer and supplier of workwear and safety footwear | 2006 | 100% ZAO Vostok-Service (Vladimir Golovnev, aformer deputy in the State Duma is the Vostok-Service's president and main shareholder) |
| ČKD Blansko Holding, a.s. | Engines and hydropower turbines production | 2010 | 100% JSC Tyazhmash (a publicly traded company with the biggest shareholders AO Areopag 27.2%, AO PromEnergoSbyt 29.9%, AO Promtyazhmash-inzhiniring 10.3%, and Andrey Fedorovich 5.8%) |

(continued)

**Table 5.2** (continued)

| *Company* | *Sphere of busines* | *Russian entry* | *Russian ownership* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Lukoil Czech Republic s.r.o. | Oil products retail | 2007[a] | 100% Lukoil CEEB (Central and Eastern Europe + Belgium) in 2007–2014, a subsidiary of PAO Lukoil, sold to MOL Rt in 2014 |
| MSA, a.s. | Industrial valves production (incl. for pipelines and nuclear power plants) | 2010 | 100% JSC ChTPZ Chelyabinsk Tube Rolling Plant (ChelPipe) through Rimera Group (the biggest shareholders of JSC ChTPZ are MountriseLimited 51.99%, Pervoualsk New Pipe Plant 33.09%, and Bounceward Limited 6%) |
| Pilsen Steel s.r.o. | Steelmaking and heavy machinery company (incl. steel, castings and forgings for nuclear power plants) | 2004 | Pilsen Steel s.r.o. was owned by OMZ Objedinennye Mashinostroitelnye Zavody in 2004–2011; the company went bankrupt in 2011. Since 2012, the company was saved through a massive investment by its new owner Pilsen Toll s.r.o., whose 100% shareholder is Vnesheconombank |
| Rosatom Central Europe s.r.o. | Nuclear energy | 2014 | 100% Private institution of Atomic Energy Power Corporation "Rusatom International Network" (Private institution RAIN), owned by Rusatom Overseas JSC, which is in turn fully owned by Rosatom State Atomic Energy Corporation |
| Škoda JS a.s. | Nuclear power plants engineering, service and components production | 2004 | 100% OMZ Objedinennye Mashinostroitelnye Zavody (United Heavy Machinery Plants) owned 98.942% by CJSC Gazprombank |

(continued)

**Table 5.2** (continued)

| *Company* | *Sphere of busines* | *Russian entry* | *Russian ownership* |
|---|---|---|---|
| STANOK s.r.o. | Metalworking machines such as lathes, milling machines, forging devices, drilling machines, gear machining, sheet-metal cutting, laser cutting, plasma cutting, bending and cold rolling | 2008[a] | 100% OOO KR PROM |
| Temac, a.s. | Manufacturer and distributor of industrial gaskets and seals for power engineering, chemical, gas, oil, petrochemical and general machine-building industries | 2012 | 100% ZAO VATI-PROM |
| ÚJV Řež, a.s. | Design and engineering, fuel cycle chemistry, radioactive waste, operational support for nuclear and conventional power plants, nuclear research and development | 2004 | 17.39% is owned by Škoda JS a.s., a subsidiary of OMZ Objedinennye Mashinostroitelnye Zavody (United Heavy Machinery Plants) owned 98.942% by CJSC Gazprombank |
| Vemex s.r.o. | Natural gas and electricity retail | 2001[a] | 50.14% Gazprom Germania GmbH and 33% Centrex Europe Energy & Gas AG (believed to be also a Gazprom subsidiary) |
| Vítkovice Steel, a.s. | Steel production | 2005 | 99% Evraz plc in 2004–2014 (sold to Ukraine's Industrial Union of Donbass) |
| Wingas GmbH | Natural gas | 1990[b] | 100% owned by Gazprom |

[a]Company created in the Czech Republic by Russian subject. In 2018, the company was taken over by Wingas (see below).
[b]Company founded in Germany by Gazprom and Wintershall, taken over by Gazprom in 2015. Active in the Czech Republic since 2006
*Source* Compiled from public sources by T. Vlček

Mashinostroitelnye Zavody (98.942% owned by CJSC Gazprombank), the new owner of Škoda JS a.s. since 2004, became a shareholder of all Škoda JS a.s.' enterprises and joint ventures, including its 17.39% share in ÚJV Řež, a.s. The explanation for these investments can actually be completely different. Before the drop in oil prices, the Crimea crisis and the devaluation of the Rouble, the Russian Federation planned massive investments in its domestic energy sector. A desire for strong, established European companies with the know-how and adequate capacity to be used for Russian domestic needs could have been behind the investments in Czech industry in the 2000s.

Speaking of the hydrocarbon industries, in the 2000s PAO LukOil was interested in refineries in the Czech Republic and therefore created an office in the Czech Republic (LukOil Czech Republic s.r.o.). After several unsuccessful efforts, it withdrew from the Czech Republic in 2014 and sold its small network of petrol stations to the Hungarian company MOL Rt. PAO LukOil remained in the country a little longer through its subsidiary LukOil Aviation Czech, s.r.o., active in fuel supply to Prague International Airport. The company went bankrupt in 2015. In the natural gas sector, the Vemex s.r.o. company was one of natural gas retail companies in the country since 2001. The Russian presence in the company was executed through Gazprom Germania GmbH (50.14%) and Centrex Europe Energy & Gas AG (33%, believed also to be a Gazprom subsidiary). In early 2018, Vemex closed its business for financial reasons and the company was taken over by Wingas, which is controlled by Gazprom. Nevertheless, the rather minor importance of the company for the Czech market remained the same.

To sum up, Russian interest in the energy and energy-related industries of the Czech Republic is in general not particularly strong. It was strengthened by the public procurement procedure for the construction of the Temelín NPP units 3 and 4, but even so, the primary reason for investments in these particular sectors were and are first of all economic with the potential of making big money in the nuclear downstream industries no matter who the actual winner of the tender was. The fears and concerns connected with Russian interest in influencing the tender being the main reason for the investments seem to be unfounded and the media depiction of Russian interest in the Czech energy industry might simply be exaggerated.

Russian capital in the Czech Republic, as well as Russian economic espionage, cannot, however, be completely underestimated. There are many companies owned by a variety of offshore companies, whose real owner

is basically impossible to uncover. Speaking of economic espionage, it is strong, but particularly in different fields, mainly communications and information technologies. Russian interests are in modern technology centres that emerge in Brno, Prague and elsewhere; they are interested in industrial Research and Development. The Security Information Service repeatedly reports on Russian efforts to apply for EU funds (grant schemes) through different organizations, institutions, think-tanks, etc. related to industrial Research and Development (Bezpečnostní informační služba 2016).

## Hybrid Threats and Czech Energy Sector

Although in recent years the energy issue has been increasingly discussed with reference to Russia, and Russian investments are seen with increasing wariness as a potential security threat, the energy sector in the Czech Republic has not hitherto been strongly linked with Russian influence—and nor is it today, in the context of the threat of a hybrid war. The security of supplies of oil and natural gas ceased to be a relevant issue when the Czech Republic diversified its import portfolio and transit routes for oil and natural gas in 1996 and 1997 respectively. Ceasing to be dependent on supplies and transit routes from Russia, this potential pressure point disappeared. The commissioning of new supply routes increased Czech energy security and ultimately changed the discourse as concerned with energy policy. Thus both the oil and the gas subsectors ceased to be seen as potentially vulnerable. The advantage of having diversified sources of supplies was then most manifest during the gas crisis of early 2009, as noted above.

In gas as well as oil supplies, all of the actors involved essentially behave as market actors, and the nature of the environment in which they operate does not offer leeway for external interventions or for exerting pressure. The Czech Republic is integrated into the Western gas network and operates within the EU internal energy market; it is also the global nature of the oil market that speaks in favour of the low politicization of supplies. Arguably, then, there is no fear of negative Russian influence over gas and oil supplies, largely because alternative supply routes have been built up. At present (2019) there is no ongoing project in the Czech Republic in either of the subsectors, where such concern over Russian influence might arise. New Russian gas pipelines are often discussed (at the time of writing of this chapter, Nord Stream 2 in particular); Czechs see this through an economic lens, and no fear of Russian influence resonates in society in this

respect. This is particularly because Czech Republic is well integrated into the Western European gas pipeline infrastructure, which, even if Russian exports were reoriented to new pipelines, would remain part of the supply chain. Thus, we note that in the natural gas and oil sectors, there is no opportunity for such activities as have been mentioned in connection with the hybrid war concept.

Generally speaking, hybrid threats are relatively limited in the nuclear sector too. Certainly, one can observe the specific behaviour of individuals who publicly promote Rosatom as the best choice (for example president Miloš Zeman and energy expert František Hezoučký); the participation of people linked with the Kremlin in various negotiations over the construction of new nuclear power plants (Klímová 2018); and the current narrative about the knowledge and experience of the expert community with Russian (Soviet) technology, according to which the MIR 1200 reactor is supposedly the best choice. It is arguable how much this narrative is autochthonous, and how much implanted into the sector by a third party. Nonetheless, the reason for the limited manifestation of hybrid threats in the nuclear sector is two-fold. First, the sector is strongly regulated in technological and safety terms. Second, there is actual independence (Temelín plant, VVER 1000) and theoretical independence (Dukovany plant, VVER 440) concerning suppliers of fuel. Indisputably, the position of the Russian suppliers of nuclear fuels is much stronger than that of their competitors. But there is no dependency per se and the leeway for exerting pressure is small, not least due to the competitive nature of the nuclear fuel market. Currently, there are therefore no significant hybrid threats connected with nuclear energy in the Czech Republic. However, it can be expected that the situation will change in the future in connection with advancement of the projects to build new nuclear power generating facilities. One may thus expect an increased interest on the part of the Russians, and hence also growth in their activities. In this respect, the expert community in particular may become a target for a campaign; the community has long historical experience with Russian technology, and hence also a tendency to speak in its favour, thus developing the narrative noted above and influencing popular opinion. In a similar spirit, we can expect that the Russian side will also generally target its information campaigns at the broader population.

## Conclusion

In spite of the relatively low politicization of Russian presence and influence in the Czech energy sector in general, it was possible to detect particular topics that appear to be sensitive as a part of the public debate—particularly reflected in the media—and were also notable in political and security discussions. Symptomatically, these debates usually only appeared for a certain period of time, as they revolved around certain formative events within the energy sector, typically the construction of infrastructure projects or sector-related facilities. The public and political debate in these cases often reflected the general trends which existed in Czech public and political discussions about Russia, Russian influence, interests or even threats since the 1990s. At the same time, this political and public debate has not only been influenced by these general discursive streams, but also by ideological orientation, personal specifics and interests and last but not least also by the overall political-security environment of Czech–Russian relations.

On the other hand, as the Czech Republic went through the transformational period with relative success and was one of the first post-communist countries that diversified its energy import portfolio, these debates have had a rather limited impact. The source and route diversification which was conducted both in the gas and oil sector in the mid-1990s influenced and moderated significantly the later impact of such events as Russian–Ukrainian gas disputes or the cases of reductions or even temporal interruptions of deliveries of Russian oil through the Druzhba pipeline on Czech energy security. Due to diversification and thus the alleviated dependence on Russian supplies, any threats of supply curtailments could be easily offset by supplies from other sources. Therefore, in spite of other intervening factors which must be taken into account as well, when we look at the way these events were portrayed and presented (e.g. in the case of the Russian–Ukrainian crisis in 2009, coinciding with the Czech Presidency of the EU, which especially moderated the discourse of governmental representatives and also to some extent the way the topic was portrayed in the media), the effect of only limited dependence on Russian supplies is indisputable. But the relatively low level of securitization of supplies in Czech public and political discourse does not mean that this topic has not been debated at all. A typical example is the case of supply issues related to the Druzhba Pipeline in 2008.

In the nuclear energy sector, the most typical example, which was also portrayed as potentially controversial issue by media, was definitely the

participation of ZAO Atom Stroy Export (as a part of the Czech–Russian consortium) in the public procurement procedure for the construction of the new blocks of Temelin power plant. The fact that the Temelin tender and Russian participation became topics of both political and also media debate is connected with the specific nature of the nuclear power sector. The Russian presence in the Czech nuclear power sector is an indisputable fact. Further possible strengthening of the Russian presence thus provoked certain controversies, together with the attempts at active support by Russian business and state representatives for the Russian–Czech consortium. On the other hand, this conduct—vocal interventions of state representatives and their support for the companies, which took part in the public procurement procedure—was typical not only of the Russian representatives. This practice is not rare in cases of important contracts, even though the outcomes of such kind of lobbying are debatable.

The last sub-chapter, which concentrated on mapping the overall participation of Russian companies in the Czech energy sector and energy-related industries, showed that compared to the popular perspective and media representation, these activities are rather limited. This applies also to the public procurement procedure for the construction of unit 3 and 4 of the Temelin NPP, which coincided with the rise of several new large companies with Russian involvement within the Czech industrial sector. As the analysis showed, the reasons for this growing Russian presence cannot be labelled as purely political, because of the specifics of the nuclear sector (see above). The behaviour of these—mostly privately owned—companies can also be explained by economic reasons, and their decisions to enter Czech energy sector as smart business decisions, regardless of the result of the Temelin tender. Additionally, one more reason could lie behind the rise of Russian investments in the Czech energy sector during the first decade of the twenty-first century (disregarding the public procurement around Temelin): Russian efforts at gaining new technologies and know-how for further development of the Russian domestic energy industry, which was planned before the Ukrainian crisis and the rising problems of Russian economy in connection with the fall of oil prices in 2014/15. Both the business and also the cultural environments of Central Europe represented quite favourable conditions for the realization of these efforts.

On the other hand, even if these findings could lead us to the conclusion that the wary discourse about the existing and real threats connected with Russian presence and influence in the Czech energy sector and industry may be exaggerated, its opposite—mean-

ing the overall underestimation and downplaying of these phenomena as a "false anti-Russian campaign"—represents another extreme. A cautious approach is appropriate, especially in the case of phenomena connected with dangerous business practices—e.g. the unclear and shadowy ownership structure of some companies which operate in the Czech market, personal links between businesses and Czech political representation, or the efforts to gain modern technologies or to penetrate existing institutions, organisations, etc. via espionage. Especially this latter practice may represent a potential problem, not only from the security point of view but also from that of business. Besides this, the phenomena of industrial espionage and spying activities with the aim of gaining know-how or penetrating grant projects not only touch on the industrial and business spheres but also the spheres of scientific research, development centres or think-tanks. Vigilance aimed in this direction is therefore proper, including the energy and energy-related areas.

## Notes

1. With the exception of Romania and Slovenia.
2. Proponents of this discourse often later also criticized the Western sanctions imposed for the Russian conduct in Ukraine as harmful for the Czech economic interests (Švec 2014).
3. The positive stance towards Russia has its proponents on both sides of the political spectrum. Social Democrats pragmatically stressed economic interests on one side and the idea of Europeanization of Russia on the other. Communists have seen Russia not only as one of the Czech Republic's most important economic partners but also as a powerful political and security actor balancing the US and the EU. Right-wing sympathisers often admire the centralisation and strong-hand rule in Putin's Russia, often combining this with criticism of intensifying European integration or EU migration policy, etc. (see, e.g. Kratochvíl et al. 2015, pp. 122–126).
4. Russia in the 1990s was facing serious issues with the transformation process, maintaining the country's territorial integrity and a general economic crisis that culminated in 1998.
5. However, it is important to note that the impact on European countries, including the Czech Republic, was rather a part of the 'collateral' damage caused by the Gazprom's decision to punish Ukraine.
6. During the Czech Presidency of the EU in January 2009, a special EU summit was held in Budapest devoted to the Nabucco project. The Czech Prime Minister, Topolánek, emphasized there the importance of Nabucco for the EU energy security and independence. On the other hand he explic-

itly refused, that Nabucco was an "anti-Russian project", but at the same time he admitted that the Nabucco project would be unfeasible in the event that Russia started construction of the South Stream project (Klímová 2009; Týden 2009).

7. The company was also active in electricity trading in last couple of years (Vemex 2012).
8. Gazprom Germania owns 50.14%.
9. Centrex Europe Energy & Gas AG (Austria), as it is officially named, was founded by ZAO AB Gazprombank. Although Gazprom lost its majority in the bank in 2008, deep institutional and personal ties to the Russian government, Gazprom, and President Putin himself remain (Belton 2011). The key person in this regard is Robert Nowikovsky, founder of the original company Jurimex Energy & Gas Development AG. Centrex, the successor to Jurimex, is also affiliated with a number of other companies in the natural gas sector scattered across Europe, including Serbia, Slovakia, Hungary, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, and Great Britain. Many are believed to work in conjunction with Gazprom (Centerex Group 2016; Kupchinsky 2008; Belton 2011; Gazprombank, n.d.).
10. A person worth mentioning in this regard is Alena Vitásková, head of the Czech Energy Regulation Office. Vitásková was criticized for conflict of interests while chairing the Club of Gas Sector Entrepreneurs, which owned 5% of the VEMEX company (Gazprom's subsidiary). However, in 2011, after being appointed as the head of the Czech Energy Regulatory Office, she sent the company into liquidation and it eventually ceased to exist (Léko 2011).
11. The abbreviation stands for "Inglostadt – Kralupy – Litvínov", which are the cities that should have originally marked the pipeline route. Although the route was later partially changed, the name remained.
12. To further foster supply security, six new storage tanks were also built in relation to the new pipeline (Vlček and Černoch 2012, p. 173).
13. The official reason reported by the Russian state was that the supplies were decreased due to technical issues (see iDnes.cz 2008). The economic interests of the companies, which provided the Russian deliveries via the Druzhba pipeline were also sometimes mentioned as a reason for the significant interruption in 2008 (see, e.g. Ekonom 2008). On the other hand, the possible political background of the interruptions of Russian oil deliveries which occurred in the years 2007–2012 was not only pronounced by Czech mass media, but could also be found in discussions of the representatives of Czech energy businesses (see, e.g. MERO ČR, a.s. 2016).
14. E.g. Václav Bartuška, the special envoy of the Czech Republic for energy security, refused speculations of misuse of Russian supplies by the Russian side. But at the same time he admitted that the Czech side did not know

about any particular technical problems and that the reduction in supplies hit only the Czech Republic, not the other neighbouring countries (Kuchyňková 2009, p. 198).

15. It was for the second time when LukOil withdrew from the Czech market. The company was also present in the retail until early 2000s (Indráček 2014).
16. Although the LukOil's interest in the Czech refineries declined over the time the torch was taken over by Gazprom who expressed its interest in buying 32.5% share of the Italian ENI in two refineries—in Kralupy and Litvínov (Petr and Strouhal 2011). However, also this endeavour quietly ended without being materialized.
17. Will be referred to as "the Consortium" for the rest of the text.
18. ZAO Atom Stroy Export is the leading Russian organization building nuclear power plants abroad and accordingly engaged in their modernization. It is supervised by the Rosatom State Atomic Energy Corporation. The larger part of the shares (50.2%) of ZAO Atom Stroy Export belongs to the companies VPO Zarubezh Atom Energostroy (44%) and OAO TVEL (6.2%), which Rosatom controls on behalf of the state, and 49.8% is owned by OAO Gazprombank.
19. The Russian company OAO TVEL (a subsidiary of Rosatom) has always supplied nuclear fuel for all Czech reactors, with the exception of the years 2000–2009, where the initial core and four reloads for Temelín NPP were supplied by Westinghouse. Temelín NPP however experienced massive malfunctions related to the geometric stability of the fuel that eventually led to premature unloading of all of Westinghouse's fuel assemblies despite financial losses, and replacement with Russian OAO TVEL fuel in 2009 (Vlček 2016) based on a public procurement procedure.
20. See Pravec et al. (2013).

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CHAPTER 6

# The Russian and North Caucasus Diaspora in the Czech Republic: Between Loyalty, Crime and Extremism

*Miroslav Mareš and Tomáš Šmíd*

## Introduction

One distinct aspect of contemporary Czech–Russian relations is the presence of a relatively populous Russian diaspora in the Czech Republic, as well as—to a lesser extent—diasporas of other nations originally from the Russian Federation (especially the North Caucasus). After 1989 (and in some exceptional cases before), many Russians obtained Czechoslovak and later Czech nationality, so today, they are a distinctive national minority in the Czech Republic. Other Russians stay in the country as foreign nationals, and their numbers have grown over time. Of course, tourists on short-term

M. Mareš (✉) · T. Šmíd
Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Studies,
Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic
e-mail: mmares@fss.muni.cz

T. Šmíd
e-mail: tsmid@fss.muni.cz



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visas and diplomats are not understood as part of the diaspora, though there is some overlap between these groups. The Cossacks, for instance, are one of these groups.

The Russian diaspora is not politically active as a whole and has various currents of opinion. From the point of view of politics and security studies, the diaspora presents several challenges. First, there are disputes over the émigré Russians' relationship with the contemporary Russian regime, and this has consequences for Czech policy on minority groups and also for Russia's policy on supporting its citizens abroad. Second, some members of this diaspora are involved in extremist groups connected with their Czech counterparts. Finally, another segment of the diaspora is involved in organised crime; Czech law enforcement and scholarly works often refer to it as 'Russian-language organised crime', though this covers the actions not just of ethnic Russians but also of Russian-speaking criminals from other post-Soviet nations.

This chapter discusses these issues. First, we give the historical context of the Russian diaspora in the Czech Republic. Then we outline the present situation, its internal political disputes and political issues as they arise with respect to the authorities—all of this in the context of the 'hybrid threats' concept. This chapter further pays attention to the activities of diaspora Russians among extremists and those involved in organised crime. Finally, the last section is dedicated to the issue of diasporas from the North Caucasus, particularly the Chechens.

## The History of the Russian Diaspora in the Czech Lands

In past centuries there have been many points of contact between Russians and Czechs and small numbers of Russians have always settled in the Czech lands, at least temporarily. However, the significant history of Russian immigration starts after the Bolshevik revolution and the Russian civil war. Since that time, the political events in 'Mother Russia' have been reliably reflected in the Russian diaspora. This concerns disputes within the immigrant community; the policies of the regimes ruling in the Soviet Union and Russian Federation; and the policies of regimes ruling in Czechoslovakia/Czech Republic towards this diaspora. In this respect it makes sense to use the approach proposed by the Czech political scientist, Karel Sládek, who distinguished between those settlers from Russia who were *forced* to go (for political or security reasons) and those who went *voluntarily*

(Sládek 2010, p. 26). Russian émigrés have arrived in the Czech lands in five waves—the last two being partially linked:

1. 1918–1938: After World War I, largely due to the victory of the Bolsheviks in the Russian civil war; this wave also included Russian prisoners of war captured in Czech territory;
2. 1939–1948: During the Nazi occupation and briefly in the wake of the war, Russians arrived from the occupied territories (for example, as forced labour), from collaborationist groups (specifically, at the end of the war, members of the Russian Liberation Army) and from partisan units and the Red Army, some of whom established lasting ties with the Czechs. However, in the immediate aftermath of the war there was also the opposite process, that is, the forced repatriation of some 'White' émigrés from Czechoslovakia to the Soviet Union;
3. 1948–1989: During the communist regime due to marriage and other family ties, facilitated by cooperation between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union within the 'Eastern Bloc'. The occupation by Soviet armed forces in 1968–1989 created very specific conditions for mutual interaction, but the Russians involved in such relationships cannot be called a diaspora, because their presence was time-limited;
4. 1990–2005: After the fall of the communist regime, due to economic opportunities that motivated some wealthy Russians—but the same opportunities gave rise to organised crime structures;
5. 2005–today: In consequence of economic and professional opportunities, or in response to political repression by the Putin regime.

As indicated above, the scene was set for a significant Russian presence in the Czech Republic after World War I (Andreyev and Savicky 2004). This diaspora sprang from three main sources. First, there were the prisoners of war from the conflict with Austria-Hungary, who could not or would not return to the USSR for political reasons. Second, there were members of anti-Bolshevik military groups—the 'White Guard', especially members of 'Wrangler's Army'. Third, there were the political opponents of the new Soviet regime: politicians, members of the upper classes, writers, teachers, scholars and suchlike—in sum, a not insignificant part of the tsarist elite (Sládek 2010, p. 27). Among the immigrants from the old Russian Empire were several thousand Cossacks, who created multiple organisations in Czechoslovakia. Some of them promoted Cossack separatism—i.e.

an understanding of the Cossacks as a nation *sui generis*, who had a right to their own state. Others grouped themselves with Russian or Ukrainian settlers (Pícha 2012, pp. 30–35).

The Czechoslovak government decided to support the incoming Russians and, as early as 1919, provided them with both financial and non-financial aid. In 1921, it declared a 'Russian Action' (*Ruská pomocná akce*) and specified (in its 28 July 1921 decision No. 23912/1921) tasks for the Foreign Ministry which was charged with organising and implementing the action (Kopřivová 2015, p. 28). This was originally scheduled to last five years and about 15,000 immigrants would be taken in, but by 1921, 25,000 Russians had already been accepted (Kopřivová 2015, p. 30). The flow then stopped, largely because the USSR closed its borders.

For some Russian émigrés, Czechoslovakia was a transit country, but a sizeable number settled, and so in the 1920s Prague became, alongside Berlin and Paris, a Russian centre, especially as far as education and science were concerned (Mchitarjan 2009; Vacek and Babka 2011, p. 84). The émigrés founded the Russian Popular (Free) University in Prague (Tejchmanová 1994). The establishment of other educational institutions—such as a Russian grammar school in Prague—was supported by the government. The arrival of Russian immigrants continued to be supported by many Czech politicians, notably and understandably the pan-Slavic circles around Karel Kramář. For the young Czechoslovak Republic, weakened by war losses, the presence of Russian *intelligentsia* (especially technical specialists), students and agricultural and industrial workers (notably in the first post-war years) was an important asset. Nor was the role of Russian military specialists, who came with the Czechoslovak Legion or emigrated, negligible. As Czech historian Pavel Šrámek noted, in the armed forces between the wars Russians could be found 'largely in artillery units, but also in the air force. Also testifying to their importance was the fact that of 141 generals in active service in the Czechoslovak armed forces at 1 August 1938, three were of Russian origin (Vasil Kirej, Jiří Mackevič and Sergej Vojcechovský)' (cf. Bystrov et al. 1999, p. 330).

Politically, the Russian immigrants in Prague were split from the beginning. There were groups of revolutionary socialists (who in 1923–1931 published the magazine *Revolucionnaya Rossya*; Vacek and Babka 2011, p. 85), liberals, pro-tsarists and groupuscules of fascists. The last posed some security threat, not least due to their links with Czech fascists. For example, the Russian émigré Josef Ryčkov, born in 1896 in Chabarovsk, organised several Czech fascists and communists in an anti-Semitic group,

the *Black Eagle Legion*, which in 1926 shot dead Alois Kafka, a businessman of Jewish origin, in a train near the Slovak city of Žilina (Suchánek 2012, p. 27). The Russian fascist, Pavel Gorgulov, also lived in Czechoslovakia, and in 1930 planned to assassinate President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. That was not carried out, but in 1932 he did kill the French president, Paul Doumer (Klimek 2016).

The disputes among Russian exiles were not just political, but also religious. Their arrival substantially bolstered the position of Orthodox Christianity in the Czech lands. Russian religious services had been conducted in Prague since the late nineteenth century, and Russia supported the construction of Orthodox churches in Czech towns and cities. At the same time, acting under the influence of pan-Slavic and, later, modernist ideas, the Czech Orthodox community broke away from the traditional Roman Catholicism. This trend was completed after World War I, with the creation in 1922 of the Czech Orthodox Church (*Česká náboženská obec pravoslavná*), whose membership was largely Czech. The church sought to be autocephalous, but after complex negotiations was subjected to the jurisdiction of the Serbian Orthodox Church (Marek and Bureha 2008, p. 510; Jindra 2015, p. 18). Russian immigrants were active in an unregistered parish in Prague (only the 'union for burial of Russian Orthodox citizens and the maintaining of their graves in Czechoslovakia', known as Uspensky Brotherhood, was registered; Marek and Bureha 2008, pp. 259–261) and failed to avoid disputes with Czech Orthodox believers, especially over the use of church buildings. Initially, the settlers were linked with the Moscow patriarchate. Nonetheless, in consequence of the persecution of the Orthodox Church in the USSR and the denial of this fact by the Moscow Church leadership, some Russian immigrants claimed allegiance to the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, which was founded within the anti-communist diaspora (Vojtíšek 2004, pp. 29–30). Due to internal disputes, some of them came under the jurisdiction of Constantinople in 1931 (Jindra 2015, p. 17).

As the Great Depression set in, the Czechoslovak government's financial support for Russian émigrés waned in the early 1930s. Contemporary economic problems throughout Europe negatively impacted the lives and businesses of many Russian émigrés. They also frequently disapproved of the rapprochement between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, as confirmed by a treaty on alliance in 1935. Democratic Russian exiles, meanwhile, felt threatened by Nazi Germany's expansionism. These factors made

several thousand Russians leave Czechoslovakia in the 1930s to seek new homes elsewhere (Kopřivová 2015, p. 31).

The bulk of the Russians stayed, however. During World War II, they became involved in complex events: on the one hand, official aid to the émigrés continued, but on the other, loyalty to the Nazis was required. In 1942, the Czech Orthodox Church was abolished after many of its figures in Prague were involved in the most celebrated action of Czech resistance during World War II—they aided the assassins of the acting Reichprotector Reinhard Heydrich, and hid them in the crypt of the Saints Cyril and Methodius Church in Prague. The Church was officially renewed only after the liberation in 1945 (Jindra 2014, p. 30). Russian Orthodox believers, especially those involved in collaborationist structures, continued their religious life in the Czech lands, however.

On 14 November 1944, some leading Russian settlers were involved in the adoption of the Prague Manifesto of the Committee for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia (KONR), under German guardianship. This action was not exclusively Czech, but taken by Russian immigrants in European countries inclined to collaborate with the Axis powers. Prague was chosen for its geopolitical location; at that time, the city was still sufficiently remote from the front lines. However, as the fighting approached, some Russian émigrés, influenced by reports of Soviet cruelty in the liberated territories, fled to Western Europe and overseas (Kopřivová 2012, p. 2).

In most of Czechoslovakia, liberated from the east by the Red Army and its allies and subsequently controlled by this army, activities conducted by SMERSH special units of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD, which was the Soviet equivalent of the interior ministry), started immediately after the end of the war. Their aim was to identify, secure and return to the USSR Russian and Ukrainian émigrés who had come to Czechoslovakia during the 1920s. These people mostly had Czechoslovak citizenship or long-term residency, with identity cards as refugees from Soviet Russia (Bystrov 2003, p. 8). The authorities were surprised by this action and unable to respond adequately. In the USSR, the returning people were tried according to criminal law not for collaboration with the Germans, but for subversion in connection to their activities against the Bolshevik forces during the civil war or for actions against the Soviet Union during their exile. The penalty was to be condemned to the Gulag (Kopřivová 2012, pp. 9–10). There is fragmentary evidence that about 250 people met this fate (Bystrov 2003, p. 230). However, the historian, Mečislav Borák, gives a much higher estimate of about 900 people, of whom more than 650

perished in the USSR (Borák 2003, p. 124). A small number of survivors returned to Czechoslovakia in the mid-1950s (Borák 2003, pp. 229–239).

In consequence of these actions by the Soviets and the radical change of political circumstances after World War II, the activities of the political and other associations of the original Russian immigrants ceased. Some even voluntarily returned to the Soviet Union (Kopřivová 2012, p. 11). Acting under instructions from Soviet intelligence agencies, the Czechoslovak State Security (secret police) sought to use others to penetrate Russian émigré groups in Western Europe, notably the National Alliance of Russian Solidarists (*Narodno-trudovoj sojuz*, or NTS; Kalous 2015).

During the communist regime, a new wave of Russian settlers arrived. Due to the growing number of Soviet advisers in Czechoslovakia, and the contacts between workers from the two countries, the number of marriages was increasing as well. Some of these were sham to obtain Czechoslovak citizenship, which permitted one to leave the Soviet Union and achieve a higher standard of living (after 1989, this phenomenon was brought to wider notice by Jan Svěrák's film *Kolya*, which won an Academy Award).

As far as the religious question was concerned, under the Third Republic (1945–1948) and communism some of the Russian diaspora was linked with the Orthodox Church in Czechoslovakia, which from 1946 came under the exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church (in 1951, it was granted autocephaly for political reasons; cf. Vojtíšek 2004, p. 30). However, in communist Czechoslovakia, Orthodoxy was not a purely Russian matter, as believers included Ukrainians as well as ethnic Czechs and Slovaks (including the Volhynian Czechs who came into Czechoslovakia). The Uspensky Brotherhood, which after World War II was branded a 'White émigré organisation', was abolished in 1951 (Marek and Bureha 2008, p. 264).

After the fall of communism in November 1989, the departure of Soviet armed forces and the disintegration of the USSR, the situation of the Russian diaspora and of Russians newly arriving changed substantially. The traditional diaspora, who had Czechoslovak and, later, Czech citizenship, could once again revive their associations in the context of the new liberal minority policy, and started to be supplemented by newcomers, of whom many also gradually obtained citizenship. Some of this migration from Russia was forced (people who were politically persecuted or feared for their safety), and some voluntary (people who wished to work, study or do business in the Czech Republic; Sládek 2010, pp. 31–39). However, from the

early 1990s a proportion of incoming Russians became closely involved with crime (see below).

Since 1989, the Russian minority in the Czech Republic has been growing continuously. According to the Czech Office for Statistics (ČSÚ), between 1991 and 2001 their number increased from 5000 to 12,000. In 2011, their share in the population was 0.2%, with nearly 18,000 people (Český statistický úřad 2014a, p. 4). From 1999 to 2015, 1379 Russians obtained Czech citizenship (Český statistický úřad 2014b, p. 8). In 2015, 34,710 people originating from the Russian Federation lived in the Czech Republic, and during the previous five years, their number increased by 9% (Zajíčková and Vavrečková 2016). It is impossible to determine what shares of this total are accounted for by various ethnic groups, especially those from the North Caucasus, and Russian Jews who faced anti-Semitic attacks in their homeland (Sládek 2010, p. 32).

## The Russian Diaspora in the Czech Republic: The Current Situation

It can be assumed that since the last census in 2011 the number of the Russian minority has grown again, with estimates suggesting that about 20,000 Czech citizens claim Russian ethnicity. More exact data are available about the number of Russians who have been in the country for more than 12 months, i.e. those without Czech citizenship. At the end of 2017, there were 34,446 of these (and a further 2196 have been there for a shorter period; Český statistický úřad 2018). Not all citizens of the Russian Federation are ethnic Russians, but they form the greatest part. The number of Russian students at Czech universities has increased substantially. The Russian community in the country is specific in that the proportion of women is significantly higher than the average for the population of the Czech Republic generally (Vavrečková and Dobiášová 2015, p. 26).

The diaspora tends to be found in Prague and environs and in the celebrated spa town, Karlovy Vary, which has often been called a 'Russian' city due to the number of properties they own; however, the Russian population in this city is decreasing slowly, as it is in another spa town, Teplice. By contrast, the number of Russians in the second largest city, Brno, is on the rise (Vavrečková and Dobiášová 2015, pp. 51–52).

The Russian community is relatively segregated from the Czechs, although there obviously are points of interaction with the majority population. As Drahomíra Zajíčková and Jana Vavrečková have noted, this fact

is reflected in the 'minimal degree of participation in either their own compatriot or domestic organisations. Social contacts occur largely within their own community, most often via family links' (Zajíčková and Vavrečková 2016). The diaspora largely maintains its own customs and lifestyle, as shown by numerous shops selling Russian food and domestic staples, especially in Prague. Cable TV providers in the country commonly offer a broad selection of Russian-language channels. Periodicals in Russian target the diaspora, including the weekly *Prazskij telegraf*; *Prazskij expres*, *Komsomolskaja pravda v Čechiji, Inform Praga, Dengi* and *Diplomat* (Juráková 2015, p. 7). The website *Drugi vzgljad* serves to counterbalance the majority pro-Kremlin position in the Russian diaspora. An official broadcaster, *Radio Praha*, has a Russian-language service (Úřad vlády České republiky. Sekretariát Rady vlády pro národnostní menšiny 2018, p. 256).

Orthodox Christianity continues to play an important role for some in the Russian diaspora. Its main representative is the Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands and Slovakia. As Zdeněk Vojtíšek noted, the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad did not renew its activities in the Czech Republic after 1989; only a small group of its supporters around a single priest were active in the country (Vojtíšek 2004, p. 31).

The community life of the Russian minority is concentrated in about 30 organisations. The degree of their mutual cooperation (or, by contrast, non-cooperation or even aversion) is influenced by personal relations and political preferences. Many other organisations are not active, but remain on the register of societies. According to Petra Findejsová (2016) and Terezie Jochymková (2015) the main organisations are as follows:

- Russian Tradition (*Russkaya tradiciya*), founded by Igor Zoltarev in 2001; until 2016 it operated under the name Association of Compatriots and Friends of Russian Tradition in the Czech Republic. In 2014, it published a volume from a conference on the 70th anniversary of the Prague Manifesto of the KONR, which testifies to its non-communist orientation (Zoltarev 2014). Russian Tradition's main event is the annual Kulturus festival (Úřad vlády České republiky. Sekretariát Rady vlády pro národnostní menšiny 2018, p. 43). The organisation is usually considered to be loyal to the official Euro-Atlantic direction of Czech policy.
- The Association of Russian-Speaking Students and their Supporters, ARTEK, founded in 2001 by Alexander Barabanov, then student of medicine at Prague's Charles University and later a businessman.

The association is a member of the International Association of Youth Organisations of Russian Compatriots (Findejsová 2016, p. 30). During the Ukrainian crisis, Barabanov defended the Russian regime's line in Czech media and described the Ukrainian government as fascist; Czech state subsidies for the association's magazine were then stopped. It has been described by some as 'Russia's fifth column' in the Czech Republic (Jochymková 2015, p. 52).

- The Coordination Council of Russian Compatriots in the Czech Republic (*Koordinacionnyj sovet rossijskich sootecestvennikov v Cesskoy Respublike*). Founded in 2015, it seeks to coordinate Russian groups; helps immigrants to integrate; and organises events to commemorate the legacies of the 'White émigrés' (including memorials to Russian Action) and of the fallen in World War II. This second aspect of its activities has become the most conspicuous, as in 2016 there emerged out of it the informal initiative, the 'Immortal Regiment', which regularly organises events, especially on the Day of Victory over Fascism. The Immortal Regiment has its roots in Russia, but gradually established branches in other countries. Its main objective is to preserve the memory of anti-fascist fighters during World War II. The association cooperates with the Czech Union of Freedom Fighters, the Union of Military Veterans in the Czech Republic, the Ludvík Svoboda Society, the Association of the Volhynian Czechs and their Friends (Bezsmertnyj polk 2016) and the organisation For European Multicultural Society, which staged an Immortal Regiment march in 2018. The chair of this last organisation, Olga Kondrašina, is also a member of the Coordination Council of Russian Compatriots in the Czech Republic (Koordinační rada ruských krajanů v České republice 2016, p. 1). Events are supported by communists and Russian firms in the Czech Republic (MH 2018).
- More Precious than a Pearl (*Dragocennej dzemczuga*) is an organisation founded in 2009 to help the integration of Russian émigrés, especially women, into Czech society (Jochymková 2015, p. 53).

Other organisations of the Russian diaspora, such as Prague Inspiration and the International Cultural Institute 'Key' (which also extends to Eastern European nations) seek to disseminate Russian culture and work with the youth (Jochymková 2015, pp. 55–57; Findejsová 2016, pp. 33–34). Showing important activity, and in recent years concentrating on celebrating the victory over fascism, are three regional formations: Kovčeg-Archa

in Teplice; the Russian Cultural-Enlightenment Association in Moravia (*Ruskoye kulturno-procbetitelnoye obssestvo na Morave*) largely in the south of this historical land, where it cooperates with, for instance, military history clubs that re-enact Red Army actions (Ruské kulturně osvětové sdružení na Moravě 2011, p. 92); and the Russian House of Ostrava, which cooperates closely with the Czech–Russian Society (Jochymková 2015, p. 56). There are also Russian folklore groups and sports clubs. Many Russian fitness clubs involve martial arts training.

Members of the Russian minority are engaged not just in their own associations, but also in organisations for joint cooperation, especially the Czech–Russian Society. There are also official institutions that disseminate Russian culture, promote the Russian language or support compatriots abroad. One such institution with links to the Russian embassy is the Russian Centre of Science and Culture in Prague (RSVK), first established in 1971. Today this is the Prague outpost of the Russian Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation (*Rossotrudnicsestvo*; Findejsová 2016, pp. 29–30). Naturally, the Russian embassy also has direct links with its diaspora.

A small number of Russians are involved in Slavic pagan activities and connect with the Czech pagan Slavic scene, which is of marginal importance. A peculiar case is that of the black metal band Welicoruss, which features Slavic pagan elements in its music, and moved from Novosibirsk to Prague in 2013 (Žilková 2018, pp. 21–22). Since then the band has largely been working in the Czech Republic, and been joined by Czech as well as Serbian musicians. The band's name references a work by the nineteenth-century Russian philosopher, Nikolay Chernyshevskiy (Vjeran 2015).

The Cossacks, too, have renewed their organisations in the Czech Republic; they tend to show no more separatist tendencies, but are linked with the Russian community and cultural life. This is especially true of their main organisation, the All-Cossack Union of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, which was renewed in 2011 and has as its aims—besides keeping alive Cossack traditions, including those of the Cossack settlers in the interwar Czechoslovakia—'to associate the Russian national minority in the Czech Republic' (Všekozácký Svaz Českých zemí a Slovenska 2015). Shortly after its inception, the union found itself at the centre of media attention. The draft version of the Report on the Situation of National Minorities for 2012, published by the government's Council for National

Minorities, connected it with the alleged emergence of Cossack armed groups, supposedly organised on military principles and aiming to penetrate civil society organisations and state authorities. After protests, the section was removed from the final version of the report. In 2015, the union expelled an ex-State Security official, Zdeněk Dragoun, who challenged this judicially and won in 2018, and the union had to readmit him (ZaZ 2018).

## The Russian Diaspora in the Context of 'Hybrid Threats'

The preceding description of the Russian diaspora and its various components allows us to address this topic in the context of Czech security policy. Indeed, this policy influences the country's minorities policy; there are Russians in the Government Council for National Minorities, which is attached to the Government Office, as well as sitting on some committees for national minorities locally—for example, in Brno and Liberec (Úřad vlády České republiky. Sekretariát Rady vlády pro národnostní menšiny 2018, pp. 70–81).

There is no question that the political positions and activities of some in the Russian minority are a source of security tensions; Russians are sometimes understood as the Putin regime's 'fifth column' in the Czech Republic. In a situation where the activities of this regime are seen by Czech actors as a threat that can be framed by the concept of the 'hybrid campaign' (see Chapter 2), many phenomena related to the Russian diaspora are understandably securitised. It should be emphasised that the diaspora is not united as to its opinions and includes many opponents of Putin. This is connected both with the family traditions of the descendants of the 'White' émigrés, and the fact that many migrants who came to the country after the fall of communism were persecuted by Russia's new political leaders (Sládek 2010, pp. 31–32). The situation has been complicated further by the crisis in eastern Ukraine, causing some of the diaspora to be loyal to the Czech Republic's Euro-Atlantic orientation and the official security interests, whereas others side with the Kremlin.

Disputes within the Russian community were briefly described in the 2016 government report on the situation of national minorities:

> The relations within the Russian (Russian-speaking) community are directly connected with the annexation of Crimea the year before last and the situation

> in Ukraine; essentially, the political orientation of the Russian Federation and its propaganda are seen as fundamental problems. According to the Russian representative in the Council, a substantial part of the Russian *intelligentsia* in the Czech Republic take a critical view of the developments in the Russian Federation; but only some of them dare to voice this position openly, whether at meetings, lectures, conferences or on social networks. Thus there is significant polarisation within the Russian-speaking community in the Czech Republic. (Úřad vlády České republiky. Sekretariát Rady vlády pro národnostní menšiny 2017, p. 69)

The network of institutions and media, which influence the pro-Putin segment of the Russian community, is well-known, and includes the pro-Kremlin Friends of Russia in the Czech Republic, the Institute of Slavic Strategic Studies (which in the past described itself as an organisation of the Russian minority), the conspiracy website *Aeronet*, the communist newspaper *Haló noviny* and the Youth Time International Movement (Břešťan 2015; Úřad vlády České republiky. Sekretariát Rady vlády pro národnostní menšiny 2016, p. 182).

In 2017, the Government Council for National Minorities admitted that, using the means at its disposal, it was unable to make an impact on the anti-democratic segment of the Russian minority, and stated that the Centre Against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats at the Ministry of the Interior was likewise ineffectual. The council therefore called for the involvement of a broader spectrum of governmental and non-governmental institutions to solve the problem of the disloyalty of some in the Russian minority towards the values grounded in European documents (Úřad vlády České republiky. Sekretariát Rady vlády pro národnostní menšiny 2018, p. 256). However, direct interventions into the lives of the Russian diaspora are rare. In the past, the Ministry of Culture withdrew subsidies for the magazine *Artek*, probably in part due to statements made by Aleksandr Barabanov (Echo 24, 2015). Locally, a problem arose in May 2018 in Brno, when the local Committee for National Minorities rejected the proposal of a representative of the Russian minority to hang the Russian flag at the city council on Victory Day (allegedly, other minorities were allowed to choose a day to hang their flags). The Russian website, *Sputnik*, then argued that this was a provocation of Czech right-wing political parties that targeted the Russian minority (Petrová 2018).

## The Activities of the Russian Diaspora Among Extremists in the Czech Republic

Some members of the Russian diaspora are active among Czech extremists, or they seek to create branches of Russian groups in the Czech Republic. Beyond scholarly definitions of extremism (Bötticher 2017), those adopted by the public authorities—specifically the Ministry of the Interior—are relevant to our topic. In this approach, where extremism is understood as the antithesis of a democratic constitutional state (Ministerstvo vnitra České republiky 2010), all activities that promote the values and instruments of non-democratic regimes can be seen as extremist, and this includes the contemporary authoritarian Russian regime. The definition used in this chapter is, nonetheless, narrower and focuses only on cases linked with traditional left- or right-wing extremists. Only those members of the Russian diaspora who are permanently present among Czech extremists are considered relevant, and not short-term visits by Russian extremists, such as when Denis Gerasimov of the neo-Nazi music band Kolovrat stayed in 2004 (Obvodní soud pro Prahu 6, 2007), or indeed Czech extremists travel to Russia (for example, the visit by members of National Resistance to a similarly-named Russian organisation). Likewise we will not consider in this chapter Czech extremists' membership of Russian organisations (for example, the alleged Czech members of the Slavic Union), Czech branches of organisations whose centres are in Russia but which do not have Russian members in the Czech Republic (e.g. the National-Bolshevik Party of Czechoslovakia; see Bastl et al. 2011, p. 53) or the influence of Russian trends on the Czech scene, for example, the 'Hardbass' musical subgenre among extreme-right hooligans (Smolík and Kajanová 2011).

Having thus defined the object of our interest, our initial observation is that we face only isolated cases, as there have been no continuously active extreme right or left Russian collectives in the Czech Republic. One borderline case is the attempt of a member of the Russian sabotage Marx-Leninist organisation, Revolutionary Military Soviet (Revvoyensovet), Sergey Maximenko, to obtain political asylum; after Maximenko had stayed several months, his application was denied and, in April 2001, he was sent back to Russia. The Revvoyensovet made bomb attacks on memorials linked with the tsarist regime, at a time when the removal of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin's mummified body and his mausoleum from the Red Square in Moscow was under consideration (Mareš 2005, pp. 125–126).

In the late 1990s, rumours spread among Czech extremists and their allied circles about a Russian anarchist activist living in Prague, allegedly a veteran of the Chechen war. He was supposedly one of the main instigators of attacks against police vehicles during an anti-fascist demonstration in Prague on 1 May 1999. However, the existence of this activist was never reliably confirmed and it is possible that it was all disinformation spread before the 2000 meetings in Prague of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Some unverifiable sources, by contrast, argued at the time that there was a group of Russian militant anarchists in the Czech Republic (Bastl 2001, p. 58).

It was only many years later that a real anarchist activist—a Russian ethnology student from Charles University, Igor Shevtsov—influenced the activities of the extreme left and the media reports about them. Shevtsov's controversial treatment by the Czech security forces, part of their actions against left-wing extremism in the mid-2010s, was a source of embarrassment for them. Shevtsov had been an active anarchist in Russia, and when he arrived in the Czech Republic, he became involved with Prague's anarchists. He was charged with throwing petrol bombs in June 2015 at the house of the then defence minister, Martin Stropnický. Shevtsov was found not guilty (Městský soud v Praze 2016, p. 3) and awarded damages for unlawful detention. He was later sued for filming graffiti being applied to a wall in Prague's remand prison on 10 May 2015, during an unannounced gathering in support of jailed anarchist activists. He allegedly watched the access paths and hence was charged with aiding and abetting (Městský soud v Praze 2016, pp. 1–2). After a complicated trial, Shevtsov's actions were not deemed to constitute even a minor offence, and he was again acquitted of all charges (Horáčková 2017).

Another Russian citizen—from the other end of the extremist spectrum—was, however, convicted. This was Sergej Busigin (born 1993), who in 2013 founded a branch of the Russian neo-Nazi organisation, Wotan Jugend, in the Czech Republic. Originally founded in Russia in the late 2000s among National Socialist Black Metal fans, it sought to follow upon Hitler Jugend in its activities and symbolism. In the Czech Republic, Busigin won a following of about five people, who participated at rallies and were involved in propaganda activities. The police, however, soon uncovered them and in 2015 they were given suspended sentences (Obvodní soud pro Prahu 8, 2016). That was the end of Wotan Jugend in the Czech Republic, but the organisation continues to be active in other countries (Holzer et al. 2019, p. 104).

## Russian Organised Crime Groups in the Czech Republic

From the early 1990s, organised crime originating from the Russian parts of the former Soviet Union became a truly serious problem for the Czech Republic's security. The reasons for the expansion of this kind of crime must be sought in the contemporary situation in the USSR and its successor states, when—as state power declined in the final days of the Soviet empire and during the chaos that accompanied the rise of its successors—a situation was created that was conducive to the development of organised crime. The traditional criminal structure of the '*vory v zakone*' (senior criminal figures), long established in Soviet prisons, slowly abandoned its customs and rules and lost influence. *Vory v zakone* were replaced by new criminal organisations. These became connected with part of the former Soviet *nomenklatura*, who sought to maximise their profits, and were abetted in this by the chaotic legal situation, absence of relevant legal regulation, and lack of any enforcement (Šmíd 2007, p. 99). The interests of the various groupings, which sought to be involved not just in street crime, but especially in the misappropriation of state-owned property and the natural assets of the post-Soviet republics, understandably clashed. A consequence of this was *'banditskaja vojna'*, which culminated in Russia in 1992–1993.

The early 1990s was also the period when crime structures from ex-Soviet countries expanded into the Czech Republic. It was an attractive destination: it was close to their traditional territories, it had a relatively close language and many cultural similarities, and many organised crime figures knew the Czech environment. This included former members of the Soviet occupying armed forces, intelligence services and various advisers in Czechoslovakia. What is more, they found willing collaborators among the underworld, the former officers and agents of the communist secret services, as well as the newly emergent economic and political (typically, local) elites in the Czech Republic. Thanks to their readiness for action and the poor state of law enforcement at the time, organised crime rapidly expanded into the Czech Republic, avoiding a ruthless struggle in the post-Soviet region that would have claimed many victims. The fact that property was being privatised at the time in the Czech Republic allowed organised crime figures to launder their illicit profits.

In the public discourse of the 1990s and later periods, these organisations were often described in a generalised way as 'Russian organised crime' or 'Russian mafia' (Policie České republiky. Policejní prezidium 1996, p. 1).

Even scholarly literature (Flormann and Krevert 2001, p. 92; Šmíd 2007, p. 100) adopted these designations. Thus, almost all criminal groups from the former Soviet region, including the Baltics, Caucasus and Ukraine, came to be seen as 'Russians'. These people used the Russian language between themselves as well as in their interactions with other groups and in their contacts with public officials—but often they were not ethnic Russians. (Most Czechs had some command of Russian, which had been taught in schools under communism.) The situation was made more confusing by the fact that, beyond groups that were ethnically 'pure', there were many in which ethnically diverse criminals from various post-Soviet republics and former communist countries mixed freely. In any case, these groups quickly achieved a position of power in the Czech Republic; they swallowed up many local organised crime groups; and came into violent conflict with their competitors—for example, gangs originating from the Balkans. According to some, Russian and Italian mafia groups met in Prague in 1992 to agree the division of spheres of influence in Europe (Lukashuk 1993, p. 218).

Focusing now on Russian groups (North Caucasus groups will be noted in the next section; South Caucasus and Ukrainian groups are not relevant to this book, although the latter in particular did play a substantial role in many segments of organised crime in the Czech Republic during the 1990s), there were two major entities in the Czech Republic during the 1990s: Semion Mogilevich's organisation and the 'Solntsevskaya bratva' (Nožina 2003, pp. 93–192).

Semion Mogilevich comes from a middle-class Jewish family (he has also had Israeli citizenship since 1991) in Ukraine; for this reason his group is sometimes classified as 'Jewish mafia', and this has often been exploited by anti-Semites. Mogilevich first became involved in illegal activities in the 1970s and, at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, became rich from various transactions in East-Central Europe (Šrámek 2012). Thanks to this, acting via the Arex company owned by a Czechoslovak citizen of Russian extraction, Petr Šumbera, he bought a listed building with a restaurant, 'U Holubů', in Prague 5 in 1991 (Macháček and Rumpl 1997, p. 54). According to police experts, Mogilevich surrounded himself with

> groups made up of former members of the Soviet security forces, Afghanistan war veterans and former top sportsmen. They arranged a weapons trade from Ukraine for him, served as bodyguards and protected buildings (using their past experience with counter-surveillance etc.), organised prostitutes and pro-

> tected them, and eliminated unwanted people and competitors. (Macháček and Rumpl 1997, p. 55)

Mogilevich was allegedly behind some lucrative frauds involving light fuel oils—a type of economic crime that was widespread and voluminous in the years of post-communist transformation.

Like the Mogilevich group, Solntsevskaya bratva (described in police documents as Solntsevskaya mafia) started to become active in the Czech Republic in the early 1990s. The group was named after its origin in the Moscow district of Solntsevo. It quickly established itself among the criminal elements in multiple regions, including Karlovy Vary, where an immigrant community of 'new Russians' was growing quickly at the time (Šmíd and Kupka 2011, p. 125).

In late May 1995, police controversially raided the Prague restaurant 'U Holubů' noted above, where a meeting of senior Russian mafia figures was taking place. Acting on the basis of information provided by US and Russian colleagues, the police thought that the meeting—formally a birthday party—was to include a clash between Mogilevich and the Solntsevskaya mafia boss, Sergei Mikhailov. There was even speculation that the Solntsevskaya mobsters planned to murder Mogilevich, but that is unconfirmed (Šmíd and Kupka 2011, p. 127). Because of the police raid, the meeting of the crime bosses did not actually take place; those who were arrested were acquitted of any specific crime, but some Russian mobsters were subsequently expelled from the country (Šmíd and Kupka 2011, pp. 128–129).

After this incident, the activities of Russian organised crime groups in the Czech Republic gradually started to change. Abandoning violent and street crime, they came to cooperate with the domestic economic crime groups and the 'grey zone', partially linked with political circles. One of the alleged important figures of Karlovy Vary's controversial economic world with roots among the mafia was Andrei Korplyakov. He was also a leader of the Association for the Twenty-First Century, founded in Moscow (Šmíd and Kupka 2011, p. 129). There was also speculation about connections between the Czech and Russian mafias in connection with the unblocking of the Russian Federation's debt (inherited from the Soviet era) to the Czech Republic, particularly, the role played by a godfather of the Czech underworld, František Mrázek, who was later murdered (Šmíd and Kupka 2011, p. 221).

At the time of writing (2018), the prevailing segment of Russian economic structures that have a controversial past in the Czech Republic focus on lobbying and the promotion of their influence. They are often directly supported by the institutions of the Russian regime and its adherents in the Czech Republic. Beyond this, some new Russian immigrants become involved in street crime and small gangs, but this problem is less acute than it was in the 1990s and no longer constitutes the characteristic image of the Russian diaspora.

Russian gangs continue to be involved in blackmail, theft and fraud, as noted in 2018 by the National Centre for Combating Organised Crime. The centre said that recently,

> there has been increased pressure from important Russian-speaking criminal figures to obtain citizenship of various EU member countries, including the Czech Republic. Such citizenship helps them move freely within the EU, and also precludes their extradition to their country of origin. In order to win Czech citizenship, these people corrupt junior and senior officials, as well as regional and national politicians. (Národní centrála boje proti organizovanému zločinu 2018, p. 16)

## Diasporas from the North Caucasus in the Czech Republic

In Russia's multinational reality, some nations from the North Caucasus have a specific reputation; some of their political leaders sought to declare independence in the recent past, and some continue to do so. The most important among these are the Chechens; the Ingush, who cooperate with them; and the Dagestani. In consequence of the two 'Chechen wars' in the 1990s and early 2000s, the Czech Republic became a transit as well as target country of immigration from the North Caucasus; and a particularly strong wave of immigrants arrived in 2003–2004 (Buchlovská 2008, pp. 37–39). This group of migrants founded the Vainakh Diaspora of the Czech Republic, which seeks to associate Chechen, Ingush, Akkhi, Kist and Batsbi settlers (Vajnachská diaspora v Ceské republice 2013).

The Czech Republic was one of the areas where Chechen organised crime gangs pursued their activities from the early 1990s. They immediately became notorious for their brutality, typically in demanding protection money. The dominant gang was headed by Gilani Alijev, who came into conflict with a group of controversial businessmen around Jaroslav

Starka, from the town of Příbram in central Bohemia (Šmíd and Kupka 2011, p. 112). Alijev was allegedly connected to the famous Chechen field commander Shamil Basaev, who supposedly visited the Czech Republic and stayed overnight in a holiday home near the Orlík reservoir. However, it is not impossible that this information was part of contemporary smear campaign orchestrated by the Russian secret services, who fought Chechen separatism and North Caucasus jihadi Islamism. In 2013, Aliev himself was sentenced *in absentia* to 18 years in prison for criminal activities, including multiple instances of conspiracy to murder in cooperation with the Armenian 'vor v zakone', Andranik Sogoyan. However, in 2017 the Chechen Supreme Court over-ruled the judgment of the Prague court; this means that Aliev is exempt from punishment in Russia and is no longer resident in the Czech Republic (Crime Russia 2017).

In connection with the migration wave of 2003–2004, mentioned above, some Chechens voiced their dissatisfaction with Czech immigration policy; these people had to wait in refugee camps for permits to move into countries of Western Europe, which were their ultimate destination. Then and later, there was concern about a potential Chechen terrorist attack against Russian targets in the Czech Republic, but this did not materialise (Centrum strategických studií 2004). The Caucasus Emirate, a radical Islamist terrorist organisation that declared a (non-existent) state in the North Caucasus, included the Czech Republic among its targets for propaganda on its media website (Kavkaz center 2016).

Today (2018) there are in the Czech Republic both supporters and opponents of the incumbent Chechen president, the pro-Kremlin Ramzan Kadyrov. There is no relevant information available about any clashes between them. Interestingly, Kadyrov owns race horses in the Czech Republic, to which EU sanctions imposed in 2014 deny him access (Břešťan 2017). Some people from the Chechen diaspora continue to be involved in criminal activities, but their number and intensity are much lower than in the 1990s. There was a rare instance of Dagestani organised crime (counterfeiting of documents; Městský soud v Praze 2013).

## Conclusion

The Russian diaspora in the Czech Republic is heterogeneous and develops dynamically. A part of it presents a significant challenge to Czech–Russian relations, because some people and organisations in the diaspora openly present themselves as supporters of Putin and thus are seen as his 'fifth

column' in the Czech Republic. Thanks to historical determinants and personal experience, others stand opposed to official Russian policy, typically on the issue of engagement in the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Overall, disagreements in the Russian community tend to follow the broad patterns of tension currently existing in Czech–Russian relations, and as such can be framed by the concept of a 'hybrid campaign', applied by Russia against the Czech Republic.

By contrast, where members of the Russian diaspora penetrated Czech anarchist and neo-Nazi extremist groups, these were only isolated phenomena, lacking continuity. Compared to the decade after 1989, the risk of blue-collar Russian organised crime has decreased; by contrast, Russian groups that obtained their assets by more sophisticated crime activities (white-collar crime) have increasing influence. The role of the diaspora from the North Caucasus is marginal, but that does not mean that some specific phenomena posing risk could not arise from this environment on an ad hoc basis.

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CHAPTER 7

# Slavonic Brothers? Current Language, Literature and Cultural Interaction Between Russia and the Czech Republic in Light of the Security Issue

*Jiří Gazda and Josef Šaur*

Modern Czech–Russian relations are an extremely complicated affair, and their scholarly reflection needs to avoid slipping into an atemporal exaggeration of either pole of the Russophilia/Russophobia conceptual dyad. On the Czech side, these relations have sometimes involved a sincere and hopeful admiration for Russia, its statehood and culture, motivated by a belief in Slavonic mutuality. At other times, Czechs have had both pragmatic and ideological reasons for turning to Russia in their search for support of Czech sovereign statehood. At still further points, Russia has been

J. Gazda (✉) · J. Šaur
Department of Slavonic Studies, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic
e-mail: gazda@phil.muni.cz

J. Šaur
e-mail: saur@phil.muni.cz



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viewed rather soberly or even highly critical. Internally divergent and therefore highly antagonising perceptions of tsarist and later Soviet Russia prevailed both before the First World War (including the whole of the nineteenth century) and during the interwar years. After the Second World War, however, an understandable—given the contemporary context—tilt towards Russia occurred, to be replaced within a few years by a forced, ideologically driven, and therefore increasingly hollow model of the so-called Czech/Czechoslovak–Russian/Soviet friendship. It was only after 1989 and the collapse of communism that these two nations could establish normal relations, even if both approached the new era brandishing transformed models of statehood: Czechoslovakia was replaced by the Czech Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics by the Russian Federation.

Given this difficult legacy, what is the present-day reality of these relations? Seen from a certain distance, they are framed by several large-scale developments such as deteriorating relations between the West and Russia generally and the conflict in eastern Ukraine, or by tensions arising from global issues such as the fight against terrorism. Even from a territorially delimited view, the Central European region still faces apparent external and internal pressures to redefine its identity. How can analysis of the diverse manifestations of cultural relations between the two actors improve our understanding of the security dimension of their mutual interaction?

The possibility of applying a philologically oriented approach and employing the well-established theory of securitisation, as developed by the Copenhagen School political science (Buzan et al. 1998), to study such developments in Central Europe has been raised by Slovak scholars Irina Dulebová and Radoslav Štefančík, among others. In their view, the framework developed by the Copenhagen School indeed provides political linguistics and discursive analysis with a desirable impetus, because its reinterpretation of the concept of security makes it possible to understand it as a discursive practice constitutive of a political community (Dulebová and Štefančík 2017, p. 51). This perspective is shared by the contributors to this book.

Against this background, the present chapter attempts to capture the current mental image of Russia held by the Czech people, as evidenced by the specific media of literary and journalistic texts. We proceed by way of two mutually interrelated probes: one explores the structure of Czech translations of Russian literary works as regards their genres and topics, the other analyses topical and linguistic aspects of Czech opinion journalism in

relation to Russia; both cover the period 2012–2017. In particular, we look for answers to the following questions: which works of contemporary Russian literature have been translated into Czech, which have not, and why? Is it possible to draw any conclusions regarding the security issue? How is Russian literature presented in the Czech Republic, and what impression of present-day Russia is thus being rendered? Moreover, what is the perception of Russia in current Czech media and internet discourse? Does this discourse build on security-related topics? If it does, what shape do they take? And finally, do the characteristics of a hybrid campaign (as defined by the authors of this book) waged by Putin's Russia project themselves into this broadly defined literary and media discourse, and if so, how are they reflected in the Czech context?

## Russian Literature and Its Reception as a Social and Political Theme

The status Russia currently enjoys with the Czech public has been shaped by several factors. One of these is the image of Russia's past and present, including current political affairs, as indicated by the reception of Russian literature, especially of contemporary works. This section therefore focuses on Czech translations of these texts, with the aim of showing not only which works have been translated, but also—and primarily—how they have been received by their Czech reviewers. That is, we examine how these texts are presented to the Czech readers. To be current, our analysis covers the period between 2012 and 2017. It uses both quantitative and qualitative data (we make use of the complete list of books translated from Russian into Czech[1]); and we also draw on book reviews published in relevant Czech literary and cultural periodicals (*Literární noviny*, *Revolver Revue*, *RozRazil*, *A2*, *Plav*, *Souvislosti*, *Host* and *Tvar*), supplemented by reviews in mainstream newspapers and magazines (*Lidové noviny, Hospodářské noviny, Právo* and *Respekt*). Since we are primarily interested in how Russian literature is presented to a general readership, we deliberately leave aside scholarly analyses in specialised disciplinary journals.

Our analysis of the Czech reception of contemporary Russian literature is based on three basic assumptions:

a. The fragmented nature of translations: only a minor part of the total output is selected for translation and this selection is not random but follows a certain pattern;
b. There is a characteristic overlap between works of literature and Russian social and political thought;
c. Long-established normative and ideological preferences shape the reception of Russian literature in the Czech context.

Conscious excursions into opinion journalism, social criticism, philosophy and political thought have always been among the distinctive features of Russian literature. This characteristic was imparted on it by modern Russian history: both the tsarist and the Bolshevik regimes suppressed freedom of speech, claimed a political monopoly, and generally created an environment in which literature was one of the few domains where opinions could be expressed freely.[2] In this context it is possible to speak about Russian 'literature-centrism' and literature's pivotal role in the collective societal and cultural conscience (Lipovetskiĭ 2008, pp. 24–33). Works of literature, however, never expressed exclusively opposing views (Offord 1999; Morson 2010); also pro-regime attitudes were expressed, rendering literature an apologia for national or imperial interests as well as for the elite's ideological preferences (Clark 1981; Ram 2003). One would expect that *perestroika* and *glasnost*, the collapse of the Soviet Union and expansion of free media, and finally the boom in internet communication and social media would cumulatively result in the diminishing importance of literature as a vehicle for expressing social and political attitudes. This was not the case. Although its original immense influence on Russian society has gone, literature—or at least a part of it—still remains an important source of public expression of social and political views. Besides that, recent research shows that Russian literature nowadays also serves as a device for representing the collective conscience of certain segments of Russian society (Etkind 2013; Noordenbos 2016). Literary works thus again (or perhaps still) represent the contrasting roles of, on the one hand, the critic of the political establishment who anticipates the looming dangers of current developments (Höllwerth 2015; Šaur 2016) and, on the other hand, the apologist for, or even willing co-author of, the neo-imperial ideology underpinning Putin's Russia (Ulbrechtová 2015). After all, quite a few Russian authors publicly proclaim that their writings reflect their civic attitudes, as Czech reviewers rarely fail to remind us.

Since the nineteenth century, the Czech reception of Russian literature has been heavily swayed by the out of ordinary artistic circumstances, both societal and political (Kšicová 1997, pp. 5–118; Hrala 2002, pp. 210–234). These factors came prominently to the fore after the Second World War, and especially after the 1948 imposition of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. The Czechs' subsequent negative perception of translations from Russian would be a result of the contemporary adoption of Soviet cultural policy and the corresponding adoration of mediocre or poor works, which nonetheless fulfilled an ideologically expedient function. This became fully apparent after 1989—with interest in translations of Russian literature abruptly dropping—not least as a response to the previous oversupply. On the top of that, the two societies differed dramatically; Russian literature grappled with problems that Czech readers found uninteresting (Hrala 2002, pp. 234–239; Zahrádka 2008, pp. 5–6). Although this bias dissipated at the beginning of the twenty-first century and the number of translations started rising again, publishers still stuck predominantly to classic works or established authors. Genuinely new Russian literature would enjoy only sporadic attention.

Slightly paradoxical yet revealing was that interest in contemporary Russian literature increased sharply after the Russian Federation's annexation of Crimea in 2014. At the same time, however, this event, in tandem with the start of the war in eastern Ukraine, foreshadowed certain peculiarities of the reception of contemporary Russian literature in the Czech Republic—namely a renewed emphasis on normative aspects of literary works. So, what do we know about this reception? Are there any identifiable tendencies? Is it particularly attentive to certain authors or works?

Between 2012 and 2017, a total of 492 books were translated from Russian into Czech. Although this represents an increase in the volume of translated works over previous years, Russian still trailed behind other languages.[3] Out of the 492 titles, about 130 were works of fiction. The bulk of translations from Russian were trivial, mass-oriented and popular science books such as science-fiction (represented among others by the repeatedly published Sergeĭ Luk'ianenko), military, esoteric literature etc. In addition, out of about 130 works of fiction published in the Czech Republic over the six-year period, 55% were translated into Czech before and were new translations or reprints of older editions (this was mostly the case with classic Russian literature). This leaves about 60 books that were translated into Czech for the first time. The majority of these translations were books by contemporary Russian authors whose popularity among Czech readers

was on the rise: While between 2012 and 2015 the annual publishing rate for new Russian books remained around three or four titles, in 2016 it rose to 13. In 2017, seven works of contemporary Russian literature were published in Czech, with Guzel' IAkhina's debut issued in two editions.

A more detailed look at the translated titles reveals several points of interest. Firstly, the popularity of authors who gave more open and direct opinions on present-day realities, or reflected upon recent developments was rising. Popular works included critical assessment of twentieth century Russian history, which reminded their readers of events that had been erased from historical memory, or protested uncritical glorification of certain periods in Russian history. On the other hand, authors who were previously widely read, such as Viktor Pelevin or Vladimir Sorokin were being pushed to the back seat.[4] One possible explanation for this is that they employ fanciful elements in their writings which make it difficult or impossible for Czech readers to detect allusions to contemporary Russia.

Among the more regularly translated authors in recent years were Svetlana Aleksievich,[5] Liudmila Ulitskaia[6] and Sergeĭ Lebedev; while Elena Chizhova, Mikhail Shevelëv and Guzel' IAkhina each had one translated title to their name. All these authors shared the thematic preference mentioned above as well as a realist approach to the subject matter. Also worth noting is the fact that the latest books by Sergeĭ Lebedev and Mikhail Shevelëv were published in Russian in 2015 and their Czech translations quickly followed in 2016. This means that their Czech readers were supplied with the most recent Russian literary output, which certainly was not the norm before. The Czech readers were interested in Russian authors' interpretation of their country's history, in how Russian literature comes to terms with the issues of repression, the suppression of freedom and the marginalisation of the individual in the name of the powerful state or ideological interests. This is underlined by the unfailing popularity of Books on the Gulag, for example, continued to be popular; translation of Anna Barkova's collection of shorter writings *Vosem' glav bezumiia* (2015 in Czech) proved highly popular, as a Czech movie about the life of the otherwise half-forgotten author was made.

Our claim that Czech translations targeted literary works that critically reflected on the Russian past and present is further supported by translations of works more journalistic in nature. These included the prison diary of Nadezhda Tolokonnikova who was incarcerated as a member of the Pussy Riot group (*How to Start a Revolution*, 2016 in Czech); her experience represents an interesting comparison to Anna Barkova's texts

on the Gulag, which depict the Soviet prison system. Another half-literary, half-journalistic contribution was the diary of Polina Zherebtsova (*Dnevnik Zherebtsovoj Poliny*, 2016 in Czech), in which the author depicts her childhood and adolescence in Groznyĭ between 1994 and 2004—that is, during the Chechen wars. So, while the renowned journalist Anna Politkovskaia detailed the Chechen wars 'from outside', Zherebtsova did the same 'from inside'. An openly critical commentary on present-day Russia and its political regime was given in the collection of essays by the journalist Oleg Panfilov, entitled *Antisovetskie istorii* (2016 in Czech), most of which were written for the Crimean service of Radio Free Europe. Panfilov argued that the present regime showed extensive parallels with the Soviet era, especially in the political domain.

These authors' efforts to openly and critically reflect on the past and present state of Russian society have been noted by Czech reviewers. For example, the latest translated books by Liudmila Ulitskaia and Sergeĭ Lebedev were praised as attempts to preserve historical memory.[7] The opinion of the mainstream Czech media on the recent Russian literary output is quite strong and one-sided. These mainly focused on the authors' societal and political views, notably their opposition to Putin's politics and efforts to defend democratic values. For example, much attention was paid to Lyudmila Ulitskaia's statement commenting on the 14% of Russians who did not vote for Putin. Another example is Mikhail Shevelëv's remark that he turned from journalism to literature because the latter still guaranteed freedom. This is also the context of the Czech media's excitement over Shevelëv's dissenting view on the August 1968 events in Czechoslovakia, as well as over Dmitriĭ Glukhovskiĭ's remark at the launch of the Czech translation of the final part of his world-famous trilogy *Metro 2035* that the book was a metaphor for contemporary Russia.

In short, the recent Czech reception of Russian literature has been rather one-sided and close attention has been paid only to a fairly narrow segment. The focus is on works critical of present-day Russia, which gives rise to the suspicion that literary criticism pursues, among others, political or at least socio-critical goals. Works other than critical have also been translated but reviewers overlooked them. There has not been a single review of the translations of, for instance, Evgeniĭ Vodolazkin's novel *Lavr* (2016 in Czech) or Dina Rubina's book *Belaia golubka Kordovy* (2016 in Czech); and their common feature is being apolitical. The collection of poems by the Nobel Prize laureate Joseph Brodsky (2013 in Czech) did not raise attention among Czech literary critics either.[8] So a pattern seems to have

emerged in recent years that while politically critical works were scrutinised without exception, others—let us call them apolitical—were reviewed only occasionally.[9]

This one-sidedness of the Czech reception of Russian literary output is further underlined by the fact that not a single work that could be referred to as nationalist or pro-regime has recently been translated. In this regard, Zakhar Prilepin's novel *Obitel'* (2014) represents an interesting example. The plot is situated in a labour camp in the Solovetsky Islands and deals with the issue of political repression in the Soviet Union. It received wide attention in Russia and was considered a major literary achievement; recently it was translated into Polish. However, its author actively fought in the conflict in eastern Ukraine, and so the Czech publisher cancelled the launch of the book, arguing that he refused to co-finance pro-Russian separatists by paying the author's royalties.

In sum, the Czech reflection of contemporary Russian literature exhibits a certain bias towards those works which dealt with problematic periods of Russian history, or which were critical of contemporary Russian politics, Vladimir Putin's regime, or dubious aspects of the Russian society. The political attitudes of the authors were an important criterion in the overall assessment of their work. A distinctive attribute of Russian literature, namely its overlap with society-wide and political issues, thus resonated in its Czech perception as well. The question remains, however, of how comprehensive the current Czech reflection on Russian literature is if the criteria of interest were not only artistic or aesthetic but political.

## Russia and Its Interests as Portrayed by the Czech Media (2013–2017)

An interdisciplinary analysis of security-related issues in the context of Czech–Russian relations would be incomplete without an examination of intercultural communication between the countries—one defined by the Russian and Czech media, participants in the media-transmitted social and political discourse, and relevant socially and politically engaged texts.

Contemporary sociolinguistics provides efficient tools for a systemic, critical analysis of socio-political discourse, as embodied in written and spoken contributions to both direct and media-transmitted social and political communication. Indeed, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, linguistic criticism and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995, 2003; Van Dijk 2008) employed to reconceptualise security provide important

research tools at the interface of political science and linguistics. A combination of these two social scientific fields formed political linguistics (Burkhardt 1996; Čudinov 2006; Čudinov et al. 2011; Niehr 2014) as both a theoretical and applied discipline focused on the impact of socio-political developments on language, and simultaneously, on how language is employed in politics.

Special attention is paid to politico-linguistic research on the language of the media, especially the political discourse on the internet which has triggered a genuine revolution in political communication in the last twenty years (Štefančík 2016, p. 31). Linguistic methodology may help answering particular questions regarding Czech–Russian relations in two ways. First, by utilising tools and methods of political linguistics to analyse political and media discourse, and second, via content and discursive analysis of the unofficial discourse in the web environment, one which mediates both individual and collective modalities of public opinion.

Focusing on the present Czech media discourse on Russia, the preeminent topic—especially since the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict in 2013—has been the media and information war. Initially, this was presented as a hybrid conflict instigated by Russia against Ukraine, one that gradually spilled over into a 'Cold War II' or 'New Cold War',[10] as the renewed political and military tension arose between Russia and NATO countries.

The 'Russian card', or the stance towards Russia and its present activities as well as past Russian influence on the Czech society, is a typical facet of the Czech media environment, providing a highly reliable indicator of the normative position of the respective authors (or the opinion groups they represent). Due to the specific historical experience with and geographical proximity of Russia as an imperial power, the Czech political and media landscape exhibits heightened sensitivity to developments in Russia. This is manifested, on the one hand, by the tendency on the part of the national media as well as of a significant number of political actors to permanently foster the sentiment that the Czech Republic and its interests are threatened by President Putin's authoritarian regime. On the other hand, there is the opposite tendency to view present-day Russia as a remarkably vital, and therefore welcome, geopolitical and civilisation alternative to the current Czech association with the Western European political community. Let us now outline the basic features of the Czech media environment in this respect, focusing on language indicators of the sense of insecurity in texts of political journalism.

The following findings are based on a thematic and partly linguistic analysis of around 200 journalistic texts published between January 2016 and June 2017 by 20 Czech news outlets[11]; additionally, we analysed another 30 relevant contributions published between 2013 and 2015. Without exception, Russian translations of these texts were subsequently published by the Russian news portal InoSMI.ru,[12] which has been posting Russian-language translations of selected analytical articles from foreign media that in one way or another concern Russia or Russian interests in the world since 2011. Although the nature and independence of this website, associated with the state news agency *Rossiia segodnia*, has been the subject of long-term debate in Russia, it represents an important source of information for its Russian audience about how the country is perceived abroad. For outside observers, in turn, comments and discussions below these texts provide a notable resource for analysis of public sentiments of at least some opinion groups within the Russian society.

### *From Politicisation to Securitisation of Putin's Russia*

Monitoring the Czech media in the years 2013–2017 invites a preliminary question whether the necessity of protecting Czech national interests against possible negative encroachments by Putin's Russia has covertly shifted from permanent politicisation[13] towards fully fledged securitisation. Securitisation means that the given topic is being framed as a significant security issue, and state institutions begin to prepare or even implement partial steps aimed at eliminating or at least mitigating the threat.[14] In order to test the thesis, we explored, first, which topics concerning Russia and Russian interests in the world have been most extensively commented upon in the Czech media. Second, we show via analysis of article headlines and parts of selected texts how the feeling of impending threat has been articulated.

For the given purposes we intentionally leave aside internet outlets which have been referred to by independent observers as well as professional analysts as purposefully propagandist or one-sided pro-Kremlin.[15] Viewed through the lens of securitisation theory, these loud critics of the existing political establishment are themselves not actors of securitisation (Buzan et al. 1998, pp. 35–36). On the contrary, they strive to play down security risks, real or imagined, and have thus embraced the role of 'desecuritising actors' within the analysed discourse. Although they have some influence over parts of the public, they have no leverage over the majority of political

and social leaders who still have the decisive say in the real-world politics of the state. Most of the analysed texts thus belong to what has been termed as the 'internet information mainstream', which largely reflects the opinions of those currently in power in the Czech Republic.[16]

The basic grouping of the studied texts by topic followed the distinction among several sectors of potential threats, as elaborated in securitisation theory. Specifically, we focused on the 'political', 'military' and 'economic' sectors.[17] Texts which did not fit into any of these groups were listed in the 'others' category.

Thematic analysis of 198 articles published in the Czech media between January 2016 and June 2017 and dealing with Russia and Russian interests reveals that political topics attracted by far the most attention (125 articles, or approximately 63%); military issues came second behind a significant gap (33 articles, or 17%); and the least attention was paid to economic topics and risks (15 articles, or 8%). The remaining 25 texts (13%) concerned either broadly societal or narrow/specialised topics which were nevertheless somehow related to one of the three main categories.

A closer look at thematic distribution within the respective sectors brings up further findings. Within the political sector (125 pieces), the Czech media focused mainly on Russia's foreign-policy relations and activities—these comprised 67 texts, out of which 19 addressed Czech-Russian relations per se. Russian relations with others commented upon were with the USA (10), the EU (6), the West (7) and Ukraine (3). This category also includes texts on Russian foreign policy and international politics in general (14) as well as on Russian great-power ambitions (8). Substantial attention was devoted to security threats arising from the information war between Russia and the European Union as well as from both Russian and Czech pro-Kremlin propaganda (28); not far behind were Russian domestic affairs (25).

The military sector (33 articles) primarily included commentaries on Russian military engagement in the Syrian (8) and Ukrainian (7) war zones; also common were various historical reminiscences (2016 was the 75th anniversary of the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, while 2017 was the 100th anniversary of the October Revolution). Other topics in focus included improvements in the combat efficiency of the Russian armed forces (6) or indirect military confrontation between Russia and NATO (5).

Texts on economic matters (15) focused almost exclusively on Russia's economic difficulties, which were often linked to sanctions imposed by the West against either Russia as a whole or certain members of its ruling elites.

As regards articles in the 'others' category (social issues, culture, sport, environment etc.), even these carried political (mostly critical) overtones and predominantly highlighted problems or deficiencies at all levels of the Russian society.

### *Linguistic Means of Depicting the 'Russian Threat' in Czech Media Discourse*

Of the almost 200 analysed texts, approximately 40 articles, or about one-fifth of the total, can be categorised as expressing in various degrees the feeling of Czech or broadly Europe-wide interests being threatened by contemporary Russia. In the three years (2013–2015) preceding the analysed period, however, we identified only 30 essays of comparable intent; it could be thus inferred that awareness of the Russian threat as presented in the Czech media has intensified in the last couple of years.

Conceptualising security within the securitisation theory framework and with the help of methodological tools provided by political linguistics (mainly critical discourse analysis) draws our attention—in accordance with social constructivism—primarily to what is being presented (framed) as a security threat as well as which linguistic instruments are being employed (Dulebová and Štefančík 2017, p. 53). For such purposes, newspaper headlines and article leads proved very useful, because they both concisely capture the substantive content of the text and (in most cases) indicate its author's position—that is, their subjective appraisal of the problem. It is the pragmatic component of these micro-texts' meanings which is most significant for evaluating the impact of their language-related aspects on intended recipients, and more generally of the intentional use of such instruments in achieving the goals of communication, as defined by the persuasive function of language (Bednář 1984, p. 109).

In this regard, we observed that in order to either explicitly or implicitly express their beliefs about the threat posed by Putin's Russia to Czech/European interests or democratic values, commentators in the Czech media employed all available lexical-stylistic tools, figures of speech and pragmatic-linguistic techniques. This can be conclusively shown by listing examples of headlines to texts that deal mostly with the political and military sectors of security. Of the wide and diverse range of available vernacular tools, the following have been most extensively employed:

- Terms and phrases belonging to the semantic field of 'threat': threat/risk, threaten, warn, danger, fear, be afraid, defence, increase pressure, head for disaster (*Fear of Russia for Eternity? BIS Warns Against Russia and China; Will European Defence Against Russia Succeed?*)
- Military terminology and metaphors: war, information war, cold war, shadow war, hybrid war, weapon of war, singing weapon, aggression, attack, combatants, to assault etc. (*Kremlin Shadow Wars and How to Hold Our Own; Putin's Cult of Death, War is the Meaning of Russian Existence; The Alexandrov Ensemble is a Russian Singing Weapon; Russia Attacks Other Countries and Starts a Genocide*)
- Accumulation of notions with negative connotation: enemy, dictator, expansive imperialism, propaganda, agents, invaders, populist, fascist etc. (*Russia is an Enemy and a Friend of Dictators; The Idea of the Russian State is Founded on Aggression and the Cultivation of an Image of the Enemy; The Kremlin Merges Anti-Fascist Rhetoric with Support for Populist and Fascist Parties*)
- Expressive metaphors with negative connotation (*Bully Putin Flexes His Muscles at the West: Don't Mess With Me; Night Wolves With a Sticky Topping of Russian Propaganda; Natural Gas and Political Turnabouts as Poisoned Candy; After Brexit—Czexiting Into the Russian Bear's Embrace*)
- Hyperboles and overstatements of negatively perceived phenomena (*Orthodox Empire in the Making?; Russia—The Eternally Disgruntled Superpower; Russian Rockets Everywhere; Football as a Weapon of War; War is the Meaning of Russian Existence*).

Pragmatic-stylistic analysis—that is, an examination of the language tools employed in order to achieve the intended effect on the recipients of the message—demonstrated that Czech opinion journalism in the field of security often trod a fine line between persuasion and manipulation—especially as regards the threat posed by Russia. Both communication strategies made use of similar language techniques; to be able to distinguish between them, we needed in every single case to take into consideration a whole range of variables—above all situational ethics and context (Srpová 2005, p. 200).

A typical example of a pragmatic-stylistic technique on the verge of manipulation is a rhetorical question (often with ironic undertows) which either already includes the answer or strongly suggests one. Its objective is to activate the reader's mental capacities, so that they feel they have the

opportunity to 'derive conclusions independently': *Fear of Russia for Eternity?; Would The Soviet Union Have Helped Us In 1938? Sure… But Where Would It Have Taken Us?; After Brexit—Czexiting Into the Russian Bear's Embrace?; Russia Feels Besieged by NATO. Any Reason to Sympathise?*

Another element of manipulative discursive strategies we point to is the overuse of expressive notions, with the aim of disparaging or discrediting one's intellectual opponent or (real or imagined) enemy. Often this is compounded by irony or sarcasm: *Bully Putin Flexes His Muscles at the West; Marine Le Pen is Putin's Russian Doll; Putin has Become a Headcase; Reviving Tsarist Autocracy: Isn't That a Great Idea for Russia?; Putin and His Variety Show.*

Attempts to ram into the headlines in the most straightforward manner the content of the text as well as the author's stance often results in their semantic (and often logical) trivialisation and absolutisation. Such cases may betray the author's black-and-white view of the given issue as well as their abuse of the propagandist technique of claiming absolute certainty—that is, presenting their private opinion as self-evidently that of the majority: *Our Options Are: EU, or Putin; Russia is an Enemy and a Friend of Dictators; Russia is No Friend of Ours; Yes to* [American] *Bases. Yes to US Troops. No to Russian Spies in Czechia; The Idea of the Russian State is Founded on Aggression and Cultivation of an Image of the Enemy.*

Assertion can be an even more sophisticated, and therefore more effective, tool of manipulation. This happens when the speaker smuggles in a categorical presupposition into the sub-text (i.e. a seemingly obvious assumption) which contains a disparaging statement about a given object: *Murder of Boris Nemtsov: Putin's Middle Finger* (presupposition: Putin orchestrated Nemtsov's murder); *On Russia's Age-Old Expansive Imperialism* (i.e. Russia always behaved as an imperial power); *Defending Against Putin: Healthy Public Space àla Germany* (Putin constitutes a threat to be defended against); *Why is the Czech Left Conciliatory Towards Russia* (the Czech left has a conciliatory stance towards Russia).

The available data thus indicate that the image of Russia in the mainstream Czech media is based on a significant and documentable bias towards both more expressive and (most importantly) explicit locutions in the sub-text which convey the sentiment that Czech interests and values are under threat from Putin's Russia. This inclination is obviously embedded in a broader context of vindication, or fully fledged defence, of the consensus on the Western and democratic orientation of the Czech polity—a

consensus that many actors find currently in peril, while others perceive it as a relic of the past, standing in dire need of rethinking and redefinition.

## Conclusion

In our view, the preceding analysis of the present-day perception of Russia within the Czech society, as found in literary and media texts, reveals that a process of discursive construction of Russia *qua* threat is underway in the Czech public sphere. As regards contemporary Russian literary output, attention was given mostly to books which dealt with the 'dark' chapters of Russian history and critically judged the current state of the Russian society and politics. Literature is politicised, which was evidenced by the mainstream media's framing of recent Russian literary works by the political attitudes of their authors. On the one hand, such an approach is understandable, insofar as Russian literature was always characterised by engagement with social issues and provided a space for expressing political beliefs. So there is nothing new about contemporary authors using their dissenting political views as advertising 'bait' for their European readership. On the other hand, accepting such a view of Russian literature commits one to a one-sided emphasis on only a subset of topics and problems that are in fact reflected in contemporary Russian literature.

Similarly, with regard to present-day Russia, the dominant strand of Czech media discourse exhibited heightened sensitivity to political and related military or (less frequently) economic issues. The politicisation of originally not political (cultural, sports-related,[18] religious, historical etc.) topics that somehow concerned Russia represented another identifiable trend. The mainstream Czech media, which mostly identify themselves as liberal,[19] now increasingly bring up the threat that Russia presents to European democratic values (often linked to human-rights documents) and therefore also to Czech national interests. In so doing, they contribute in a major way to shifting the issue of Russian influence from politicisation to securitisation.

Answering the question of whether (and if so, how) the characteristics of a hybrid campaign waged by contemporary Russia were reflected in the broadly-conceived Czech literary and media discourse, specifically in contemporary publishing practice and in items of political journalism, requires separate assessment.

Although current Czech practice in translating and publishing contemporary Russian fiction cannot by definition be seen and assessed as a direct

instrument of intentional ideological influence on Czech culture, and hence as a relevant factor in a Russian hybrid campaign, the choice of authors and works for translation nevertheless reflects a tendency indirectly to co-participate in the creation of an image of Russia as a problematic, contradictory and unpredictable society, which might potentially be a destabilising element for the rest of the world. This is then amplified by the book reviewers, who tend to focus on works that are critical of Russia and its past. Lack of relevant data prevents us from ascertaining unambiguously whether publishing and translating practice reflects the conscious ideological positions of those involved, or whether it is motivated by an economic calculation. However, Czech publishers largely buy the rights to contemporary Russian books from Western European agencies, and this weakens the influences of the pro-Russian segment of Czech society on Czech publishing practice.

By contrast, Czech mainstream political journalism articulates directly and strikingly the understanding of Putin's Russia as a security threat, and this is a consequence of a real hybrid campaign. It is manifested in the preference for controversial topics connected with Russia and Russian interests in the world, and with a securitising interpretation of these topics. A discourse analysis of Czech political journalism showed that, in order to defend the national interest against real or putative Russian threats, linguistic devices and discourse strategies characteristic of the language of propaganda in general—rhetoric of the pro-Kremlin media—were used as instruments of the securitisation rhetoric at the broad level.

In the context of increasingly tense relations and the information war between Russia and the EU, our view is that not a small part of the Czech media are partly responsible for creating a negative public image of Russia, and for reinforcing stereotypes and feelings of insecurity. On the one hand, this can be construed as a legitimate effort on the part of certain actors to protect Czech national interests. At the same time, however, we should be wary of the temptation to abuse public political language for propaganda and ideological manipulation.

## Notes

1. These can be generated for each year via the on-line catalogue of the National Library of the Czech Republic in Prague. The library keeps a record of each publication in Czech that has been assigned an ISBN.

2. Which however never came at the expense of its artistic and aesthetic function. Moreover, we certainly do not want to imply that Russian literature should be viewed solely through the prism of political thought.
3. The figure is roughly equal to translations from Italian. As expected, the most popular language in this regard is English (on average 2800–2900 translations a year), followed by German (approx. 900 translations a year) and French (290). Spanish also scores slightly higher than Russian (at about 100 translations a year).
4. During the observed period, one book by Viktor Pelevin and two by Vladimir Sorokin were published; still, by the number of their titles that have been issued, the two authors continue to rank among the most translated Russian authors into Czech.
5. In the case of Svetlana Aleksievich, her Nobel Prize for literature received in 2015 certainly helped. Her Czech translations include *Vremia sekond khėnd* (2015 and 2017), *Chernobyl'skaia molitva. Khronika budushchego* (2002 and 2017) and *Cinkovye mal'chiki* (2016).
6. There have been four translations of Liudmila Ulitskaia's books, three of which have appeared within the last three years.
7. In his review of Lebedev's *Liudi avgusta*, Marián Pčola aptly labelled this effort a 'sarcophagus of memory' (Pčola 2017).
8. It should be added that this was far from the first translated work by the renowned author.
9. For instance, the eminent postmodernist Sasha Sokolov's novel *Mezhdu sobakoĭ i volkom* (2013 in Czech) did not receive a single review. On the other hand, other postmodern works such as *Pushkinskiĭ dom* (2014) by Andreĭ Bitov or *Leto v Badene* (2015) by Leonid Tsypkin received several reviews.
10. See the articles Welcome to Cold War II in *Foreign Policy* (2014) or Debunked: Why There Won't Be Another Cold War in *The National Interest* (2015), or alternatively the text by L. Solomon (2015).
11. *A2larm, Aktuálně.cz, Česká pozice, Český rozhlas, ČT, E15.cz, Echo24, EurActiv, Forum24, Hlídací pes, iDNES.cz, iHNED.cz, INFO.cz, LIDOVKY, Literární noviny, natoaktual.cz, Neviditelný pes, Novinky.cz, Reflex* and *Respekt*.
12. See http://inosmi.ru/magazines/?regions=&country=country_czech&language=lang_cz.
13. The ever more frequent attention to and intensifying politicisation of the Russian threat within the Czech media landscape is illustrated by a google.cz search of the term 'ruská hrozba' ('Russian threat') which yielded 534,000 hits (as of October 2017).
14. Compare the measures adopted by Czech government institutions to shield against Russian propaganda, such as the creation on 1 January 2017 of the

Centre Against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats under the Czech Ministry of Interior.

15. See, e.g., the study by Gregor and Vejvodová (2017) of manipulative techniques employed by selected Czech websites. According to Gregor and Vejvodová, pro-Kremlin propaganda is spread among others by the following news portals: *Aeronet.cz*, *AC24.cz*, *Parlamentní listy* (parlamentnilisty.cz), *Sputnik* (cz.sputniknews.com) and *Svět kolem nás* (svetkolemnas.info).
16. It is another question whether the media mainstream retains a decisive influence over public opinion at large. The results of the Czech parliamentary elections in October 2017 (https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/volby-2017) show that certain scepticism is warranted, due to the striking support for several populist or even more or less anti-system parties. Among other factors, their electorate was mobilised behind rhetoric of distrust towards mainstream channels of communication within Czech society, including major media outlets (public service media such as Česká televize/Czech Television or Český rozhlas/Czech Radio were no exception).
17. Securitisation theory further includes social and environmental sectors (Buzan et al. 1998, pp. 27–29); however, we proceeded on the assumption (correctly, as it turned out) that such contributions were not to be expected.
18. One example is the discourse on the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi. Most recently, there has been a passionate debate about the politicised background of the sanctions imposed by international authorities on Russian sportspersons, in response to a state-organised Russian doping program. The reason is that these debates concern sports that are very popular in the Czech Republic, such as track and field and the biathlon, to the effect that pro- and anti-Russian biases in the realm of sport have acquired the same intensity they normally exhibit in political debates.
19. We leave aside for the moment the weakening consensus on the limits to categorising someone or something as 'liberal' or 'liberally oriented'.

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CHAPTER 8

# Czech Images of Russian History as a Societal Security Issue

*Pavel Boček, Jan Holzer and Radomír Vlček*

Not only has the Czech Republic been the target of concerted Russian strategies emanating from various sides and sources and aimed against the European Union and NATO; but we can also still observe an eastern influence in the classroom […] Modern history as presented in schools is *de facto* a Soviet version of modern history and the teaching of Czech language and litera-

P. Boček
Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic
e-mail: pbocek@phil.muni.cz

J. Holzer (✉)
Department of Political Science and International Institute for Political Science, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic
e-mail: holzer@fss.muni.cz

R. Vlček
Institute of History, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Prague, Czech Republic
e-mail: 33152@mail.muni.cz



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> ture (national revival) is also affected by pro-Russian pan-Slavism to a certain extent. The enduring power of Soviet propaganda and the fact that Russians control modern history (George Orwell: Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past.) lays the groundwork for contemporary Russian influence operations of all kinds, hybrid strategy included.

This quotation comes not from an academic or political debate about contemporary Czech education, but from the 2017 annual report of the Security Information Service of the Czech Republic (BIS, the domestic intelligence agency), published in late 2018 (BIS 2018). Incidentally, the report consistently employs the concept of hybrid war, which, the BIS analysts unambiguously argue, Russia is waging against the Czech Republic. One of the non-military instruments that Russia allegedly finds suitable for this purpose is the enduring stratagem of teaching modern history in Czech schools—its form and its meaning. In other words, the report assumes that education generally has an overtly political dimension—and, implicitly, a security dimension as well.

It must be noted at the outset that there are no relevant data to support this claim by the Czech secret service: there is no proof that the contemporary teaching of history in Czech schools really is affected by something like Soviet propaganda. A serious study of the interpretations in teaching Czech modern history that would verify or falsify the claim that there is a tendency towards 'a Soviet version of modern history' is simply not available. Despite this, the report's publication immediately sparked a lively public debate, which continued earlier discussions about the didactic and pedagogic aspects of teaching modern history in particular: how much is being taught about the twentieth century (too much or too little)? Is it pertinent to criticise the emphasis on historical facts as being excessive, or the space afforded for interpretation and encouraging pupils' critical thinking as insufficient; or is it rather a decline in factual knowledge that is the issue? Why do we teach history? Is it to strengthen our collective identity through conveying an exclusive interpretation of the past, or is it to develop individual skills—in other words, abilities to think critically about history? And so on.

In any case, the BIS report has again recalled and further strengthened some general observations: first, that the notions entertained in contemporary Czech society about Russia are largely formed by perceptions of, and ways of knowing, its past; and second, that security's societal dimension

is no mere academic construct, but reflects deeply-rooted and naturally conflicting perceptions (on the level of interests and values, i.e. the classic categories of political science) of the political reality. The argument that 'children today are taught history rather as their grandparents were at a time when Czechoslovakia was occupied by the Soviet Union', is just another expression of the contemporary atmosphere of conflict in Czech society (for the political level of this, see Chapter 3). In the context of an analysis of the contemporary propaganda instruments used by 'modern authoritarian regimes' against democracies (Deibert 2015, pp. 68–71; Guriev and Treisman 2015, p. 4; Pomerantsev 2015, pp. 40–48), or 'fake news' (Gregor et al. 2018), the argument that some Czechs are susceptible to the propaganda disseminated by Russia because it evokes for them the pan-Slavic ideas they learned from their socialist schooling, gains gravity. It has been noted that 'history is a political subject', and the situation in Czech education has been called a 'cultural war', with a fundamental ideological clash not just ongoing but becoming increasingly heated (Karen 2018), and this fully supports the application of security terminology to this area. This is not a struggle about culture, but a dispute about the shape of society, historically concerned with religion above all (in Czechoslovakia, immediately after an independent state was declared in 1918, a struggle began for the separation of Church and state; cf. Hanuš and Husák 2018), but typically issuing in modern Europe into aggressively conducted ideological conflicts.

Modern, historically-focused Russian studies in the Czech Republic have created several influential images of the Russian past, presented them to Czech society and conveyed them through the teaching of history in schools and universities. These images have then been subject to intensive polemics that are not just academic, but broadly political. The apparently neutral objectives of teaching history and historiographic scholarship generally have always been subject to politically motivated interpretations in the country; petrified by power, these interpretations have even served as the basic building blocks for the legitimacy of specific political projects and regimes. The context for this was the international grounding of Czech national identity and its political expression in Czech or Czechoslovak statehood—these did not come as a matter of course, and remain contested.

In this sense, this chapter presents selected changing forms of Czech historical scholarship about Russian history, and the ways in which Czech politics sought sources for its own identity, its political contests and its legitimacy in the tradition of the Czech historiography of Russia. Included in

the chapter is a micro-study of Czech historiography's changing treatment of one classical figure from Russian history, Ivan the Terrible.

* * *

The roots of the Czech historiography of Russia reach deep into the past—for instance, the Italian humanist, Alessandro Guagnini, in Polish service, wrote a volume that was translated into Czech by Matyáš Hosio and published in 1590 by Daniel Adam of Veleslavín as *Moskevská kronika* (Veber 2009, p. 289). An intensive and systematic interest in Russia can only be dated to the first half of the nineteenth century, however. It was motivated by the revivalists' search for traits that the Czech and Russian cultures shared (consider the activities of the founder of Czech scholarly Slavic studies, Josef Dobrovský/1753–1829/; cf. Vlček 2004) and an understanding of the study of the Russian past as a necessary component in the creation of a comprehensive history of the Slavs and Slavonic mutuality (see e.g. Josef Jungmann/1773–1847/; cf. Kudělka 1995, pp. 18–49). In the second half of the nineteenth century, the need to acquaint the Czech public with the Russian past was still seen as a priority, whether it took the form of publishing overviews of Russian history (Ritter 1857; Píč 1889) or by comparing Russian history with world history (Kalousek 1880a, b). In these efforts, scientific rigour was evidently a secondary consideration (Vlček 2007).

The shift towards modern scholarship based on factual accounts and personal investigations occurred only later, in the early twentieth century, and the credit goes to the pupils of Jaroslav Goll (1846–1929), the founder of modern Czech historical science; in particular, Jaroslav Bidlo (1868–1937; see his *Dějiny Ruska v 19. Století* [History of Russia in the Nineteenth Century], in two volumes, published in 1908). Until World War I, however, interest in Russian history continued to be largely motivated by traditional Czech Slavophilia and Russophilia—consciously political instruments used in the contestations with the German-speaking element in the Czech lands.

The interwar period brought a change. The motives continued to be political: the search for a new identity for Czech (Czechoslovak) society and the efforts of the new independent state to establish itself in Europe in terms of geopolitics, culture and civilisation. Added to this was a new impulse: the Russian revolutionary cycle, peaking in the Bolshevik takeover, created both curiosity and a desire to imitate, as well as rejections and fears, among the Czechs. The historian Jan Slavík (1885–1978) created a truly outstanding scholarly foundation for the Czech tradition of crit-

ically evaluating the Russian revolutions of 1917 and the rise of Bolshevism. His *Kapitoly o Leninovi* [Chapters on Lenin] (Slavík 1924), *Studie k dějinám ruské revoluce I.–III.* [Studies on the History of the Russian Revolution, vols. I to III] (Slavík 1926–1928) and *Bolševismus v přerodu: historicko-sociologická studie* [Bolshevism in a Transformation: A Historical and Sociological Study] (Slavík 1932) understandably elicited numerous criticisms, on to which the polemical Czech positions on the events in the Soviet Union were projected (Bouček 2002). Leftist critiques, penned by Zdeněk Nejedlý and others, were dominant and sought to defend Lenin's actions (Křesťan 2012, p. 249). Russian historians—émigrés who lived in Czechoslovakia –responded critically, but from other positions, to defend the failed attempts to democratise by politicians of the Provisional Government in spring 1917 (Kovaljov 2012). Despite this, in the interwar period there was space for non-ideological and critical historiography of Russia, in a tradition created by Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850–1937) through his work *Rusko a Evropa. Studie o duchovních proudech v Rusku* [published in English as *The Spirit of Russia: Studies in History, Literature and Philosophy*], published in German in 1913 (the complete work in Czech was issued only in 1995; see Masaryk 1995). This tradition reverberated in Josef Macůrek's (1902–1991) *Dějiny východních Slovanů* [History of the Eastern Slavs] in three volumes, published after World War II—a work extraordinary for its time, as in describing the Russian past it emphasised the variety of its culture and civilisation and its geopolitical contexts (Macůrek 1947).

The liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Red Army in 1945 brought a tendency to express gratitude to the Soviet Union, whatever the price. For instance, before the May 1946 parliamentary elections, all of the political parties that were permitted to operate agreed that friendship with the Soviet Union would not be a matter for campaigning. But the February 1948 coup turned this idealised image into an important part of the comprehensive ideological doctrine of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ), according to which everything that happened in the Soviet Union was to serve as a model. The minister for education and KSČ member, Zdeněk Nejedlý (1878–1962), unambiguously applied this dogma to historiography in his article 'Komunisté jako nositelé pokrokových tradic' [Communists as the bearers of progressive traditions] (Nejedlý 1946). What this meant in practice was later expressed explicitly by the director of the Czechoslovak-Soviet Institute at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences (ČSAV) and chief ideologist of the 'normalisation' phase of Czechoslovak

politics (i.e. the post-1968 stage), Václav Král: 'Ideology, not facts, is what matters in historiography' (Král 1973).

Works by Soviet historians would become the groundwork for the communist image of Russian and Soviet history for the next 40 years. Initially, in the form of translations from Russian (e.g. Pankratovová 1953a, b, 1954); later, these were the models Czech historians were supposed to adhere to in their 'research' into Russia's past (e.g. Krandžalov 1963). This fact was guaranteed by a network of 'scientific' institutions: the Czechoslovak-Soviet Institute, founded in 1950, was first tasked with applying the results of Soviet science across disciplines; later, now part of the ČSAV, it was to undertake basic research with a focus on the Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian languages and literature, as well USSR history (Vlčková Kryčerová 2015). The ČSAV, founded in 1952, was closely modelled on the Soviet Academy of Sciences; and there were corresponding research and teaching departments at universities. In accordance with the command system of Party decision-making, their research focused on the celebration of the important anniversaries of the Russian revolutionary cycle. The independent study of sources was impossible at the time.

Though the 1960s brought some institutional changes (the ČSAV Slavic Institute was abolished, and some of its staff, together with historians from the Czechoslovak-Soviet Institute, were moved to the newly-created Institute for the History of European Socialist Countries) and partially opened the door for Czech and Slovak historians to undertake their own research of Russian and USSR history, access to the archives in the USSR remained minimal and valuable studies were rarely published (Reiman 1967). Nor was there much change thematically, with the phenomenon of Russian revolutions remaining the main focus. A brief period in the late 1960s allowed the publication of a two-volume synthetic work on Russian and Soviet history which, in the spirit of contemporary *Osteuropaforschung* trends, pointed out the lacunae in scholarship and the continuity of a state-political system from earliest Rus' up to that date that was depersonalised and denied the value of human life (Švankmajer et al. 1967; Sládek et al. 1967). After 1968, however, there were purges of personnel, and many Czech scholars of Russian history were forced to leave academia. The 1967 synthesis of Russian and Soviet history was described as an 'ideological diversion', and in 1977 a new, so-called 'red', history of Russia was published. It was nicknamed thus not just for its red cover, but also for its doctrinarism, imitating the official Soviet model (Herman and Kočí 1977). Only works on the earliest Russian history—and especially those published during the less

strict 1980s—managed to avoid ideology (Havlík 1987). This was a time when a new generation of historians was arriving at research institutions and universities, but their works were largely published only after 1989 (Boček 1995; Picková 1992, 2002).

November 1989, understandably, was a watershed. Political change quickly manifested itself in science. There were institutional changes: the ČSAV Czechoslovak-Soviet Institute in Prague and ČSAV Slavonic Studies Institute in Brno were abolished; the ČSAV Institute of Eastern European History was renewed, but then abolished in 1993, as were some departments in Czech universities dedicated to the historiography of Russia. The natural context for this was a contemporary worldwide decrease of interest in the history of Eastern Europe and in the study of the Russian language, which, furthermore, ceased to be an obligatory part of the curriculum in Czech elementary and secondary schools. The opening of the Russian archives, by contrast, brought a positive impulse. In an atmosphere of Czech politics and society's radical reorientation from East to West, which lasted for the next two decades, the Czech historiography of Russia was affected by a quantitative decrease and an individualisation. As the situation gradually stabilised, interesting discussions started to take place, with the main topics as follows:

- Overcoming the old focus on political history—as was exhibited even by an otherwise high quality, new, synthetic treatment of Russian history (Švankmajer et al. 1995; five more updated editions until 2010). In parallel, there was previously a lack of interest in intellectual, cultural, economic and social history, as well as the history of everyday life, in Russia;
- The application of modern thematic and methodological approaches, responding to new discussions in the USA, Germany and Austria during the second half of the 1990s about continuity and discontinuity in Russian history, and about the very meaning of Eastern European studies (see the discussion on *Kontinuita ruských dějin*, or The Continuity of Russian History, in the journal *Slovanský přehled* [Slavic Review]; cf. Franěk et al. 1999);
- The need for broader cross-disciplinary approaches and the inclusion of such questions as the causes of Russian literature's exceptional quality in the nineteenth century or the inspirational character of the Russian theological school during the early twentieth century;

see the discussion of Brno-based Russian scholars about the German historian Dan Diner's study *Two Easts: Europe Between the West, Byzantium and Islam* (published in Czech as Diner 2005), which was followed by interdisciplinary debates about Russia's past organised by the Institute for Slavonic Studies, Masaryk University, Brno (NR 2008–2018). Among other things, these debates spawned papers that preferred a view of the relations between Russia and Europe that focused on culture and civilisation (Pospíšil and Šaur 2012).

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, the images of Russia that Czechs received via scholarly works about the Russian and Soviet past elicited no passionate responses—let alone responses that would be security-relevant. This was true even when attractive topics—and ones that were crucial from the point of view of historical memory—were treated: see, for instance, the project 'Czechs in the Gulag', from which Czech society first learned the tragic fates of some Czech citizens in the USSR (Borák 2003, 2013). Also published were works responding to the current political situation in Russia: consider in particular the studies that sought to point out the historicity of the Russian-Chechen war in the context of traditional Russian expansionism (Procházková 2003; Souleimanov 2011). Generally, though, these works did not instigate polemics of any importance in Czech society, whether they were scholarly in character (Holzer 2001, 2004; Šmíd 2009; Vydra 2010; Komendová 2011; Putna 2015; Voráček et al. 2015; Nykl 2015, 2017; Šaur 2015; Vlček 2002, 2014; Davidová and David 2017; Šímová et al. 2017); aimed to bring scholarship to the general reader (Veber 2000, 2014, 2016; Litera 2009, 2013, 2015); or were travelogues (Sobotka 2007; Ryšavý 2008; Šimánek 2009).

This does not mean that were was no social reflection of historiography on Russia at all. Some translations, for instance, proved more controversial. At the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, crucial English-language books on Romanov and Soviet Russia by Richard Pipes (1998, 2004) and Martin Malia (2004) were translated. Paradigmatically, these were very different works. Despite this, they were both criticised for their allegedly archaic (and ideologically motivated) argument that there was a continuity between the tsarist and Soviet eras (Pipes) and of the totalitarianism concept (Malia), as well as for the false impression they created that these were still the best ways to interpret modern Russian history. And it is true that the key revisionist works—e.g. Sheila Fitzpatrick's volumes

on Russian revolution and the Stalinist era (Fitzpatricková 2017, 2018; similarly Clarková 2015, 2016)—were translated into Czech only later.

The situation with translations from Russian was similarly complicated. Initially, there was virtually no interest in books by Russian historians, literature on World War II themes excepted (e.g. Viktor Suvorov's books). Gradually, interest did appear, and there were translations into Czech (Chlevňuk 2008), but the works in question were not always trustworthy—nor were the translations always as good as they could have been—which opened a space for the twisting of facts and favouring of views that were not objective, or idealised certain topics. This went hand in hand with Russian historiography regaining its self-confidence after 2000, when it once again started to show a propensity to produce works that glorified Russian exceptionality and greatness.

Certainly, the 'Zubov Affair' was a breakthrough in the Czech popular reception of scholarly works on Russia. In 2014, during the 'Crimea crisis', Andrej Zubov, a professor at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), published an article, 'To už tady bylo' [We've seen this before] in the *Vedomosti* daily (Zubov 2014), in which he deplored Russia's military occupation of Crimea, comparing it to actions by Nazi Germany against its neighbours, including Czechoslovakia, whose territory of 'Sudetenland', largely inhabited by German speakers, Germany annexed. Zubov himself said that the purpose of his article was to establish how Russian society would respond to a piece that contradicted President Putin's official policy. The response was very swift indeed: Professor Zubov was dismissed from his post for 'immoral behaviour'.

Though some MGIMO colleagues and international academics came to Zubov's defence, there was, of course, no revocation of the decision to sack him. But the case resonated loudly in the Czech Republic, probably because he had used a comparison to which Czechs have historically been very sensitive (the 'Sudeten question'). And so, for instance, Masaryk University in Brno offered Zubov a professorship (which he politely declined) and his work on twentieth-century Russian history was translated into Czech (Zubov 2014–2015). What matters most is that, after some time, the Czech public once again showed a certain ability to mobilise in response to an event of this kind.

And it was precisely about the assessment of the Russian annexation of Crimea that a veritable media war was unleashed in the Czech Republic, which continues to be waged (see Chapter 3 for more detail). Part of this has been the translating and publishing, by little known houses, of propaganda

works of Russian provenience, defending Russian interests (Tulajev 2017). By contrast, Czech historians' efforts to provide a more comprehensive picture (Ulbrechtová et al. 2015; Ulbrechtová 2018) have been attacked on the internet (see Trinkewitz 2018). Conspiracy theories claiming that the West and its cabals are largely behind Russia's failures have the same aim and a similar form. The classic Slavophile position has also been revitalised; claiming that the Czechs understand Russians better than the West does, and hence it is fitting for the Czechs to balance out the a priori critical positions of the West—a traditional rival to Russia (Rybas 2017, 2018b).

In recent years, the opportunities to discuss these issues in the Czech Republic have become more complicated. This can be illustrated by the activities of the Czech-Russian Commission of Historians and Archivists, which has been holding regular working sessions since 1995. Initially it was tasked to make archival collections reciprocally available to scholars from both sides. Gradually the commission has also started to organise thematic conferences at two-year intervals—a thankless task at the moment. At the most recent Czech-Russian forum in June 2018, the Russians tried to convince the Czechs—contrary to their experiences—that there were no limitations to the availability of archival materials except for those embargoed for a period by law, and that 98% of the material in Russian state archives is digitised and hence easily available over the internet (https://www.info.cz/cesko/rusove-prijeli-na-forum-do-prahy-jsme-v-soku-slyseli-od-ceskych-historiku-kvuli-prekrucovani-dejin-31814.html). When a conference is organised by Russians—usually in collaboration with the Russian Centre of Science and Culture in Prague—it tends to have an obvious goal determined in advance, and controlled discussions. The Czechs, then, tend to make efforts to balance out the situation and to consistently verify opinions that seem uncritical or unaccountably adulatory (see the activities of the Boris Nemtsov Academic Centre for the Study of Russia, attached to the Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague).

The presentation of Russian scholarly works in Czech translation is similarly complicated. For instance, in May 2017, a book by the very popular and prolific Russian historian and journalist, Sviatoslav Rybas (born 1946), *Spiknutí mocných* [Conspiracy of the powerful], was launched at a book fair in Prague. The original was published by a prestigious Moscow house, Molodaya gvardiya. The monograph seeks to explain the causes of the 1917 Russian revolution based on a conspiracy theory involving Western powers (Rybas 2017). The Czech historians of Russia, who were invited by

the organisers to this presentation, were later described in Rybas's memoir as incompetent and wrong-headed in explaining Russian history (Rybas 2018b, pp. 77–78). A similar approach, in which not just Russian but also world history is explained one-sidedly, is apparent in the author's other books that have been translated into Czech (Rybas 2014, 2018a).

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Evidently, then, the study of Russian history has never been a neutral, purely academic matter for the Czechs—and nor is it today. Rather, it is a phenomenon that traditionally has had important political and ideological connections and impacts, and presently exhibits a renewed capacity to mobilise. The Czech domestic intelligence agency report about the hybrid campaign waged by Russia against the Czech Republic thus confirms how important and research-relevant the societal dimension of security is today.

We believe that if a controversy about the *political* goals of school education, about teaching history, about historiographical research and about the study of history has become a focus of contemporary Czech society, then this provides important testimony about the condition of this society today. If questions are formulated such as: *Which truth should be taught? Which truth should be examined?* Then the argument suggests itself that Czech society is lacking a fundamental consensus about its ideas and values, and that political and ideological objectives—and hopes—are being inserted into education and science.

The lines of conflict are, of course, not always unambiguous and evident. In the first, there stands on one side a progressive belief that we must definitely resist all efforts to build a national historical identity via mechanisms of 'transmitting the past' or 'collective memory'. From this position, the study of history has no other goal than to develop critical thinking, a competence that will produce citizens actively involved in managing public affairs. This is the way in which we can equip our young people (our basic hope) with defences against propaganda of all sorts. To do this, we must 'radically and revolutionarily transform classic teaching' (Karen 2018). In this line of conflict, those on the other side allegedly consist of an alliance of authoritarians, for whom an independent, critically thinking, active individual is supposedly undesirable; these authoritarians, the argument goes, see in the study of history an instrument for building ossified collective entities that suppress diversity, repeating instead the alleged 'objective historical truths' that they themselves learned at school by memorising textbooks

by rote, and describing the story of the Czech nation as a narrative of 'us versus them'.

The second tension—the second line of conflict—is more subtle. Those participating in this dispute would agree that some interpretation of history ought to be reproduced or preferred. But which one? Some in the Czech non-profit sector and memory institutions (for instance, some scholars at the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, founded in 2008) see the 'liberal-democratic' interpretation of Czech (and also Russian and European) history as insufficiently rooted. This interpretation is supposed to glorify the fall of communism and post-1989 developments, climaxing with Czech accession to supranational structures, in particular the European Union. At present, this liberal interpretation is supposedly confronted with a 'conservative counterrevolution', allegedly defending the still-influential, traditional Czech romantic-national story, paradoxically, in a version adapted to the needs of the communist regime by Zdeněk Nejedlý, a historian and ideologue (see above). This story, indeed, is the story that the influential generations (obviously, the older ones) of Czech society encountered at school and at university (before 1989, every university student in Czechoslovakia had to pass a course called something along the lines of *A History of the International Labour Movement and of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia*). And it is precisely these segments of society, the BIS report argues, that are today most affected by conspiracy theories and the influence of Russian propaganda. If we admit that the old Soviet and contemporary Russian state propaganda have many characteristics and objectives in common—the idea even suggests itself, of presenting Russian and Soviet history in a retrograde order, i.e. going chronologically back from Crimea, Putin etc.—the conflict is self-evident.

The tradition of Russian studies in the Czech Republic is rich and dates back more than two centuries. It has produced distinctive personalities, such as Jaroslav Bidlo and Jan Slavík; it has integrated a generation of Russian émigré historians, who, having left their country, found a new home in the interwar Czechoslovakia; it has been involved in building and defending the communist regime after 1948, for the ideology of which the relationship with Russia and the Soviet Union was as important as Marxist-Leninist slogans; and despite this it has maintained a certain continuity of free research, upon which it could follow up after 1989 (the most recent product being the 2017 *Dějiny Ruska* [History of Russia]; Vydra et al. 2017). Today, however, Russian studies in the Czech Republic have once again become involved in a particular tension that is currently intensifying in

Czech society, which is exceptionally sensitive to topics linked with Russia, its history and the history of Czech-Russian relations. Seeking a balance between adaptation to current scholarly tendencies in terms of the choice of topics and methods; efforts to restore credibility to historiography in the eyes of the Czech public; and responding to political-security visions, which their political proponents base on references to scholarly works (both Czech and Russian), will probably represent a long-term and complicated objective for Czech scholars of Russia.

## A Micro-Study: The Image of Ivan the Terrible in Czech Historiography

The history of Russia is full of events, figures and phenomena, the study and knowledge of which have provided the basis for constructing universal historiographical—and indeed, broadly social-scientific—concepts and ideas. Could we, for instance, imagine the development of modern humanities and social studies without an analysis of the Russian revolution or Soviet communism? Examples that have become iconic not just for understanding Russia itself; not solely general or European history; but the genesis of humankind broadly, are, however, also provided by earlier Russian history. A prominent figure in this respect is Tsar Ivan the Terrible (from 1533, as Ivan IV Vasilyevich, the Grand Prince of Moscow; he became the tsar in 1547).

In Russia, Ivan is among the historical figures that attract constant attention. An entirely acceptable simplification can summarise how he is seen in two myths. The liberal myth says: with Ivan, a spawn of hell, a half-insane maniac, a bloody criminal, a despotic personality came to the Russian throne—and organically embodied Russia. He suppressed any green shots of freedom and independent thinking, destroying even the most minor democratic elements in Russian society of his time. He destroyed all truth in the Russian Church, which slavishly bent its back during his reign. A deep chasm appeared between Russia and the West; complicating potential dialogue with Europe and limiting the chances of European culture being adopted in Russia. He perfectly embodied the tyranny of the Russian state.

By contrast, the cultish and protective version of the myth claims: this powerful tsar was a great strategist who always led Russian troops to victory; he was the builder and protector of the Russian lands. He consistently defended Russian distinctiveness from the dangers arriving in many forms from Europe, which he prevented from controlling Russia and from break-

ing her up intellectually. He had to sweep omnipresent betrayal from every corner of his empire. As a true Orthodox believer, he always unfalteringly defended the foundations of the true faith. His sanctification is necessary for the sake of the Holy Rus', which he was building.

When matters are escalated to such a situation, where space for historical truth disappears (Volodichin 2018, p. 330), we believe that it makes sense to dedicate a micro-study to the figure of Ivan. It is focused on how Czech historiography has treated those aspects of his personality and era that continue to be alive today as specific images and symbols, and which are used by Czechs to understand contemporary Russia, and even to defend particular political-security arguments.

The turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was a critical point in the history of Eastern Europe. When the power of the Mongol Khans collapsed, two forces vied for hegemony in the region: the Jagiellonian Polish-Lithuanian Union, which developed a monarchy where the estates played an important role (estates monarchy), and Muscovy, which tended towards autocracy, as formulated by Orthodox Church leaders in their considerations of the new ideological grounds for Russian foreign and domestic policy. Part of this was a conception of the Grand Prince as a symbol and guarantor of the Grand Principality of Moscow and its successful development (Florja 2009, p. 99). The dangers posed by the Turks was a secondary dimension of the contemporary geopolitical constellation. Although they did not pose an immediate threat to Muscovy, they did force the leaders of the 'Latin' Europe to see a potential partner in Muscovy. Thus, after many years of mutual isolation, two worlds started to seek a path towards each other—yet there was a barrier between them created by their different hierarchies of values.

There were many complications, starting with how the Europeans saw the figure of the Grand Prince of Moscow, his role and titles. The attempts to integrate him into the traditional system of relations among rulers in the 'Latin' part of Europe failed, whether these concerned the marriage negotiations between the widowed Habsburg Emperor Maximilian I and one of the daughters of Grand Prince Ivan III, or the repeatedly-made offer of a regal investiture. The records of the January 1489 negotiations with Nicholas Poppel, the envoy sent by Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III, put it clearly: 'By the grace of God we and our forefathers have been sovereigns of our land from aboriginal times; we have been invested with power by God and do not need investiture by anyone else' (Florja 2009, p. 6; English wording adopted from George Vernadsky, *A History of Russia*,

Yale University Press, 1969, Vol. 4, p. 92). Thus, Ivan III made it quite clear that he would not give up any of the principles from which he and his Muscovy had developed, and that he would not accommodate the 'Latin' world (*Iděja Rima v Moskve*, p. 5). Indeed, the contemporary humanist literature makes it clear how in 'Latin' Europe the positions and responses of Moscow rulers were misconstrued, and how substantial was the influence of the Poles, who in their works misinterpreted the image of the Moscow rulers as it suited their interests (Guagnini 1590, p. 154ff).

Ivan III's successor was Ivan the Terrible, a figure who symbolises the start of a connection between the figure of the Russian ruler and the Russian state. By having himself crowned tsar in 1547, Ivan made it clear that he wanted to be an equal partner to the Roman Emperor, i.e. a ruler of the highest order, an heir to Emperor Augustus. In his own interpretation of the Russian past, he created an ancient, sacred and inviolable basis for Muscovy as the only true Christian country in the world (Nitsche 1991), standing on the twin pillars of Orthodoxy and *samoderzhavstvo* (autocracy). With the blessing of a 1551 Church Council, the tsar became responsible to God alone for his actions. To his subjects, he was a 'strict but just' *gosudar* (lord), who guaranteed their security; they unreservedly respected and obeyed him in order not to anger God to whom he was responsible and who entrusted the subjects into his hands; and who, finally, was respected and honoured by other rulers. Gradually his subjects would learn to see the tsar as a model for their everyday lives, as an exemplar of how a true Orthodox Christian ought to behave and act.

Jaroslav Bidlo was the first Czech to approach Ivan the Terrible from a scholarly perspective. Indeed, the formulations of most classical arguments about (and images of) Ivan that Czechs continue to apply analogically to contemporary Russia to this day, can be traced back to his texts:

- Ivan as a barbarian who does not know how to behave (consider the influence of his childhood and youth on his later actions), who views the 'Latin' world as inferior and schismatic and is convinced of his own personal as well as general Russian exceptionalism and superiority (Bidlo 1938, pp. 506–520);
- An understanding of Ivan's reforms as having as their exclusive aim to centralise the empire and increase its military power, especially after losing the Livonian War;

- The penetration into Siberia as colonisation (in accordance with the opinions of V. O. Ključevskij) and the 'genetic' trait of the development of Muscovy;
- The tsar's ultra-conservative orientation, responding to the pernicious influences of Western sectarianism (here the inspiration by classical Russian historiography is evident: see authors such as M. A. D'jakonov, V. Je. Valďěnberg, A. A. Kizevetter, P. N. Miljukov and M. N. Speranskij).

Bidlo has also conveyed a unique contemporary testimony about Ivan the Terrible's thought, as provided by Jan Rokyta, a priest of the Bohemian Brethren (Bidlo 1903). Their 1570 disputation showed that the hopes that the leaders of European reformation had for the first Russian tsar (i.e. that he could be a potential ally against the Turks) and which appeared in the first writings describing the situation in Muscovy (Giovio 1525; Fabri 1526; Campensis 1543) were unfounded (Marčalis 2009, pp. 276–316). Most importantly, Bidlo was the first Czech historiographer to articulate not just the central issue of Ivan's reign, but of Russia broadly: would an autocracy, or an estates model, establish itself in Russia? And Bidlo's position is as follows: since Ivan, there has been in Russia a dominant, and permanently anchored, centralised conception of the state, resulting in autocracy and preferring the subjugation of all potential opponents; in Ivan's case, this meant the persecution of the *boyarstvo* in particular and the removal of 'oppressing claims by the upper nobility' in general, as well as the fruitless efforts to curb the influence of the *mestnichestvo*, a system under which senior state functions and offices were occupied according to the noble descent of the candidates, or the functions held by their ancestors (Bidlo 1938, p. 508).

After World War II, Josef Macůrek offered Czech society a different vision of both Russia and Ivan the Terrible. Macůrek departed from Bidlo—his teacher—in his fundamental approach to Eastern European history: he rejected the division of Europe into two parts according to religion, and considered Russia a part of Europe. In this respect, Macůrek's contemplation of the possibility that a united Slavic state could have arisen in the 1560s is interesting: it was formulated not on the basis of ideological premises, but historical facts. He was nevertheless aware of the insoluble problem of Orthodoxy, which prevented the acceptance of Ivan's candidature for the Polish royal throne.

Macůrek thought Ivan the Terrible a capable statesman, who had a clear notion of his rule from the age of sixteen. He presented him as a symbol and a guarantor of the Russian state's existence. He involved that state in the system of international relations, but, above all, consolidated it internally. For that reason, Macůrek, for instance, saw *oprichnina* positively, as an agrarian revolution necessary at the time. (This was a division of the state into two parts, a *zemshchina* traditionally managed by land authorities led by the Boyar Duma [council], and an*oprichnina*, directly owned by the tsar; this was a step taken against the power ambitions of the boyar-princely aristocracy.) Macůrek does consider the variant under which Muscovy would be run as an estates system; he believes that centralisation was inevitable under the circumstances, even if it meant, for instance, subjugation of the Church to state power (Macůrek 1947, p. 156). Ivan, according to Macůrek, saw Orthodoxy as an ideology Muscovy could not do without. Ivan expected unambiguous support from the Church, as shown by sources describing the installation of Metropolitan Afanasii. Macůrek thus contributed to the creation of another traditional—and partially simplifying and misleading—image of Russia among the Czechs, that remains effective and in use to this day: that is, the subjection of spiritual power in Russia to the secular power. For that matter, it is contemporary Russia where the Orthodox Church organises and funds exhibitions that explain the most recent phase of Russian history in a way that fundamentally distorts the role of the USSR in international politics, and tendentiously describes the positions of the Soviet regime towards the Church and its leaders (http://www.evestnik.ru/reports/rossiya_moya_istoriya_2016_9721/; accessed 11 January 2019).

Bohuslav Ilek enriched the Czechs with a Marxist interpretation of Ivan the Terrible and an edition of his correspondence. He appreciated Ivan as a strong ruler who was instrumental in centralising the territory and was able to establish a strong central government. Under the influence of Soviet historiography, Ilek interpreted *oprichnina* positively, that it was necessary for Ivan to exercise his power, and assessed Ivan as a cruel but systematic and coherent ruler. Finally, with his notion that Ivan considered Moscow the heir to Byzantium and himself a leading Christian ruler (Ilek 1957, p. 17), Ilek introduced Czechs to an imprecise view of Russian history, one that continues to appear in scholarly and popular works. In reality, the Muscovites did not consider themselves heirs to Byzantium, because they believed that their civilisation had its own, independent roots. For them, Byzantium was a negative exemplar of an empire that God had delivered

into the hands of the infidels; to serve them as inspiration in the sense that they would ask themselves—and answer—the question of how to avoid the same fate.

By contrast, when in the 1960s Vladimír Hostička described Ivan's rule, he sought the logic of contemporary events not just in the characteristics of his personality. He returned to the question of the role and influence of the Council of the Land (*zemskii sobor*), which he saw as an institution of the estates enjoying a remarkable degree of independence (Švankmajer et al. 1967, p. 100). He considered *boyars* and princes not as opposition, but as a force that cared about Muscovy's prosperity. Nor did the Church support the power of the state as a matter of course for example, the positions of the *osiflyans*—conservative supporters of Iosif Volotsky—were not in agreement with those held by the state power, as is often simply asserted in the literature (Švankmajer et al. 1967, p. 85). Hostička thus revived interest in the fundamental question of Russian history, viz. whether the dominant actor would be a hereditary monarch invested by God, or the Council of the Land. And Hostička believed that Muscovy had a chance to evolve a specific form of estates system. However, by superordinating his personal security to state security (see *oprichnina* or, for instance, the devastation of Novgorod in 1570), Ivan established his own absolute power, based on violence, replaced law with his own will, and multiplied the cruelty of the era by the cruelty of his character. He created a model for the behaviour and actions of a Russian ruler. We believe that this is the most objective image of Ivan the Terrible that Czech historiography has ever produced.

Milan Švankmajer, Hostička's coeval, chose an interesting approach: he compared the situation in Muscovy with that in sixteenth-century Western Europe, thus following upon the interwar-era discussions about the position of Russia in Europe. He emphasised that Muscovy emerged out of the 'contact and contention' with the Tatars, who put the stamp of their barbarism on it (Švankmajer et al. 2010, p. 41). Drawing on Hostička, he recalls the fork between autocracy and a specific Russian estates model, which the *oprichnina* 'resolved' to the benefit of the autocratic monarchy (Švankmajer et al. 2010, p. 55). Švankmajer's view of Ivan's piety and personal responsibility to God—he was the first Czech historian to note it—is interesting and novel. With brilliant attention to detail (see his description of ideas concerned with Ivan's person, his personal responsibility to God, and the imperial role of Russia, which Ivan had embodied in the design of Saint Basil's Cathedral), Švankmajer managed to express one of the funda-

mental premises of Ivan's thinking (Švankmajer et al. 2010, pp. 49–50). By contrast, his interpretation of Filofei's well-known idea of Moscow as the Third Rome is skewed, even tendentious (Švankmajer et al. 2010, p. 44). By lifting it out of contemporary context, Švankmajer gave the idea an imperial dimension, favoured today not just in popular works, but also by some historians and theoreticians of international relations.

Martin C. Putna endorses the critical, liberal view of Ivan's rule, as described above. Despite his admirable knowledge of literature, he provides an image that is constructed one-sidedly and his opinion is predetermined. Putna is unaware of the context of Muscovy of the time. He does not know about Nil Sorskii or Zosimaand dismisses Iosif Volotsky with only a few brief comments. What he misses is the contemporary boom of social thought—unusual for Russia—that was not stimulated from the outside. Hence also his misleading assessment of Ivan the Terrible's 'second life'—i.e. reflections upon him today (especially the tendency to canonise Ivan; cf. Serpuchov 2006)—here merely noting Vladimir Sorokin's books will not do.

The most recent interpretation of Ivan the Terrible's rule, penned by Jitka Komendová and Michal Řoutil, combines controversial insights (e.g. the preservation of the position of the upper aristocracy or the alleged enslavement of the Russian Church; see Vydra et al. 2017, p. 70) with interesting ones (for example, the belief that the tsar's personality can be better understood through an analysis of the ideas of predestination and being the chosen one, than by mere references to his disrupted mental health; unfortunately this idea is not fully developed: Vydra et al. 2017, pp. 65–69). It is a pity that, though this work is rich in information, there was not enough space to explain to the contemporary Czech reader why Ivan's canonisation remains topical in Russia.

In any case: in its repeated reflections upon the figure of Ivan the Terrible and sixteenth-century Russia—an epoch apparently so distant temporally that it cannot speak to the present—Czech historiography has created several stereotypes that rank among the favourite tools used by Czech society to respond to current events in Russia. These include the arguments about the typical and unmistakable personality traits of Russia's rulers; about the irreplaceability of aggressive methods for dealing with opponents; about the subordination of spiritual power to temporal power; about the imperial 'genes' of Russian foreign policy; and finally, about an overarching political science thesis that autocracy is the only functional political arrangement in

Russia. The present micro-study shows that these arguments can both be verified and falsified, depending on the chosen interpretation and author. Paradoxically, the figure of Ivan the Terrible can be seen as a memento, which alerts us to the fact that structural and institutional characteristics, however brilliantly described, do not on their own allow us to understand history and explain it objectively, unless they are supplemented with seeking the answer to the question of personal responsibility of every historical actor to God—and this question must be investigated by both professional and amateur historians.

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CHAPTER 9

# In the Shadow of Russia: The Czech Republic as a Small Central European State

*Jan Holzer and Miroslav Mareš*

More than fifty years ago, on 1 August 1968, the Czech writer Milan Kundera, then already of world renown, published an article, *Malý a velký* [The Little and the Big], in the magazine *Literární listy*. In it, Kundera argued against the contemporary ideological slogan of the communist regime, which claimed that the relationship between Czechoslovakia (the little) and the Soviet Union (the big) was that of equals and brothers. In the conclusion of his article, Kundera wrote: 'For a small nation, the question of existence and non-existance is always open. Sovereignty is its eternal effort, duty and struggle. Only that nation which passionately desires to live on its own terms, in its own way, only such a proud nation, for whom only an independent life is worth living, deserves to live and to be; and only such a nation endures.' A mere three weeks after its publication, Kundera's

J. Holzer (✉) · M. Mareš
Department of Political Science, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic
e-mail: holzer@fss.muni.cz

M. Mareš
e-mail: mmares@fss.muni.cz



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nation's efforts to preserve its sovereignty would be put through another major trial: the Soviet leadership responded to the 'Prague Spring' aggressively, by ordering armies of the Warsaw Pact to invade Czechoslovakia.

The heart of Kundera's argument remains remarkably clear and lasting even today, five decades after 1968 and three decades after the disintegration of the communist bloc; and despite the fact that there is no more bipolar division of the world, and that today, the independent existence of nation states is not seen as an arrangement with good prospects for peaceful relations between European nations. Despite all of this, notions such as national security and national interest remain meaningful political watchwords that offer a capacity to mobilise; and as such, it makes sense to use them as analytical variables. In this context, we have asked ourselves to identify the possible current security threats and risks that follow from the Czech Republic's relationship with one key—and undoubtedly active—actor in European security: the Russian Federation.

The choice of Russia as the subject of this book and as a potential threat stems from the historical experience of the Czech political community. Indeed, in the second half of the twentieth century, Russia replaced Germany as the main external mover in the processes that took place on Czech territory: first as the liberator from the Nazi Third Reich (1945), soon thereafter (1948) as the provider of ideology and power to that segment of the Czechoslovak political community that installed the communist regime, and finally (1968) as an intransigent aggressive power. The effect of these events was that in the 1970s and 1980s Soviet Russia 'enjoyed' a particularly contradictory reputation among the Czechs and Slovaks: from enduring ideological adoration (a gradually weakening and, in the end, decidedly minority position) to hatred or contempt (a gradually strengthening and, in the end, decidedly majority position).

The focus of this book on Russia as a source of threats and risks for the Czech Republic has, however, largely observed the Russian state in its post-Soviet phase and considered first of all the activities of its current authoritarian regime, personified by Vladimir Putin, its president/prime minister. And there is no question that he is interested in the Czech Republic and the Central European region broadly.[1] Current developments even lead some observers to a conviction that there is a risk of overall geopolitical reorientation of the Czech Republic (and other Central European countries) from the West to the East (http://ceskapozice.lidovky.cz/liberalove-predstavili-scenare-ktere-cechy-povedou-do-zahuby-pup-/tema.aspx?c=A181221_110549_pozice-tema_houd). That is, a risk of another change

in the foreign policy preferences of the Czech Republic—preferences that, following the events of 1989 (the fall of the communist totalitarian regime), 1999 (accession to NATO) and 2004 (accession to the EU) seemed to be definitively pro-Western, firmly anchored and unchangeable. For that reason, this book could ask the dramatic question, which reflects realistic conceptions of concern or fear that we have endorsed: Should we fear Russia today?

Since the mid-2000s, Russia has acted with increasing self-confidence in international relations, and has been assertive and in some cases even aggressive against countries which it saw as hostile, or as temporarily controlled by its antagonists; and this could be the case of the Czech Republic too. This manner of acting is a response to a subjectively perceived loss of power since the break-up of the USSR, caused by the overall decline in the economy and politics in Russia during the 1990s. This has influenced the limited ability of the country to exercise a foreign policy and has justified the West's rejection of Russian interests during the twenty years after the fall of communism (NATO enlargement, the bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, the declaration of Kosovan independence in 2008, the USA's withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty etc.). During this period, Russia gradually lost influence over territories which it saw as its strategic fore field (Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and the Balkans). However, once its economy started to improve and the West was exhausting itself in the Near and Middle East conflicts with Islamists, Russia decided to regain its position of power. The breakthroughs in this respect were the Russo-Georgian war of 2008 and especially the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the expansion into the Donbas from 2014 onwards.

Today, Russia aims to secure a position that will allow it to implement its world power ambitions, without having its territory jeopardised by approaching enemies, or its internal system of power threatened (Diec 2012, p. 50). The rejection of the norms of international law has become an important characteristic of this assertiveness. When reprimanded for its actions, Russia points to actions undertaken by others (the West), which from the Russian point of view are in turn seen as infringements of international law (such as pointing to the recognition of Kosovo when references to the Crimea annexation are being made). Russia also rejects the ideological, human-rights based premises of legitimacy of the world system that was established after the Cold War. What is more, external aggression serves to legitimise Putin's regime, which, by pursuing a foreign policy of a great power, is able to dampen the dissatisfaction of many Russians with the

economy, crime, corruption and nepotism in their country. These negative phenomena are simply blamed on external actors and influences. Furthermore, in its contemporary expansion Russia draws on some historical traditions, but also has some innovations at its disposal, especially an ideological mix based on Eurasianism (and potentially pan-Slavism), which combines the imperial legacy of the USSR with the protection of 'traditional values' against 'liberal and neo-Marxist decadence', and with safeguarding social guarantees (with reference to the social policy of socialist bloc countries before 1989).

For our analysis, we have chosen the concept of a *hybrid campaign*. Its advantage is that, in the study of disproportions and conflicts between a small/medium-sized Central European country and an Eastern European great power with Europe-wide/global ambitions, it does not ignore classic hard security issues, while including a broad spectrum of the non-military aspects of their relationship. These are crucial for understanding both contemporary Czech–Russian relations and the general security situation in the Eastern and Central European regions.

For this reason, our book has offered a description of the *securitisation* of issues such as migration from Russia to the Czech Republic, the influence operations conducted by the secret services, the influence of Russian-speaking organised crime groups, the strategically conceived contexts of economic relations, energy policy and, last but not least, a number of societal topics such as the changing perceptions of Russia in literary and historical narratives and images. We have demonstrated that, in recent years, Czechs have shown an intense interest in Russia, and that this topic is able to mobilise them, especially since the beginning of the armed conflicts in Crimea and eastern Ukraine. From the time these events started, it is right to seek the correct terminology to describe Russian activities vis-à-vis the Czech Republic which unfolded against the background of mutable declarations of state-security interests by both Moscow and Prague.

Although the Russian strategy described above, which aims to weaken Russia's adversaries, is primarily aimed against the loci of power in Western Europe (Berlin, Paris and London) and the USA, smaller countries are also affected by it, specifically those in Central Europe and especially the Czech Republic. Obviously, Russia and the Czech Republic are not in a state of war, and military force is not used; but that force is present on the Russian side, and the Czech Republic is well aware of this. The Czech Republic's strategic position and divided political spectrum (in terms of geostrategic and ideological orientations) create a suitable opportunity for Russia to

shift its sphere of influence. Russia takes advantage of the polarisation in Czech society and politics to support its allies in Czech domestic politics and in the local Russian-speaking diaspora. For instance, the rides of the Night Wolves biker gang in recent years have had a demonstrable effect. Traditional narratives, too, play an important role; a topical example is provided by the anti-Banderite discourse, used to delegitimize not just one internal current within Ukrainian politics, but, by extension, all pro-Western actors in Central and Eastern European politics and, of course, also their partners in the West.

The definition of a hybrid campaign is not entirely settled yet. Referencing Christopher S. Chivvis's work on the characteristics of the Russian hybrid campaign (Chivvis 2017), this book has tested the concept by describing how Russian actors currently seek to achieve their strategic objectives in the Czech Republic.

The book has not focused on all the points made by Chivvis. We have not addressed his point 1, which brought attention to increasingly more intensive use of information operations in both classic and new media and on social networks, and phenomena such as trolling, hoaxes, fake news and conspiracy theories. A study of these would constitute a separate (and extensive) sub-discipline of security studies, with its own specific terminology and methodology. We intend to dedicate another book to this topic.[2] Nor did this book assess in detail attacks in cyberspace, espionage or secret operations (Chivvis's points 2 and 3)—i.e. phenomena that the concept of a hybrid campaign reflects, but which are close to the traditional, essential instruments of war. Our focus on the political, economic and social aspects of contemporary Czech–Russian relations might therefore seem a modest choice. But it has allowed us to analyse these phenomena in greater depth, and ultimately to enlarge the set of characteristics of a hybrid campaign.

As far as the economy is concerned, we had to note—somewhat surprisingly—that Russian influence and pressure in bilateral economic relations is weak or absent. Although in recent years the policy of Putin's Russia has once again preferred political interests over economic ones, the Czech Republic does not seem to be an object of Russian approaches that use the economy to reach political goals. It is no accident that Chapter 5 of this book is entitled 'Business as Usual' and notes the absence of evidence for politically motivated pressure by Russia targeting Czech economy. This, understandably, does not mean that such pressures are entirely absent, but rather that they are of limited relevance in the context of the overall picture of the Czech economy.

The same is essentially true of the energy sector. The security of oil and natural gas supplies ceased to be a relevant issue when the Czech Republic diversified its import portfolio and transit routes in 1996–1997. This increased Czech energy security and the two subsectors ceased to be seen as potentially vulnerable. In gas as well as oil supplies, all of the actors involved today essentially behave as market actors. There is no substantial ongoing project in the Czech Republic in either of the subsectors, where concern over Russian influence might arise. Czechs see the new Russian gas pipeline construction (Nord Stream 2) through an economic lens, even though it is a project often discussed in security studies and one seen in Poland, for instance, solely from a security perspective. Thus, the Czechs believe that in the natural gas and oil sectors, there is no opportunity for such activities as have been mentioned in connection with the hybrid war concept.

Hybrid threats have been articulated to a limited extent in the Czech nuclear sector. One can observe individuals who publicly promote Rosatom as the best choice for the construction of new nuclear power generating capacities (most notably, the Czech president, Miloš Zeman, and František Hezoučký, an adviser to the industry minister); involvement of people linked with the Kremlin in negotiations about the construction of plants (Klímová 2018); and the current rhetoric concerned with the knowledge and experience of the expert community with Russian (Soviet) technology, according to which the MIR 1200 reactor is supposedly the best choice. Nonetheless, a combination of strong regulation of the sector in technological and safety terms and Czech independence from a specific supplier of fuel limits the options for hybrid threats in the nuclear sector. However, it can be expected that the situation will change in the future in connection with the plans to construct new capacity currently being considered. One may thus expect increased Russian interest, and hence also growth in their activities.

At present, the Czech situation offers the most alarming data in connection with Chivvis's 6—political influence. The presence of Russia as an abstract symbol on the Czech political scene has been evident, and growing, in recent years. Those inclined to promote a policy of accommodating Russian interests are increasingly active, although specific influences are hard to prove. The most important is the circle around President Miloš Zeman, as shown by a diachronic comparative analysis of Czech presidents' foreign policy discourses in Chapter 3. Another important actor is the communist camp, a traditional and reliable supporter of Russian interests. Then there are various party factions (including the governing Social

Democrats); criminal structures and gangs, often connected with intelligence services and businesses; non-profit organisations; associations; and individuals, whose motivations tend to be a consequence of their relations with particular Russian actors. The occurrence of these proxies (Chivvis' point 5) in the Czech Republic has been documented in Chapter 6.

What is of the essence is the general context, or even the anticipation of this new situation. We mean the Czech political community's uncertainty about its future foreign-policy direction. The current Czech security dilemma consists of the following. On the one hand, there are political actors who see Russia, its regime and its foreign policy as a credible security threat and as a risk to the security guarantees that the Czech Republic has obtained over the past two decades via its NATO and EU membership. On the other hand, there are the political actors who see Russia as a desirable alternative to Czech Republic's present attachment to the West; and who have a fond view not just Russian foreign policy, but also its authoritarian regime. With reference to the results of the most recent Czech parliamentary and presidential elections in 2017 and 2018, there is arguably a remarkable balance between these two political camps in terms of their ability to pull in voters. A pragmatic position, which can envisage cooperation with Russia in international and domestic security, without potentially toying with Russian authoritarianism, is a third, minority option.

This politicisation, or securitisation, of Russia in the Czech society can be proven and is also manifested in spheres that were not analysed by Chivvis in his inquiry into hybrid campaigns. We feel the need to supplement Chivvis's list with the societal level, which, on the basis of our analysis of the Czech experience, seems particularly important. Russian topics resonate in the Czech society in such areas as the arts (which works of contemporary Russian fiction get translated) and historiography (consider the issues and tensions linked with the activities of the Czech-Russian Commission of Historians and Archivists) and even in the debate about how history ought to be taught in elementary and secondary schools (see Chapters 7 and 8). We believe this is unique and noteworthy, and it confirms the significance of societal issues for understanding the security situation of a particular country.

These insights allow us to formulate an answer to the questions that were posed in the introductory chapter of this book: *How is contemporary Russia seen in the Czech political community? Which Russia-associated issues resonate in Czech society; which unite or divide it? What is it that Czech political actors fear from Russia?*

This book has shown that Czech views of contemporary Russia are very contradictory, and it seems to us that the tensions are increasing. On the one hand, Russia is understood as a real security threat; on the other, as a potential partner. These positions, when understood as ideal-typical forms, always contain both an internal and an external dimension. This means that the NATO and EU membership is automatically associated with a liberal-democratic model of government; and that an affinity for Russia automatically means an anti-democratic (pro-populist, pro-technocratic, pro-authoritarian) alternative.

A majority of contemporary Czech political leaders are wary or even hostile to Russia. Particularly those who draw upon the traditions of the liberal-humanist current in Czech pro-Western politics see the contemporary Russian authoritarian regime as evil. These forces, symbolised by the figure of the first Czech president, Václav Havel, support the opposition to Putin in Russia.

A minority of politicians welcome Russian expansionist interests, especially in their 'balancing out' of the negatively perceived influence of the USA and the West. The contemporary Russian conservative-Eurasian message, complemented with USSR reminiscences and pan-Slavist ideas, finds response among the illiberal streams in Czech politics and among that not insignificant segment of the population who are unhappy with the results of the post-November 1989 transformation. These currents vary as to the degree of their actual support for Russia: some might be firm Russophiles, while others are isolationists rejecting both the West which (currently) dominates, and the possible increase in Russia's influence.

The concerns of the anti-Kremlin segment of the Czech political spectrum are largely based on historical experience—these people are worried about restricting the freedom of the individual and within the state, a weakening or the demise of democracy, and economic exploitation by Russian or pro-Russian business owners, if they were to obtain a guaranteed, privileged position in the Czech economy (where their role so far has been entirely marginal). There are fears of military conflict between NATO and Russia using both conventional and nuclear weapons. That seems unlikely today, although military staff and armies are preparing for it in their exercises.

A solely pro-Russian and anti-Western segment of the Czech political spectrum, by contrast, welcomes Russia's potential re-acquisition of control over Czech sovereignty. In their propaganda, these people emphasise contemporary issues in Western Europe (migration, Islamic terrorism and the dominant liberal-left public discourse) or controversial actions of the

USA in the world as a great power (in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Iran, Venezuela and other countries). Parallels between the 'original Slavic homeland' of the Soviet Union and contemporary Russia thus play an important role in the propaganda of both of the polarised sides in the dispute.

In this polarisation, the relationship with Russia—or with the present Putin regime, its ideological message and its *realpolitik*—is also interconnected with the broader aspects of the relationship with ethic, economic, cultural and historical values. The relationship with Russia is also influenced by politics and culture coming from the West. Some of the formerly pro-Western Czech elites see contemporary Russia as the saviour from the Western globalised neo-liberal exploitation and neo-Marxist decadence. Contemporary Russia and its allied actors are relatively effective in exploiting these processes. However, in doing so they also motivate their opponents, who themselves are connected to Western patrons. Czech political disputes about Russia thus form an important part of the contemporary processes of polarisation and radicalisation, in Europe and globally. In this context, the book has posed the following questions: *What is it that the Czechs find affable (or not) about contemporary Russia? Do political, sociocultural, economic and military processes and relations, anchored in history and drawing on history, influence Czech actors?*

As shown in Chapter 8, Czechs notably perceive Russia through the lens of historical narratives. A positive or a negative relationship with Russia is determined by an interpretation of historical events, related largely to modern twentieth-century history (the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Red Army in 1945; and the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact troops), whilst employing stereotypical themes that go back deep into history, as this book has shown in a micro-study of Ivan the Terrible. The arguments that only forceful rulers who do not hesitate to use aggression against their opponents can be successful in Russia; that Russians see themselves as a nation that was predestined to become the Third Rome; about the imperial preferences of Russian foreign policy; and tsarist autocracy as the only functional model of a political system in Russia are deeply embedded in the Czech mind, irrespective of what their actual historical relevance is. By contrast, counter-arguments to these stereotypes, which would be able to view Russia without prejudice, as a normal country with normal people, are rarely articulated in Czech society. The efforts to draw attention to this vision of Russia, noticeable in, for instance, the discourse of the first Czech president Václav Havel and highlighting the Russian tradition of dissidence (see Chapter 3), evidently failed. The conflict between affection

for versus aversion to Russia runs through the Czech society alongside the strict line of 'I reject historical and contemporary Russia as an alternative to the West' vs 'I find past and contemporary Russia agreeable, at least as an alternative to the West'. Thus, it is the current 'state' of the West and the political, economic, value-based and cultural models it produces that determine present Czech relationships with Russia.

This brings us to our final question: *Given the contemporary strategy of the Russian political elites, are the dual analytical concepts* 'friend—enemy' *relevant to the Czech situation?* The short answer to this question is *yes*. The present analysis of how the Czech public see Russia has documented and proven an existential tension (in the wording of Carl Schmitt's categories of friend and enemy) that arises and exists in the interactions between political actors domestically and internationally. Russia has a reason to see the Czech Republic as a state whose capacity is not more than medium-sized (in a European comparison), as a country that it has historically been close to and in which there are for that reason actors inclined to see articulated and unarticulated Russian interests as relevant and worthy of defence. Our book has pointed out the strong anti-Russian narratives in the Czech society, which have robust historical roots and are critical of the steps currently being taken by Russian elites internationally and domestically. A realistic paradigm encourages us to assume that this conflict is essentially latent; it can be diminished or intensified in turns, but it is unlikely ever to be overcome. A centrist position, though theoretically virtuous and unprejudiced, is not strongly articulated among the Czech public at the moment.

By contrast, polarisation and the creation of images 'friend—enemy' with respect to the contemporary Russian regime (which is understood as a successor to the Soviet Union before Gorbachev) is strongly present in the Czech public discourse and appears in many areas. However, as the chapter on the economy in this book has shown, for instance, the rhetoric is often stronger than the reality. The relatively strong acceptance of the concept of hybrid threats in the Czech political environment; tense political disputes surrounding the relationship with Russia; the radicalisation of many actors (including pro-Russian paramilitary groups); and other factors create a situation where the schema 'friend—enemy' plays an important role.

This book has sought to characterise the main areas and actors in the contemporary disputes over 'Russian politics' in the Czech Republic. Its conclusions confirm the historical continuity of most of the studied issues. Despite the current upheavals, the pro-Western leaning of the Czech Republic still seems dominant; but it has been called into question

by some political leaders and members of the public. The current 'mobilisation' on the issue of how Czech society should see Russia seems to us a consequence of the changes now underway in the West, which have also unsettled the balance within the Czech society, Central Europe and beyond. Russia actively intervenes in this period of *transition of the West*. We hope that the book has helped readers unpack the complex Czech relationship with Russia and that it will facilitate their understanding as events in the Czech Republic unfold in the upcoming intricate period of regional and global development.

## Notes

1. Compare a similar debate in Poland (typically, the texts on the website of the Cracow-based think-tank, Arcana: www.arcana.pl), works by Alexander Duleba in Slovakia, etc.
2. We address these issues in other papers written as part of the project this book forms a part of, as well as in other projects, especially *Manipulative Techniques of Propaganda in the Internet Age* (MUNI/G/0872/201).

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