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## **Civil Military Relations in the Czech Republic. The Image of the Democratic Soldier**

The Czech Republic Case

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Between the Organisation of Armed Forces and the Principles of  
Democracy in European Comparison“

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## 1. The History of Civil-Military Relations and its Impact on the Present

### 1. 1 Armed Forces and Society in the 1<sup>st</sup> Czechoslovak Republic

Understanding the process of civil-military relation transformation in the Czech Republic is not possible without considering the historical tradition of this country which affects the contemporary view of actors active in this process. Attitudes and beliefs of individuals are formed in the process of socialization by the interpretation of history and therefore history influences current behavior of every individual. Humans naturally compare the past and the present and by doing this, they form their views of what is good and what is bad.

The social and political development in the current Czech Republic is a continuation of its development over the past decades. With hindsight, looking at the legacy that is the product of the development in the past, and reflecting on its impact on the process of the formation of civil-military relations in the Czech Republic and of the image of the ideal soldier, we should start by admitting that the political and social development in this country has not always been entirely continuous. And this discontinuity is probably the most distinctive legacy, which fact is doubly true with respect to the position of the Czech armed forces in the democratic society. It is therefore necessary to have a closer look at this discontinuity.

Until 1918 the development of the Czech-Crown Lands (Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia) and what is today Slovakia took place within the Habsburg Monarchy (transformed into Austro-Hungary Empire in 1867). We cannot ignore the fact that all the territories that, later on, were to become parts of Czechoslovakia, followed a developmental trajectory that, from the global point of view, did not in any significant way deviate from the general trend characteristic of the development of civilisation in Western Europe. Of course, the development in these countries was slightly delayed, but its direction and trends were similar.

From the economic point of view, the most important processes were the ones of industrialisation, culminating in the Czech Lands at the turn of the century. As a result of these processes, the Czech basin (in which Czech, German and Jewish ethnic elements were mixed) was transformed into one of the most industrialised regions in the continental Europe, and became the armory of the Habsburg Monarchy. The economic boom (made possible by the liberalisation of economy), which brought about an unprecedented growth of the standards of living of the population at large and far reaching changes in the social structure of the society, proceeded hand in hand with the political liberalisation started in the 1860s. In consequence of this liberalisation, the process of the change of the Habsburg Monarchy was initiated which led to the formation of the civic society and – gradually and in spite of the resistance of Vienna and Budapest

– to more equality between the individual nations composing the monarchy. Last but not least, the process led to the formation of the political elites that were gradually getting used to the democratic rules of political life. Even though, measured by our present standards, the monarchy had never become a full democratic country, which fact manifested itself mainly in the continued existence of the old structure of the political system, the position, within the system, of the army, which was fully and exclusively subordinated to the monarch, and the considerable concentration of power (from the point of view of the theory of democracy) in the hands of illegitimate political elites, Austro-Hungary Empire can still be described as a state undergoing a painful democratic transformation.

The outbreak of the First World War put an end to all the democratising tendencies, and led to an unprecedented increase in the political persecution in the monarchy, which, until that time, had been relatively liberal. The political development in the Austro-Hungarian Empire took the Czech political representation by surprise, because until that point, its political program had been based on the assumption of the continued existence of the Czech state, defined as the land of the Czech Crown, within the wider empire. That is also why, at first, it was not able to respond adequately to the new developments. But gradually, in response to the persecution of the authorities of the empire, the tendencies to create a “Great Germany”, and the events of the war, the program of the creation of an independent state of the Czech and Slovaks was developed by both crucial elements of the Czech political representation (resident at home and abroad respectively).

The First Republic is often considered – especially by its founders (Masaryk and Beneš) – an important turning point in our history, and therefore, a discontinuity in the century long development within Austro-Hungary Empire. We admit that, from one point view, this interpretation is justified, because all the nations of Czechoslovakia (Czechs, Germans, Slovaks, Hungarians, Ruthenians, Jews and Poles) were guaranteed an independent development in the new democratic state - state that got rid of all the authoritarian residues of the pre-war Austria-Hungary. But, viewed through a more detailed optics characterising particularly our present viewpoint, and taking into consideration the events after 1938 (Nazi occupation and communist coup), those changes only seem partial and unimportant. From the point of view of the general civilising trends in Western and Middle Europe, the First Republic only completed what had already begun in the period of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (democratisation and industrialisation), building on the above mentioned general civilising trends, and that is also why – especially in the light of the events of 1938 and 1948 (coming to power of forces based on totalitarian ideologies, nazism and communism) – we cannot speak of it as a disruption in the continuity of the development of our country.

Already at the time of the declaration of the newly created, independent republic, the National Committee was aware of the necessity, in the historical situation existing at that time, to rely on military force to safeguard the republic’s independence and territorial integrity. The armed forces had to deal with the problem of protecting the borders of the country, especially against the centrifugal tendencies of a segment of Czech Germans,

and, in Slovakia, against the military aggression of the communist Hungarian Republic of Soviets (Dvořan 1991: 12-18).

The existence of the armed forces at the time of the republic's coming in being played an important role in providing support to the political elites, who had to cope with the antimilitaristic sentiments in the society at large. The build-up of the republic's armed forces was modelled on the French army. The principal aim was to build armed forces compatible with the democratic regime, credit for which should be given especially to president Masaryk. The objective was to build armed forces that would not "*consider themselves an exponent of a particular social order*", and, instead, would identify themselves with the whole nation and its people (Beneš 1937: 14); armed forces, whose officers would not enjoy privileges placing them above the rest of the society; armed forces that would be controlled by politician whose claim to legitimacy would be justified, and by the public opinion; non-political, i.e. politically neutral armed forces; armed forces that would provide an environment in which people could learn shared national values, coexistence governed by democratic principles and national awareness. In other words, the new army was meant to be a "democratic army", even though not in the sense of incorporating democratic principles into its own internal organisation, because that would necessarily prove disruptive as far its effective functioning is concerned. (Beneš 1937: 18-19) The idea was to build a democratic army in the sense of the army of a democratic state. To find an inspiration for that, the founders of the republic rejected the traditions of the Austro-Hungarian armed forces and turned to the Hussite military traditions.

Whether in 1918-1938 the army of Czechoslovak Republic was built as a tool of democratic regime that could be used, as the case might be, for its defence, or whether it was a neutral institution standing outside of the political regime, is an interesting question. If our starting point is the thesis that the armed forces (including the army) are the main instrument of the state policies, we are led to the unavoidable conclusion that the nature of those armed forces will reflect, among others, the character of the policies, and, therefore, of the governing political regime. When analysing past and present political events, we find out that regime changes have always been followed by profound changes in armies (armed forces in general) and, which is even more important, that every regime builds its own army (provided it builds one at all) as the last resort safeguard to get under control, if the need arises, internal social conflicts threatening its existence. The first Czechoslovak Republic, which was a democratic regime, had such a safeguard built in its Defence Act, and, in fact, it was also used in practice: "*The aim of the Czechoslovak armed forces is both to defend the integrity and liberty of the republic against its external enemies and to assist in maintaining internal security and order. It can be used to assist in coping with catastrophes threatening lives and property.*"<sup>1</sup>

As far as the process of the armed forces build-up is concerned, the whole period of the existence of the First Republic is characterised by the effort to make sure that the armed forces remain politically neutral and the development in the republic does not

1 Branný zákon 193/1920 Sb., paragraf 1. (Defense Act 193/1920, Statute Book, par. 1).

follow a similar course as in the neighbouring countries, where regimes held up by armed forces got to power in one way or another. In the terminology of the time, the effort found expression in the requirement that the army should be 'apolitical'. The main problem connected with this requirement was how to, on the one hand, build an army consisting of citizens endowed with equal rights and duties with respect to the state, and, on the other hand, make sure that the army did not become a fighting ground for various political parties, which would undoubtedly threaten the effective functioning of the army as a military organisation. In this connection, the right of soldiers to vote played a very important role. In 1927, after a period of hard political fighting, that basic civic right was denied to all soldiers. Even though the introduction of this measure achieved its aim and the army became a less attractive place for political campaigning, this was achieved at a cost, because the new situation „was not in agreement with what was believed should be the proper position of the members of the new type of army in a democratic country, and what values they should be taught in the army environment.” (Dvořan 1991: 49)

Nevertheless, the Ministry of Defence, which was controlled by the liberal wing of the Agrarian Party, went on playing an important role in the political life of the country. The issues of security and the state policies vis a vis the military - from the problems of army supplies to such questions as who should hold which post in the military - were very often discussed in the pre-war CSR. Especially the Agrarian Party and the Social Democratic Party would often clash over such issues (Anger 1990: 98) On the whole, we can say that the political elites in the pre-war Czechoslovakia mostly tried to keep politically neutral, even though, from time to time, they also tried to make use of the fact that were well connected to politicians for pushing through their own interests in the struggle between various “military groups”. Unlike the military, political parties in the CSR in 1918 - 1938 were not restrained by any scruples and, from time to time, would interfere in purely military affairs, using the army as a pawn on the chessboard of party political fighting.

The interest of the society in the army increased substantially with the coming to power of the national-socialist regime in Germany. The attitude of the population at large towards the armed forces was rather problematic already at the period of the First Republic. E. Beneš Wrote: “To ‘de-austrianize’ the army, and to ‘de-austrianize’ ourselves - in all our parties, the parliament and civic life - when dealing with issues that concern our army, to learn to have a better, more candid, warmer and livelier attitude towards it - that is one of the big tasks of our times. We still tend to look at our armed forces that same way we used to look at the army of the Austrian Habsburg Monarchy.” (Beneš 1937: 78) In other words, not even 20 years of building a democratic army in a situation where our country was practically surrounded by its potential enemies sufficed to fully eliminate the deeply rooted (in our history) negative attitudes of our public towards the armed forces. This was further aggravated by the failure to use our armed forces in 1938, even though, given the international political isolation of the CSR and the stance taken by France, Great Britain, USSR, Poland and Hungary, further the existence of large German and Hungarian minorities, and, finally, the numerical superiority of Wehrmacht over our armed forces, the decision not to fight is only understandable. Be

that as it may, it further strengthened the negative attitudes of the Czech society towards the Czech armed forces.

Nevertheless, the overall strategy with respect to the relationship between the army and the society at large did not aim at pushing the army outside of the society, but, on the contrary and in spite of the fact that soldiers were deprived of the right to vote (the law that was supported by the army command), at integrating the army into the society as much as possible. The ideal was the “citizen-soldier” who was ready to defend his country out of deep personal conviction. The emphasis was placed on the fact that soldiers were citizens, that they should be educated to respect the ideals and values of democracy, humanism and “Czechoslovakism”<sup>2</sup>, and that they should have sufficient knowledge of politics and of what is happening in the world. It was also considered important that proper relationships between rank and file soldiers and officers, as well as between the military and the civil society should be maintained. (Vondrášek 1993) All the above given facts support the hypothesis that the particular way in which the military in Czechoslovakia was incorporated into the society at large resembled the German model referred to as ‘citizen-soldier in uniform’.

## **1. 2 Army and the Society in the Period of Socialism Building**

The communist takeover in February 1948 led to a radical, discontinuous break in the course of Czech history. Some of those who were directly participating (on the defeated side) in the events of February 1948 later expressed the view that the failure to use the army to defend democracy should be regarded as a serious mistake committed by non-communist forces at that time. Nevertheless, on the basis the latest research, we can conclude that such a use the army against the communist coup was simply impossible. Moreover, president Beneš was worried that the use of force could escalate the situation into an open civil war. The communists managed to get under their control all the key posts in the armed forces, and, as Hanzlík points out, they were in a position “*to eliminate all those who were ready to follow, as the case might be, the orders of the president. Last but not least, there was also the – quite real – threat that the Soviet Union would resort to a military intervention*” (Hanzlík 1995: 97) After a short post-war period of ‘limited’ democracy, in the course of which many features of the totalitarian regime to come began to appear, a process of the implantation of the Soviet social order set on, which, at first, was supported and partly designed by most of the left-wing intelligentsia, all the visions of ‘national socialism’ or specific Czech path to socialism being rejected. These developments can be considered a radical, discontinuous turn in the course of our history.

These profound changes of our society also affected the army. The pre-war traditions of the army build-up – both in the area of its organisation, training or armaments and the area of its integration into the society, political neutrality or civil-military and internal (among soldiers themselves) relationships – were abandoned.

2 It was the Masaryk’s idea that one big Czechoslovak nation exists instead of two independent nations, Czechs and Slovaks.

After the February 1948 coup the process of the “new type” army build-up began, characterised by attempts to take over as much as possible from the Soviet totalitarian model. At the practical level it meant unification of the doctrine, tactics, methods of command, and, of course, the integration of the army into the society through the subjection of the armed forces to the Communist Party. In this connection, it should be noted that some features of this orientation to the military experience of the USSR, had already been outlined in the 1945 ‘Košice Government Program’. After political activities were banned in the army in 1945, the communists began to infiltrate the armed forces openly, while the hidden forms of infiltration had much deeper roots and older history. (Hanzlík 2000: 155 – 170; Vondrášek 1990: 22 - 23) The process of the transformation of the democratic regime army into a totalitarian regime army culminated in 1950 when the “Main Political Administration” was set up and the function of “commander’s deputy for political affairs” was introduced into the army. As a result of this double identification – the identification of politics with the Communist Party line and the identification of the officer corps with the Communist Party elite – a number of the government bodies previously functioning in the area of security policy were abolished (or, at least, given less power) and their powers were taken over by the Communist Party organs, especially by the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Finally, in 1963 the Ministry of Defence was directly subjected to the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

This radical change in the area of defence was accompanied by similarly radical changes in the officer corps, taking place in the first half of the 1950s. Without these changes, the adoption of the Soviet totalitarian model of the civil-military relations would not have been complete. The extent of the structural changes in officer corps shows the fact that out of the total officer corps in 1955, 88, 5% became officers after February 1948. According to the new legislature (par. 37 and 39 of Defence Act) the army would recruit working class cadres dedicated to the cause of socialism and communism. Loyalty to the regime was given precedence over purely military qualifications and skills or the level of education of the recruit. (Chrastil 1995: 190) The final steps in adapting the officer corps to the needs of the Communist Party were taken in the mid 1950s when the remaining unreliable officers were dismissed from the army during the process of the army manpower reduction. As O. Pick, Š. Sarvaš and S. Stach write: “*After the communist coup in February 1948 the army began to be considered a tool to be used by the communist power. It was turned into a ‘re-education’ tool to deal with the remaining elements of bourgeoisie and aristocracy.*” (Pick – Sarvaš – Stach 1996: 14) This status quo in civil-military relations and the position of the army within the society at large was then preserved until 1989. The reform movement of the ‘Spring 1968’ only brought partial changes remaining within the limits of the existing system. On the other hand, the germs of independent military-theoretical thought began to occur at that time, and that is also why the Communist Party leadership under G. Husák viewed the army as unreliable, falling short of what was required by the process of so called ‘normalisation’. Consequently, the army was subjected to an extensive purge using the well-tried methods of pacification of the army of the 1950s. (Chrastil 2000: 173-192)

One of the characteristic features of the socialist society was a hidden form of militarisation reflected in the existence of a series of paramilitary institutions assisting the



army in the area of its manpower requirements. Nevertheless, when compared with the situation in the Soviet Union, the influence of the army on politics was relatively small. (Pick – Sarvaš – Stach 1996: 16)

In Czechoslovakia, similarly as in other socialist countries, a real danger existed that the army could be used, if the need would arise, to defend the regime that was losing the support of the population at large, for which use the army was systematically prepared in the 1970s and the 1980s. This fact is confirmed by the events of 1969 and by the existence of the plans to resort to the use of the Czechoslovak People's Army in 1989. The development of civil-military relations after the fall of communism was affected by the fact that, as S. Chrastil notes, *"the Czechoslovak army could be considered a faithful mage of the society – it was well armed and trained, but at the same time, it was losing its prestige in the society. The intimate connection between the army and the regime, the threat that it could be used to suppress the opposition, which was manifested overtly by its periodic preparation for that kind of use, its ever closer integration into the Warsaw Pact – and organisation which could hardly be said to represent our national interests, all that kept alive and further intensified the traditional attitude of the Czech people towards the army as something external to the nation, something alien, and further strengthened all the undesirable features of the traditional Czech pacifism and ambivalent attitude to the armed forces in general."* (Chrastil 1995: 196) Importantly, the build-up of the Army of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic was subordinated to the needs of the Warsaw Pact, and the Czechoslovak People's Army was supervised not only by the Communist Party of CSSR, but also by the Soviet political and military elites. All that was well known to the public and contributed to further alienation in the relations between the army and the society at large, and to the continued loss of interest of the Czechoslovak society in the matters concerning its armed forces - a tendency which was historically rooted already in the failure to use the army for the defence of the country in 1938. Although the first independent and available surveys of the attitudes of the society were conducted in the early 1990s, their results reflect mainly the attitudes of the society as it existed at the end of the 1980s. Out of 50 professions considered in the survey, the career officer came 43<sup>th</sup>. (Paducha 1992: 23) In the 1992 survey of the prestige of 17 occupations, the company commander came 14<sup>th</sup>. The only occupations that did worse than this in the survey were police-constable, conductor in the public means of transport, and baker. The occupation of the police-officer ended up at the 6<sup>th</sup> place. (Pick – Sarvaš – Stach 1996: 25). The alienation and loss of interest in the army was reflected, among other things, in the growing officer-recruitment problems in the 1970s, to which the regime responded by lowering the requirements on the applicants. This strategy of lowering the qualification (mainly educational) requirements on the applicants for studies at military high schools had a considerable negative impact on the quality of Czechoslovak People's Army officer corps, which can still be felt in the present ACR. (Chrastil – Markel – Vondrášek 2001: 136 –137)

Even though the detailed investigation of the period in question has not been completed yet, we can already conclude that, in the 1950s, over the course of a historically very short time period, a radical social change occurred, introducing into our society the Soviet type of socialism with all its characteristic features - the communist

dictatorship, centrally planned economy, attempts at controlling the thought processes of people and infiltrating their minds with the ideas of communism and socialism, politically motivated show-trials, party purges, etc. The army was subjected to the governing political party, political (party) and military elites merged, the party set up mechanisms (Main Political Administration) enabling it to control the army, and the military was given a (limited) power to participate in political decision-making through placing officers-communists in top government organs. From one point of view, one can say that the army was under a civilian control – under the control a political party. But, given the character of the regime in question, it was not, by any stretch of imagination, a democratic control. The traditions of the civil-military relations existing in the Czechoslovak Republic before 1938 were forcibly interrupted, and the political regime that came to power tried to suppress all ideas connected with those traditions.

## 2. Transformation of the Civil-Military Relations in the Former Czechoslovakia after Fall of Socialism

### 2. 1 Perception of the Situation in the Former Czechoslovakia after 1989

The fall of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe started major changes in these societies that quite logically hit the military as well. Newly founded Czech political elite close to the Civic Forum had to operatively start solving the problems of the transition of military - civil relationships and the way of military integration into the society from the totalitarian type to the democratic one. The new political elites were not properly prepared either theoretically or practically. (Cvrček 1992: 145) These new political elites kept at their disposal only the limited number of politically trustworthy experts on army matters and on security policy matters, because the former regime wanted the experts to be joined with the communist authority. Only some former ex-officer of Czechoslovak people's army who were sacked in consequence of the purges after 1968, constituted a certain exception. However they had not been involved in army structures for more than twenty years. Basically indeed they were joined with the communist regime during their active service.

A. Rašek states that out of the countries in transition, Czechoslovakia had better conditions for transformation of civil-military relation and ensuring democratic control over the military. To defend his theory, he uses the following arguments: 1) the Democratic tradition of Czechoslovakia between 1918 and 1938, 2) the influence on the military by society: the reformatory climate of the 1960s showed up in the military structures as well, 3) the existence of a group of military experts thrown out of the military after 1968 and brought together in an organization called Obroda (Revival) whose services the new regime could utilize, and 4) the existence of a thinktank for solving problems of the position of the military in a democracy which was established soon after the change of the political regime: The Military Institute for Social Research. (Rašek 2001)

From a certain point of view, Czechoslovak society found itself in a better position than other countries of Central Europe trying to build a democracy. It could draw upon the First Republic tradition of a democratic regime even in the sphere of the engagement of the military into a democratic society among 1918 - 1938. From this point of view, the historical situation of post-November-1989 Czechoslovakia was more favourable than in Poland or Hungary because, in the period between the first two world wars these countries were authoritarian regimes, that to a degree relied on the military for support. On the other hand, historic events connected to the stabilization of the regime after the communist coup 1948 and again after the Soviet intervention of 1968 and especially the massive purges in the military during communist domination, which affected disloyal and the supposedly “disloyal” elements, objectively eliminated the advantages arising from the democratic tradition of Czechoslovak society. (More Chrástil 2000)

The officer corps of the Czechoslovak People’s Army was at the time loyal to the regime, when no one predicted the events at the end of the 1980s. This was no surprise, as 82% of the officers were at that time members of the Communist Party. The problem during the transformation of the military under the newly built regime was that the habits acquired from the functioning of the military under the totalitarian regime consequently influenced also the view of the military elites about the optimal way of engaging the military into the democratic regime. Also the re-activated soldiers of the Obroda organization and especially its military parts were in the past loyal soldiers of the communist regime although most of them in the Period after invasion of Warsaw Pact changed their political views and preferences. Also significant is the fact that their qualifications were dated, as during the course of the 1970s and 80s the ČSLA had modernized in some areas, although the basic operation procedures remained unchanged. With respect to implementing democratic control over the military, the lack of agreement within the Obroda organization proved to be problematic, which limited its potential when enforcing changes in the military. It seems rather suitable not to overestimate the above mentioned historical circumstances favorable to transformation of civil-military relations and implementing democratic control over the military.

## **2. 2 Transformation of Civil-Military Relations and its Outputs**

The November Events in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in 1989 and the following disassembling of the communist system took place under the direction of the Civic Forum. Although in our lands there was not a tradition of interference of the military into the political arena, part of the public and at that time the new political elite were concerned with the possibility of misusing the military. In spite of the intentions on the part of some within the communist elites to use the military to turn back the political developments, the military was not misused for this purpose and the military gradually turned its loyalty, or at least its indifference, toward the new democratic change. Overall, when evaluating the role of the military, we can agree with the theory of A. Rašek that “*it is not possible by any means to evaluate its role in the November [1989] Events better than as neutral. A number of soldiers serving their mandatory service, and especially*

*students of university military departments behaved in a more radical way, but it had no decisive effect on the reaction of the military.* (Rašek 1992: 12)

Some indirect evidence on the relationship of the army to proceeding political changes has also been suggested by the research of the history of the military educational system. The authors of "The history of military academy in Brno" S. Chrastil, M. Markel a V. Vondrášek mention that: "*the school as an institution remained in support of the communist regime and in the environment of Brno universities presented the only institution where the actions against the demands of striking students were evident, and that shows us that the school was under the control of the political department until the intervention of superior authority.*" (Chrastil – Vondrášek – Markel 2001: 146) However the total historical research of this problem still waits for its researcher. Only after the break up of the regime, as is mentioned by P. Paducha and M. Purkrábek, the loyalty of the military elite to the democratic regime slowly started to solidify. (Paducha – Purkrábek 1992: 22)

At the beginning of 1990 (although there was general helplessness and no conception of army affairs) the new political elites understood very well that it was a necessity to disentangle the army from political influence of the Communist Party as soon as possible and to subordinate it to the state authorities. The first significant step on the way to democracy and to the incorporation of the army into democratic policies in a way compatible with democracy, was the abolishment of the leading position of Communist Party, which was done by the parliament restored by co-optations. There was a pressure on the army to achieve political neutrality of the army because of this step, as there was no axiom for the existence of a revolutionary political elite with a monopoly on leadership, which is the foundation-stone of the totalitarian way of army incorporation into a political regime. The pressure towards an achievement of political neutrality was manifested by the abolishment of the leading political administration, political departments, the political officers functions in troops and by a prohibition of the activities of political parties in army (especially the Communist Party in fact). In this way they stopped the state from, using the army as the instrument of political doctrine and using it as a means to educate the new socialistic man. When speaking about this it is necessary to state that political activities in the army ceased as early as 15. 12. 1989 and from 15. 3. 1990 all political activities in the army were forbidden to professional soldiers and fundamental military service soldiers. After 40 years the army was again subordinated to the government and parliament, which began to supervise the army, including an audit of the budget, its real budget was publicised in 1990.

The assurance of political neutrality of the army by breaking their ties with the Communist party happened due to the expressive pressure of newly formed democratic political elites in the Civic Forum. The result was adopted in to the law (n. 361/1992), which forbade soldiers most political activities and especially from membership in political parties. Nevertheless the soldiers did not stay totally out of the politics because they could, still vote for political parties in both national and municipal elections, even though they were members of any political party. In fact their franchise remained untouched - both active and passive. The soldiers were removed from military service for

the period of their service in office. There were two active regular soldiers at the top level of politics in the period 1990-1992 and after the elections in 1992 there were six soldiers. (Pick – Sarvaš – Stach 1996: 18) It is obvious in this situation that regular soldiers preferred left-wing parties during active political participation in the period of the existence of CSFR. This view is also supported by the fact, that before the election in the year 1990 communists were preferred by 41% of regular soldiers according to research. It can be inferred that the political preferences changes further, as in 1991 only 13% of regular soldiers supported the Communist party. (Rašek 1993: 13)

The standpoint of newly formed democratic political elite towards the army developed gradually. As it is mentioned by M. Purkrábek, „*the army of that time was perceived as a potential danger both by population and at large the military commission of Civic Forum, and even by Defence and Security Parliament commissions*”. (Purkrábek 1992: 12) The part of these political elites distrusted the army and made such radical suggestions as the abolishment of the army and an establishment of a new one, which was to be professional without the participation of former career officers. It is obvious that these suggestions were similar to the suggestions of extreme left-wing parties (anarchist) and extreme right-wing parties (neo-Nazi). There was distrust of the army and of professional soldiers in some parts of Civic Forum as well. The new political elites usually distrusted experts joined with an old regime, later with the exception of a general and later Secretary of Defence M. Vacek, who was gradually partly trusted by the president V. Havel and the government representatives of that time. New political elites, which lacked military matters specialists not joined with the last regime, did not have another possibility than to rely on some of communist regime military experts in the first period of an army transformation and its position in society in the democratic atmosphere. M. Vacek, who was a pre-revolutionary Chief of General Staff of the army and the Secretary of Defence from December 1989 to October 1990, speaks about the relationship as follows “*I would like to detachedly, in the name of truth, even today confirm, that I felt an important president V. Havel support, the support of a federal government chairman M. Čalfa and also both chairmen of national governments - P. Pithart and V. Mečiar. As long as I dealt with these constitutional officers, I do not remember, that anyone of them would disapprove or even refuse my suggestions. However I myself can say that I did not know about any unfair dealing with them. As long as I did not agree with what they wanted me to do I always said it to them in good time, understandable enough I hope, without the intention to omit anything*”. (Vacek 1994: 178) In other words, the new political elites and especially the president Vaclav Havel were influenced in military issues by “old communist dinosaurs”.

At present, it is common for democratic regimes to have a civil and political person in the office of Secretary of Defence, which is the expression of army control by legitimate political elites. However as it is mentioned above, it was not like this, at the first period of creating democracy in Czechoslovakia after 1989. But in the end, Miroslav Vacek was replaced (in October 1990) by L. Dobrovsky – after many decades the first civilian Defence Secretary coming from newly formed political elite. In the course of 1990 a partial purge in the army began even if there were dissents between the Secretary of Defence Vacek and new political elites. The aim of the purge was a riddance of unreliable

officers connected with the communist regime; 15% of the whole body of officers (9 640 officers) left by the end of September, but only 5,5% of them left because of the disability. The purge had a fundamental impact on army generality, 50% of which left the army. As it is mentioned by Obrman out of the number of officers, who left the army, 52% left on their own request, 24% did not sign a new oath (which did not include the loyalty to socialism and the Communist Party) and 18,5% retired from the job. (Obrman 1993: 37–38) The second stage of leaving was a negative phenomenon from the point of view of personnel composition of the army since, in contrast to a riddance of mostly politically compromised staff, in this second stage more capable officers (mainly younger) left for civil professions in the period of insecurity in the army. (More Vltavský 1992: 32)

It is a question of another survey, how much the political elites wanted to pay for the army toleration to proceeding political changes by seizing the office of the Secretary of Defence by a qualified and competent soldier, however jointed with the communist authority according to all available assessments in military revolting affairs, eventually up to what point the elites wanted to irritate relationships with the Soviet union in the period of dealings of displacement of its Soviet army from ČSFR and the Warsaw agreement transformation. In any case, some sections of Civic Forum a priori did not agree with appointment of the Secretary of Defence Vacek and the sections were in permanent conflict with him. This relatively considerable disharmony between the Secretary and Civic Forum occurred e.g. in the litigation - the further existence of Head political administration workers, the administration controlled the political reliability in the period of the communist regime. Civic Forum and especially the Military commission as its part imputed the Secretary of Defence Vacek that he only changed the name of the administration for Administration of the education and culture and also only shifted the majority of political apparatus staff of the Communist party there.

The army, being the most powerful body in every state, is usually in the centre of interest of political authorities in the period of radical political changes and is an object of arguments of new and old political elites. It was not like this in the Czech Republic at the beginning of the 90s. The army reform is a marginal political problem after the detachment army from the Communist party. On one hand, V. Havel was the only prominent politician who was partly interested in army problematic in the initial period of creating democracy in Czechoslovakia after the end of communist regime, despite of the fact that his interest in the army did not reach the level of the interest of the founders of Czechoslovak state in the period after foundation in year 1918. On the other hand, having considered the previous idea, it is necessary to take into account that he might have been under influence of former communist Chief of Staff, M. Vacek, who executed the position of Minister of Defence after November events 1989.

If we globally assess the whole transformation process of army integration into the democratic regime we can state that there are characteristic features of it in the ČSFR existence period from 1989 to 1992, especially: 1. The changeover of the political army leadership by means of a legitimate, that is elective, political elites by subordinating the army to the government, the president, the parliament and relevant security committees. 2.

The army's detachment from the communist party, its general political neutralisation connected with a partial purge (it was a purge for a lot of soldiers) in the officer corps and termination of using the army as the part of political doctrine for wide mass. The effort to establish the army, in which the political education is done in a similar way as in the German army. 3. The initiation of creating a parliamentary control and supervision especially through military budget and an Defence and Security Committee. The adoption of the CSFR military doctrine by the parliament on the 20. 3. 1991 was one of the most important practical demonstrations. 4. The reduction in the number of soldiers in connection with the obligations resulting from the Agreement on decreasing the conventional armed forces and by the new security environment. 5. The radical reduction of military expenditure. 6. The society demilitarisation a reduction of arms capacities. 7. The transformation, translocation and reduction the total size of equipment of technology and staff in connection with signing the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces.

The stress was put on the maximum possible transfer of the democratic regime elements into the army institution, than on strengthening the military professionalism. In this process were used both lessons learned in the First Czechoslovak Republic and procedure typical for Germany after WW II. The reason was simple. The situation in the Czech Republic was similar to the situation in post-war Germany and Czechoslovakia wanted to take up pre-war democratic traditions which were generally considered to be appropriate in new conditions too.

### 3. Civil-Military Relations in the Czech Republic<sup>3</sup>

#### 3.1 Development of the Czech Armed Forces since 1993

Describing the process of military transformation in the Czech Republic it is necessary to take into account the political development in this country. From 1993 to 1998 Civic Democratic Party and Christian Democrats governed in the Czech Republic. Between 1998 and 2002 Social Democrats governed as a minority government, and they formed a coalition with the Christian Democrats and the Union of Freedom after the 2002 election. The Civic Democratic Party won the election in 2006 and created with Christian Democrats and Green Party the coalition government, which is in power nowadays.

The Czech Army has been reforming since 1993 and the size of the Czech Armed Forces has been decreasing throughout the 1990s. While in 1993 the Czech Army had 92,599 soldiers, it had only 30,470 soldiers in 2004.<sup>4</sup> The ACR inherited from the Federal

3 In this chapter the author used parts of his study „Transformation of civil military relations in the Czech Republic and its outcomes” published in Glatzl, Ch. – Hauser, G. – Kernic, F. (Hrsg.): *Europäische Sicherheit und Streitkräfte reform in der Weltgesellschaft*. Schriftenreihe der Landesverteidigungsakademie, Nr. 13, pp. 191 – 213.

4 Ministerstvo obrany České republiky (Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic) (1994). *Armádní ročenka 1993* (Army Yearbook 1993) and Ministerstvo obrany České republiky (Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic) (2003). *Koncepce výstavby profesionální Armády České republiky a mobilizace ozbrojených sil České republiky přepracovaná na změněný zdrojový rámec*. (The Concept of the

armed forces a large quantum of heavy military hardware that was of little use in the changed international security environment. On the other hand, it lacked other types of military equipment. Most of the equipment inherited from the Federal army was obsolete and in bad condition. Thus, there were two processes taking place in parallel: first, downsizing, especially by cutting down on heavy military hardware and second, modernization and acquisition of new equipment with the aim to gradually remove the weakest spots of the ACR. While in January 1 1993 the ACR had 957 tanks, 1367 armoured carriers and combat infantry vehicles, 767 pieces of artillery and rocket launchers, and 456 aircraft<sup>5</sup>, it is expected that after the completion of the reform it will have about 150 tanks, at most 1000 combat infantry vehicles and armoured carriers, and around 100 combat aircraft and helicopters. Radical reductions are also expected in artillery equipment.

The unsatisfactory condition of the ACR that, in spite of the permanent reform, had not managed to achieve the structure, size or capabilities required by the needs of the Czech security policy in particular with respect to its NATO and EU commitments. It finally led, on the basis of discussions among politicians and members of the Czech security community to a crucial decision. A team of 14 people was created that prepared the document *“Analysis of definitions, required capabilities, target structure and composition of the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic.”* The government acknowledged the document. The definition of the goals assigned to the military by the political representation had to respect the following parameters: 1. Providing for the defence of vital and strategic interests of the Czech Republic; 2. Meeting NATO membership commitments; 3. Keeping defence spending at the level of 2.2% GDP until 2004; Demographic trends and falling numbers of young people conscripted to the army.<sup>6</sup> It was originally assumed that conscription would be preserved until full professionalization is achieved.

The 2003 Czech Armed Forces review, necessitated by the MoD budget reductions, decreased the planned target size of the Army to 26,200 soldiers and 8,000 civil employees. It stated the intention that, after the completion of the reform, in 2010 - 2012, the ACR should be capable of:

- Deploying all its forces in an operation of collective defence by article 5 of Washington Treaty;
- Deploying up to 3 000 troops in one peace enforcement operation for the period of 6 month without rotation (by 2007), or an air force element equivalent to it in terms of resource requirements, for the maximum period of 3 months without rotation (after 2010);

Professional Army CR build-up and Armed Forces CR Mobilisation, Adapted to the Changed Resource Framework). A-revue, n. 24, p. 6.

5 Ministerstvo obrany České republiky (Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic) (1994). Armádní ročenka 1993 (Army Yearbook 1993).

6 Ministerstvo obrany České republiky (Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic) (2002): Ročenka (Yearbook 2001). Prague, p. 30 – 31.



- Deploying up to 1 000 troops for the period of 6 month without rotation in one peace support or peace keeping operation or an air force element equivalent, while keeping 250 troops for the purpose of a simultaneous operation for the period of 6 months without rotation.

At the same time, in parallel with any of the above given variants of the deployment of its forces, the Czech Armed Forces should be able to provide for the protection of important buildings or facilities, and, as the case might be, to receive NATO reinforcements at the territory of the Czech Republic and to participate in NATINEADS (NATO Integrated Extended Air Defence System).<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, not even the tasks defined as described above can in any way be regarded as implying the build-up of an army designed only for a range of types of military crisis management operations outside the territory of the Czech Republic. One of the emphases of the current concept of the ACR reform still is to maintain complex military capabilities (however reduced in comparison with the Cold War period) aimed at a self-reliant defence of the territory of the state. But, if we take into account the current international security environment characterised by the absence of an enemy threatening the territory of the Czech Republic with a classic form of military aggression, the ongoing process of the reduction of the ACR, and the fact that the ACR has stopped to build massive reserves, then, in the view of the author of this paper, it is obvious that the orientation of the ACR in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is much more towards the acquiring the capability to carry out a range of peace resolving operations, than it ever was during the 1990s.

It would be a mistake to interpret the above defined tasks as meaning that the ACR is being a priori designed for various operations outside of the territory of the Czech Republic, because, beside these tasks, the current conception of the ACR reform also emphasises the importance of maintaining the complex military capacities necessary to provide the capability (even though a rather reduced one, compared to the Cold War period) of the Czech Army to defend - by its own forces - the territory of the state. Nor is the strategy of having a complex army comprising all basic types of components entirely abandoned in the revised conception of the ACR reform, even though it places much more emphasis on acquiring complex military capability to carry out military crisis management operations outside of the territory of the Czech Republic. This is attested by the hire of the supersonic multi-purpose combat aircraft (Gripen), by entering into service L -159 Alca (made in the Czech Republic), purchase of the modernized tank T - 72M4CZ, the modernization of helicopters, the planned purchase of new armoured wheel personnel carrier, and some other projects.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, much greater

7 Ministerstvo obrany České republiky (Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic) (2003): *Koncepce výstavby profesionální Armády České republiky a mobilizace ozbrojených sil České republiky* přepracovaná na změněný zdrojový rámec. (The Concept of the Professional Army CR build-up and Armed Forces CR Mobilisation, Adapted to the Changed Resource Framework) A-report, n. 24, p. 6 - 7.

8 Ministerstvo obrany České republiky (Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic) (2003): *Koncepce výstavby profesionální Armády České republiky a mobilizace ozbrojených sil České republiky*

specialisation of the ACR than in the past is anticipated in the area of passive monitoring systems and the means for dealing with the after-effects of the use of the means of mass destruction. Last but not least, an emphasis is put on the introduction of modern information and logistic systems in all components of the ACR. The Army of the Czech Republic remains a balanced force comprising all vital components and capable of autonomous defence of the CR territory, even though, compared to the Czechoslovak People's Army of the Cold War Period, it will be downsized by an order of magnitude both in terms of its manpower and heavy military hardware, which is a tendency resisted by part of the officer corps.

Regarding the role of the Social Democrats in implementation of the ACR reform, it should be noted that in the period of the government of the Social Democratic Party, the previously started trend of having a civilian MoD minister was interrupted. As J. Eichler says, "*the Social Democratic Party gave the post of the MoD minister to its politician only once, in 1998. At that time, the party chose out of its ranks an entirely unknown and an entirely inexperienced teacher of the Military Academy in Brno.* (V. Vetchý - the author's note)." (Eichler 2003: 1) Thus, the post of the MoD minister began to be occupied by soldiers again - J. Tvrđík in 2001 - 2003 and M. Kostelka in 2003 - 2004. The trend that was begun under the Social Democratic minority government in 2001, was continued under the coalition government of the Social Democratic Party, the Christian Democratic Party and the Union of Freedom (from 2002). It and only ended in summer 2004, when, after the fall of the cabinet of V. Špidla (Social Democratic Party), K. Kühnl (Union of Freedom) became the MoD minister in the cabinet of S. Gross (Social Democratic Party). This phenomenon can be used as a further illustration of the fact that the ACR reform is being undertaken under relatively small influence of elected political elites, who, having given up all attempts to prepare their own concept of the reform, rely almost exclusively on concepts prepared by military elites.

The Czech Armed Forces has suffered from lack of financial resources. In the Czech Republic, a reform of public finances has been in progress since 2002, carried out due to deficits in national budgets that are not sustainable for a long time. This process has brought about (despite the fact that defence expenses are in no case the culprit of the gloomy state of national finances in the Czech Republic) the reduction in the share of expenses on defence on GDP to 1.56% in 2007, which is naturally negative regarding the needs of the concurrently ongoing reform of the Czech army.<sup>9</sup> These relatively low defence expenditures – much lower than those in the period of socialism building – are perceived by Czech people as being an excessive burden on the resources of the society. Sociological surveys indicate, as Jandová and Palvíková point out (Jandová-Pavelková 2003: 46), that in 2003, this negative view of defence expenditures was shared by 58% of the total population. On the other hand, according to the survey conducted in October

přepřacovaná na změněný zdrojový rámec (The concept of the professional Army of the Czech Republic build-up adapted to a changed resource framework). A-revue, č. 24.

9 Základní ukazatele státního rozpočtu v kapitole Ministerstvo obrany ČR v letech 1993 – 2007 (Main parameters of the Czech military expenditures in the years 1993 – 2007). <http://www.army.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=5146> (stav k 14. 4. 2007).

2002, 70% respondents think that it is desirable that our armed forces should catch up with the level of the armed forces of developed western countries, while only 21% expressed the opposite view.<sup>10</sup> From this we can conclude that Czech society wants to have a similar army to other NATO member countries, but they are not ready to spend on money that are necessary for achieving this goal.

### 3. 2 The Evolution of the Tasks of the Army in the 1990s

Turning now to the question of the tasks of the armed forces in the Czech Republic, it should be noted that a rather illogical definition of armed forces is used in the Czech Republic. The armed forces of the Czech Republic consist of the Army, the Military Office of the President of the Republic and the Castle Guard (i.e. presidential guard). The police and the customs service personnel are not included in the definition of the armed forces. Out of all the elements making up the armed forces, only the Army is relevant to the subject matter of this study. Neither the Military Office of the President of the Republic nor the Castle Guard can be considered an essential institution from the point of view of the defence capability of the Czech Republic.

Since 1993, the tasks of the Army as one of the components making up the armed forces have been defined by a law in the following way: *“(1) The basic task of the armed forces is to prepare for the defence of the Czech Republic and to defend it, if the need arises, against an external aggression. (2) It is also the duty of the armed forces to fulfil the tasks that are necessary to meet the commitments of the Czech Republic that follow from international common defence agreements to which it is a party.”*<sup>11</sup> In 1999 a radical reform of the Czech Republic defence legislation took place. The new law (Law No. 219/1999 Coll.), does not fundamentally change the tasks, it only further expands them. Among the most important tasks of the army are the protection of important buildings and facilities, providing assistance in rescue operations and when dealing with the consequences of natural (and other) disasters, air transport of government officials, air transport in medical emergencies, air search services, etc.<sup>12</sup>

For a long time, there was a lack of a more detailed elaboration of the tasks of the army, and this situation became the subject of much criticism on the part of the Czech defence community. A radical change of the situation was only been brought about in 1999, when the Security Strategy of the Czech Republic was adopted, which was the first document of its kind. The Strategy is the basic framework of national security policy of the Czech Republic.

10 Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění, Sociologický ústav Akademie věd České republiky (Centre for Public Opinion Research, Sociological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic): *Veřejnost k obranné strategii ČR a k rozšíření NATO* (Public opinion and Czech defence strategy and NATO enlargement). Press release Pm21122, pg. 1.

11 Zákon o Armádě České republiky č. 15/1993Sb., úplné znění. (Law no. 15/1993 Coll. on the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic, full statutory text)

12 Zákon o ozbrojených silách České republiky, č. 229/1999Sb. (Law on The Armed Forces of the Czech Republic, no. 219/1999 Coll. Laws), § 14.

The Security Strategy of the Czech Republic defines vital, strategic and other important interests of the state. According to the document, the realisation of the strategic interests serves the aim of protection of the vital interests of the Czech Republic. The document includes among the vital interests the following: securing the continued existence of the Czech Republic, protecting its independence, democracy and the rule of law, and, last but not least, the protection of the basic human rights and liberties of its citizens. The strategic interests are defined in the Security Strategy of the Czech Republic as follows: security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic region, continued existence of the UN with a more effective role, strong transatlantic link within NATO and strategic partnership between NATO and European Union, complementary development of the respective defence capabilities of NATO and EU, fight against terrorism, reducing the risks of the proliferation of mass destruction weapons and their carriers, elimination of organised crime and of illegal migration, reduction of the risk of the attack on the Czech Republic by the weapons of mass destruction, promotion of regional cooperation, providing for the economic security of the Czech Republic and strengthening the competitiveness of the national defence industry, and, finally, providing support to the spread of freedom and democracy.

The 2003 Security Strategy of the Czech Republic considered the international security environment as being very favourable at the time when the document was written, because there was no threat of a massive military aggression directed against the territory of the Czech Republic. The most dangerous threats of the present time are considered to be the international terrorism (often based on religious radicalism), organised crime, proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction and their carriers, greater accessibility of technologies needed for their production and the possibility that these weapons could be used by terrorist groups. Among the other threats that are perceived to be there are the ever-increasing gap between the North and the South, decline of the functionality of states, organised crime, spreading of drugs and global climatic changes.

Thus, a certain demilitarisation of the concept of security can be detected in the Security Strategy of the Czech Republic in the sense of there being less emphasis on the traditional threats connected with an aggression against the territory of the Czech Republic conducted by a foreign power. This trend is even more apparent if we look at the Czech society at large - a conclusion that can be inferred from the results of the CVVM (Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění - Centre for Public Opinion Research) survey conducted in December 2006. The survey shows that 61% Czech people believe that security and peace are threatened by ethnic minorities living in the Czech Republic, 71% think these threats are posed by refugees from other countries, 90% see these risks in terrorism, and 94% believe these risks are posed by international organised crime. In answering another question (how real are individual security threats) 85% ranked a

natural catastrophe as a small to medium threat, 82% pointed to threat of epidemic, 60% chose the threat of war.<sup>13</sup>

There are certain passages contained in the document dealing with the question of the use of military force that remind one of an attempt to dance among eggs. The amended version of the Security Strategy of the Czech Republic speaks only of the use of force that is accord with the UN Charter, but, on the other hand, the same document also contains the following passage: “*The Czech Republic is ready to take part in enforcement operations conducted by the international community aimed at the prevention of a massive breach of human rights, genocide in particular. Such operations should have the widest possible international support, including the UN Security Council mandate.*”<sup>14</sup> Naturally, whenever applying the principles of the Security Strategy in practice, two factors will play an important role: 1. the specific form of *ad hoc* interpretation of this passage, and 2. the specific form of consensus reached by politicians. With respect to the possible interpretation, it is important to note that what is spoken of here is not operations under *the UN* umbrella, but operations of *the international community*, and, furthermore, the formulation of the principle says that the operations *should* have the Security Council mandate and not that it *must* have it. The use of the conditional leaves the door open for conducting a multinational military operation without the authorisation of the UN Security Council, provided it is taken with the aim to protect human rights or to stop genocide. If this is the correct interpretation of the 2003 security strategy of the Czech Republic, it indicates that the Czech security policy attaches more importance to having a certain amount of the freedom of action than to building a world order based on the right of veto of states that find it difficult to respect the human rights of all their citizens (China) or ethnic minorities (Russia in Chechnya)

The 2003 Security Strategy of the Czech Republic takes for its principal security policy purpose the following: to secure sovereignty, territorial integrity, the principles of democracy and rule of law, and the protection of the lives and property of the Czech Republic population against external threats. The main pillar of defence is taken to be the membership in NATO, and that is also why Czech defence policies should be formulated in a way that is in accord with the Strategic Concept of the Alliance. Last but not least, the document declares readiness to take part in a wide spectrum of military crisis management operations. The army should always be ready to defend the territory of the state, while part of its capacities should be earmarked for Alliance operations under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. Furthermore, in that document, the Czech Republic declares its willingness to contribute to the Alliance rapid forces build-up and to specialize in the area of protection against the effects of the use of weapons of mass destruction. From the point of view of the Czech Army build-up, there is another

13 Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění, Sociologický ústav Akademie věd České republiky (Centre for Public Opinion Research, Sociological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic): *Bezpečnostní rizika pro ČR z pohledu veřejného mínění*. (Security risks for the Czech Republic from point of view public opinion) Press release Pm70129, p. 1-2.

14 *Bezpečnostní strategie České republiky* (Security Strategy of the Czech Republic) (2003) Prague, p. 15-16.

important statement, namely that the armed forces of the Czech Republic are ready to take part both in peace and humanitarian operations conducted by the UN and European Union. Last but not least, the document declares “*the armed forces are a constant part of the Alliance air-defence system (NATINEADS), and are ready to accept NATO reinforcements on Czech Republic territory, if the need arises. Further, the Army of the Czech Republic earmarks and prepares part of its forces pro NATO and EU operations responding to crisis situations (peace making, supporting or maintaining outside of Article 5 of Washington Treaty). The limits for the build-up of the contingent are stipulated by the Military Strategy of the Czech Republic.*”<sup>15</sup>

What the elites currently expect of the Czech army is, primarily, its participation in a wide range of military crisis-management operations under the umbrella of various international institutions such as the UN, NATO and EU. It should be noted in this connection that, since 1989, the Czech Army has participated in 22 operations abroad, whose specific forms range from observation missions through peace-support operations to peace-enforcement operations. Among the most important ones were undoubtedly the participation in the Desert Storm operations, UNPPROFOR, IFOR, SFOR and KFOR missions, and the Czech participation in the Enduring Freedom operation.<sup>16</sup> At the end of 2006, the total of 1029 troops were deployed abroad.<sup>17</sup> The defence of the territory of the Czech Republic against an external aggression is perceived as a rather unlikely variant of the use of the Czech Armed Forces in the near future. But, if such a situation arose, the defence would be realised within the frame of the NATO collective defence.

The deployment of Czech military units abroad is usually an apple of discord for the political elites and the whole society. Left-wing politicians from the Communist Party and the left wing of social democrats are fundamental opponents of any participation in military crisis management operations out of the territory of the Czech Republic. On the contrary, right- and centric-wing politicians usually vote for Czech participation in military crisis management operations even if some of them are occasionally against. Generally, it is true that left-wing politicians and especially social democrats are more willing to support the deployment of the Czech army abroad if the operation is organized by the United Nations and not by the NATO. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is negatively perceived by communists, left-wing social democrats and a part of left-wing intellectuals in the long run. Considering the NATO role in the Cold War and the NATO credit of the downfall of communist domination in Eastern and Central Europe, this attitude seems to be understandable. Regarding the Czech participation in military crisis management operations, it seems to be necessary to stress that the Czech Republic has not participated yet in any military operation abroad without the UN Security Council or host country permission.

15 Bezpečnostní strategie České republiky (Security Strategy of the Czech Republic) (2003) Prague, p. 18.

16 More on that in Historie zahraničních misí (History of international missions) <http://www.army.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=3699> (situation 14th of April 2007).

17 Čeští vojáci v zahraničí k 31. prosinci 2006. (Czech soldiers abroad in 2006) <http://www.army.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=8402> (situation on 14th of April 2007).

Nevertheless, the Czech public is not ready to give an unconditional support to military crisis management operations. According to sociological surveys, 50% citizens supported our participation in such operations, while 41% were against it and 9% could not make up their mind one way or another. But it should be noted in this connection that the participation in the UN missions was supported by 73% of Czech citizens (Jandová-Pavlíková 2003: 35) This is probably to be understood in the light of another fact, namely that, people in the Czech Republic perceive the UN as being by far the most trustworthy institution.<sup>18</sup> According a long-term research conducted by a prestigious Czech institution, Centre for Public Opinion Research of the Sociological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, the UN is the most trusted international organisation by Czech public, the level of trust in that institution standing above 60% over a long period of time. The relevant data are summed up in the following table:

**Table n. 1: Trust in selected international institutions – comparison (%)<sup>19</sup>**

	XI/03	III/04	V/04	XI/04	II/05	IX/06	II/2007
UN	64	70	64	62	61	61	56
EU	57	56	64	55	56	58	50
NATO	50	57	49	49	48	48	45

One might also want to explain the fact by concluding that the Czech public is not very well informed about the nature and performance of the UN.

The participation of the Czech army in the fight against the international terrorisms in Afghanistan and in missions aimed at stabilising the situation in Iraq at the end of 2002 and beginning of 2003 was supported by about 50% of Czech citizens. (Jandová-Pavlíková 2003: 36) But the support of the Czech public for these stabilizing operations has been falling since. The attitude of the Czech public to the deployment of Czech troops in Afghanistan is negative as well. In February 2004, 17% respondents in a CVVM survey expressed their support for these policies, while 75% were against.<sup>20</sup> In

18 One might also want to explain the fact by concluding that the Czech public is not very well informed about the nature and actual performance of the UN.

19 Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění, Sociologický ústav Akademie věd České republiky (Centre for Public Opinion Research, Sociological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic): *Důvěra Čechů k OSN, EU a NATO (Trust Czech to the UN, EU and NATO)*. Press release Pm61031, pp. 1-2. and Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění, Sociologický ústav Akademie věd České republiky (Centre for Public Opinion Research, Sociological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic): *Důvěra a spokojenost Čechů s OSN, EU a NATO (Trust Czech to and satisfaction with the UN, EU and NATO)*. Press release Pm70312, pp. 1-2.

20 Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění, Sociologický ústav Akademie věd České republiky (Centre for Public Opinion Research, Sociological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic):

February 2005, 46% respondents of another CVVM were against the mission of Czech military police in Iraq, while only 37% supported it.<sup>21</sup>

In general, the sociological data suggest that the Czech society is, to a certain degree, divided over the issue of defence. The October 2002 CVVM survey showed that, on the one hand, there were 87% respondents subscribing to the thesis that the sovereignty of the state should be defended at all costs, while only 9% were against, but at the same time, 61% respondents in the same survey also subscribed to the idea that it would be pointless to even try to defend the state, since its fate would be decided by the superpowers anyway (30% respondents disagreed) and 62% respondents agreed with the view that the Czech Republic would not be able to defend successfully itself, 28% disagreed.<sup>22</sup> Similar results were also brought by a CVVM survey conducted in January 2007. It showed that 87.7% believe in the defence of their country at all costs, while 63.5% think we would not be able to defend ourselves anyway, and 59.5% are convinced that the fate of our country will be decided by the superpowers.<sup>23</sup> These views probably reflect the prevailing interpretation of Czech and Czechoslovak history. Especially the events of 1938 and 1968 seem to give much support to the believe that one should not expect France (1938) or USSR (1968) to meet their commitments as allies, and that the fate of our country would be decided by the superpowers, who would try to push their own interest, anyway.

### **3. 3 The Power of Political Institution with Respect to the Army**

In the Czech Republic, the basic powers with respect to the Army are mainly divided between the executive and the judiciary. The government is one of the poles of the executive besides the president. It has relatively more influence on political matters than president, and that is also true of its powers vis-à-vis the army. The position of the government within the political system of the Czech Republic gives it wide-ranging powers in the area of Armed Forces control in general, and the Army, as its most important and biggest component, in particular. The government is responsible for the creation of security and defence policies of the Czech Republic, which find their expression in a set of security documents approved by the government and implemented by individual ministries as top organs of state administration. To implement the security policies in various specific areas, including those that concern the Army, the government proposes drafts of laws which are then, in accordance with the Constitution of the Czech

Postoj občanů k vyslání českých vojáků do Afghánistánu (Citizen attitude to the Czech military deployment in Afghanistan). Press release Pm40305.

21 Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění, Sociologický ústav Akademie věd České republiky (Centre for Public Opinion Research, Sociological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic): Irák z pohledu veřejného mínění (Iraq from point of view public opinion). Press release Pm50318, p. 4.

22 Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění, Sociologický ústav Akademie věd České republiky (Centre for Public Opinion Research, Sociological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic): Veřejnost k obranné strategii ČR a k rozšíření NATO (Public opinion and Czech defence strategy and NATO enlargement). Press release Pm21122, p. 2.

23 Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění, Sociologický ústav Akademie věd České republiky (Centre for Public Opinion Research, Sociological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic): Postoj občanů k NATO (The Czech Republic citizens attitude to the NATO). Press release Pm70221, p.2.



Republic, passed to the Parliament. The Government of the Czech Republic makes decisions about the main directions of the Army build-up, its training and use a part of the Armed Forces, and it approves the concept of its mobilisation.<sup>24</sup> In accordance with the Czech Republic system of law, the government approves the operational plans (proposed by the minister) for the use of the armed forces in case of the threat to the state and the state of war. It further approves the structure of armed forces, total size of the armed forces manpower and the concept of the army build-up.<sup>25</sup> One of the important tasks of the government is to propose the size of that part of the total government budget that will be allocated to defence. The task of optimising the cooperation between individual ministries in the process of making the security policies falls to a body called the Security Council, whose members are premier minister and selected government ministers.<sup>26</sup>

Last but not least, the government, together with the Parliament, decides whether to send Czech troops abroad and whether to allow foreign troops to be stationed on the territory of the Czech Republic. The Czech parliament decides about the appointment of military units to the military structures of the international security organization, such as the NATO and the European Union. The declaration of war is an exclusive power of the parliament as well; fortunately, it has never been used yet. On the other hand, decisions concerning Czech participation in military crisis management operations are made relatively often. Powers of the Czech government and the parliament regarding military units deployment abroad have gradually changed since 1993. Increasing government jurisdiction and simplification were typical of this process. Originally, the consent of both parliament chambers was necessary to ensure the Czech military participation in military crisis management operations abroad. Unfortunately, it was impractical and tedious. The Czech parliament still has this power; in other words, the consent of both parliament chambers is necessary in case of deployment of the Czech military units out of its territory but the last version of constitution allows the government to rule on some types of military deployments independently.

Regarding fulfilling international obligations regarding common defense as well as the participation in peacekeeping operations with agreement of the host country and organized by an international institution with a Czech membership, or taking part in rescue operations in case of natural disasters and industrial or ecological emergencies, the government is eligible to deploy Czech armed forces abroad without a previous permission of both parliament chambers for 60 days. However, the Parliament of the Czech Republic has the power to reverse this governmental decision.<sup>27</sup>

24 Zákon o zajišťování obrany České republiky, č. 222/1999Sb., úplné znění, paragraf 5. (5§ of Law no. 222/1999 Coll. on the Czech defense provision, full statutory text).

25 Zákon o ozbrojených silách České republiky, č. 219/1999Sb., úplné znění, paragraf 6. (6§ of Law no. 219/1999 Coll. on the Czech Armed Forces, full statutory text).

26 Ústavní zákon o bezpečnosti České republiky č. 110/1998 Sb., úplné znění, čl. 9. (9 para. of Constitutional Law No. 110/1998 Coll. On Security of the Czech Republic, full statutory text).

27 Ústava České republiky, zákon č. 1/1993Sb., úplné znění, článek 43 (Constitution of the Czech Republic, para 43 of Law No. 1/1993 Coll., full statutory text).

The second component of the executive power in the political system of the Czech Republic is the president. On the basis of an older historical tradition going back to the period 1918 – 1938 (finding its expression also in the construction of the political system of the Czech Republic), the president has several powers with respect to the Armed Forces in general and the Army in particular. First and foremost, according to the Constitution of the Czech Republic he is the commander in-chief of the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic and has the power to appoint and promote generals.<sup>28</sup> According to the Czech Constitution, the decisions of the president in above areas, in order to be valid, must also be signed by the prime minister. As the commander in-chief of the Army the president has also these powers: to approve basic military regulations, to confer honorific or historic names on military units and to bestow military flags to units. Just to make the list complete, we should also mention the fact that the president has the power of appointment and removal of the Chief of the Military Office of the President of the Republic, which, strictly according to the Czech system of law is not part of the Army. According to the system of law of the Czech Republic the Military Office of the President of the Republic is a component of the Armed forces, alongside the Army and the Castle Guard.<sup>29</sup>

The tasks of the Parliament of the Czech Republic with respect to the Army consist mainly of the following: 1. to take part in the preparation and realisation of the concept of security policy; 2. to control the executive branch (which includes the armed forces and the army as their component), mainly through the control of the process of the realisation of the program statement; 3. to pass the government budget, which includes as its part finance allocated to the army; 4. to participate in the process of creating laws relating the armed forces; 5. to decide whether to declare war; 6. to decide whether to send troops abroad and whether to allow stationing foreign troops on the territory of the Czech Republic, provided the decision does not belong to the government.

To sum up, we can conclude that, in the Czech Republic, the key powers with respect to the Army belong to the government. The role of the Parliament is limited to controlling functions exercised through appropriate committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

### **3. 4 The Future Development of the Czech Army as Envisaged by Political Elites**

Several discussions about security issues have taken place in the Czech Republic. The first one took place as early as the beginning of the 1990s as part of discussions about the further directions of the development of the country after the collapse of socialism. At beginning of these discussions, some politicians, for example Václav Havel and Jiří

28 Ústava České republiky, zákon č. 1/1993Sb., úplné znění, článek 63. (Constitution of the Czech Republic, para 63 of Law No. 1/1993 Coll., full statutory text.).

29 Zákon o ozbrojených silách České republiky, č. 219/1999Sb., úplné znění, paragraf 3 a 5 (3 and 5§ of Low no. 219/1999 Coll. on the Czech Armed Forces, full statutory text).

Dientsbier (foreign minister at the time) envisaged the creation of a pan-European security organisation that would be based on CSCE. It is the task of future research to show to what extent this was a genuine attempt to create an authentic security-political strategy, and to what extent it was just a tactical step whose aim was to prepare conditions that would make it possible for Czechoslovakia to regain full sovereignty after the departure of the Soviet occupying forces. After the departure of the Soviet troops, the possibility of our accession to NATO became an issue of our security policy. The accession to NATO was supported by liberal and conservative forces and opposed by the political left. The debate was stimulated by the actual results achieved by CSCE, the conflict in what used to be Yugoslavia and, to some extent, the fear of Russia. After the Czech Republic came into existence as a separate entity in 1993, the new government of the ODS (Civic Democratic Party), ODA (Civic Democratic Alliance) and KDU ČSL (Christian Democratic Union – Czech People's Party) openly declared that it was their aim to achieve the full integration of the Czech Republic in the North Atlantic Alliance. This policy was supported even by part of social democrats with liberal-democratic orientation. The communists – both those who remained loyal to the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia and those who had gone over to the Czech social democrats – remained unequivocally opposed to it. A part of left-wing politicians and intellectuals without communist past opposed the Czech NATO Membership too.

The second debate on security issues (which was not as large as the debate on our NATO membership) concerned the question of whether the Czech Republic should actively participate in (out of area) military crisis management operations. Like in the previous debate, the liberal-conservative political forces preferred the engagement of the country in these operations, while the attitude of the social democrats towards it remained rather reserved, and their allies in the Communists Party became open critical of it, refusing an any participation of the Czech Republic in such operations. Both these debates were concerned with international aspects of our security policy, while, in the 1990s, there was no comparable nation-wide debate on issues concerning the transformation of the army or civil-military relations. Consequently, there was no nation-wide debate on the values of the ideal Czech soldier either. The latter debate did not take place because the Czech population at large did not consider the issue a priority. The issue was more or less ignored even by the media, except for occasional discussions of partial problems relating to things like the behaviour of some high-ranking officials of the MoD in the past, especially their collaboration with repressive organs of socialist Czechoslovakia.

Regarding Iraq is necessary to take into account that the political discussion the issue of Czech participation in the process of Iraq-stabilisation is nowadays an important part of the debate concerning military crisis management operations. (More Král – Pachtla 2004).

There was also a nation-wide discussion of the partial political issue of acquisition programmes of the Czech army, especially the modernisation programme of Mig-21 and T-72, renting or, as the case might be, leasing Gripen-fighters and the purchase of new armoured personnel carriers. Not even the question of the abolition of the compulsory

military service (which is not the same as the obligation to defend the state, if the need arises, which has been retained) was subjected to a proper nation-wide discussion. Both the overwhelming majority of the population at large and basically all political parties supported this step. 79% of the total population were for the full professionalization of the Army, the percentage being even higher - 83% - among the population below the age of 30. (Jandová-Pavlíková 2003: 34)

Throughout the 1990s, the Czech army was undergoing a profound transformation, which is still far from being completed. The transformation is driven by the need to adapt the Czech army to the new international security environment (in particular to NATO and the EU) and to the limited defence budget. When analysing the civil-military relations in the Czech Republic, one has to take into account the attitudes of individual political parties to this process because that is what will determine (to a large extent) the future shape of the Czech army. In general, Czech political parties have had difficulties creating consistent programs relating to the army and security policy.

The evidence for this statement is, that unlike the former opposition (Civic Democratic Party), the Social Democratic Party has not proposed any ACR reform concept of its own during its term and relied on concept created by military elites.

The ACR reform has been at the centre of attention of the Civic Democratic Party after 2000, and it is a deplorable fact that no other alternative to the reform concepts worked out by military elites has been proposed than the one prepared by this party. Later, the coalition government took over responsibility for the alternative. Naturally, the CDP 's defence policy reflects that party's foreign policy position, which, in the area of security, is characterized by a profound mistrust of the EU security dimension and the emphasis on the North Atlantic Alliance as the principal guarantee of the security of the Czech Republic. Thus, it's hardly surprising that the CDP insists that "*The Czech Republic must reject all suggestions, based on the proposed European constitution, to the effect that a European substitute for NATO should be built or that there could be a system of collective defence within EU.*"<sup>30</sup>

According to the CDP, after the reform is completed, the ACR should be capable of being incorporated in NATO operational forces, if the need arises to deal with a major regional conflict. In case of a minor regional conflict that could be dealt with by Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, the Czech Army should be able to provide two light mechanised battalions and, at the same time, it should have at its disposal one battalion for peace operations, humanitarian operations or rescue operations. In case of the use of the weapons of mass destructions, the Czech Army should be capable of deploying a brigade specialised for the protection against the after-effects of the use that kind of weapons. Besides, for the purposes of the Article 5 operations, the Czech Army should

30 Nečas, Petr (2003): *Moderní vojsko pro 21. století. Modrá šance pro bezpečnost země* (Modern armed forces for the 21st century. Blue chance for the security of this country, CDP program document). Praha, p. 10.

have at its disposal two contingents totalling up to 1000 soldiers with a long period of rotation.<sup>31</sup>

The conception of the ACR reform prepared at the MoD by the military elites under the social democratic governments was criticized by the CDP for the following reasons: 1. The CDP has always argued for rather smaller target size of the Czech Army. 2. The CDP has criticised some modernization projects. The sharpest criticism by the CDP has probably been levelled against the project of the purchase (in fact leasing) of the Gripen supersonic aircraft. As far as the project of T-72 modernization is concerned, its uncompromising rejection by the CDP has only been a relatively recent development. 3. The CDP has always been in favour of more specialization of the ACR than any of the two former social democratic governments. 4. The CDP has always been a critic of the tendency to concentrate the whole of the Czech Army into a few large military bases and of the resulting process of abandoning many smaller garrisons all over the territory of the Czech Republic.

Even though the CDP subjected to sharp criticism the fact that in connection with the launching of the reform of public finance, the military expenditures were reduced from 2.2% GDP to 1.9-2% GDP, the party itself did not intend to increase military expenditures. I believe that here we can see a certain degree of populism on the part of the CDP. The idea that the military expenditures should be increased again is rather unpopular among the Czech public at large, and, besides, given the large public finance deficit generated by the former social democratic governments (more than 3% GDP annually at the time of economic grow about 5% of GDP annually), any increase in military expenditures could only happen at the cost of further increasing the already enormous government debt, which is something the CDP itself has always criticized, or at the cost of reducing public expenditures in other areas. The CDP suggests that the size of the reformed ACR should be 28,000 soldiers and 4,000 civil employees. The party wants to have an army that would be relatively small in terms of its manpower, but modern in terms of its equipment. With regard to the future of the ACR, the following principle adhered to by the CDP is important: *“out of all the activities and capabilities [of the ACR] only those should be further developed in which we are able to achieve the top - or at least above the average - level. The ones that are bellow the average should uncompromisingly be cancelled. The average will either become better-than-average, or it will be cancelled.”*<sup>32</sup> The core of the ACR should be brought up to the standards of NATO Response Forces. As the CDP states, *“because of the big difference between, on the one hand, the military capabilities of the US and British armed forces, and the capabilities of all the other armies on the other hand, the ACR should concentrate predominantly (if not exclusively) on the USA and Great Britain. Our army should*

31 Nečas, Petr (2003): *Moderní vojsko pro 21. století. Modrá šance pro bezpečnost země* (Modern armed forces for the 21st century. Blue chance for the security of this country, CDP program document). Praha, p. 19.

32 Nečas, Petr (2003): *Moderní vojsko pro 21. století. Modrá šance pro bezpečnost země* (Modern armed forces for the 21st century. Blue chance for the security of this country, CDP program document). Praha, p. 15.

*develop the capability to provide brigades, battalions and companies for the corps, divisions and brigades under American or British command.*"<sup>33</sup> The Czech Republic should also avoid any commitments to build forces above and beyond the NATO framework. To achieve an overall reduction in military infrastructure so as to save financial resources, the CDP suggests that the ACR should integrate its repair, training and logistic capacities, as well as its air-defence support, with Slovakia. The party further believes, that, to make sure the ACR is capable to fulfil all its functions, an "active reserves corps" should be created.<sup>34</sup>

The most serious conclusion that can be drawn is the finding that there is a disagreement between the CDP, which is at this time in power and former government coalition led by social democrats with respect to one basic parameter of the armed forces: the socialist government wanted to have all-round armed forces comprising all basic components, capable of carrying out an autonomous action, while the CDP wants a more specialised army that would give up some of its traditional capabilities.

**Table n. 2: Comparison of the former government coalition under leadership of social democrats and CDP reform concepts<sup>35</sup>**

	Former coalition government	CDP
Military spending	2% GDP	2% GDP
Soldiers	26,200	28,000
Civilian Employees	8,800	4,000
Method of recruitment	Voluntary	Voluntary
Philosophy of the ACR Build-up	All-round armed forces comprising all basic	Armed forces specialized in selected areas with the

33 Nečas, Petr (2003): *Moderní vojsko pro 21. století. Modrá šance pro bezpečnost země* (Modern armed forces for the 21st century. Blue chance for the security of this country, CDP program document). Praha, p. 16.

34 More Nečas, Petr (2003): *Moderní vojsko pro 21. století. Modrá šance pro bezpečnost země* (Modern armed forces for the 21st century. Blue chance for the security of this country, CDP program document). Praha, p. 15 - 17.

35 Ministerstvo obrany České republiky (Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic) (2003): *Koncepce výstavby profesionální Armády České republiky a mobilizace ozbrojených sil České republiky* (The concept of the professional Army of the Czech Republic build-up adapted to a changed resource framework). A-revue, č. 24 and Nečas, Petr (2003): *Moderní vojsko pro 21. století. Modrá šance pro bezpečnost země* (Modern armed forces for the 21st century. Blue chance for the security of this country, CDP program document). Praha.

	components designed primarily for territorial defence and only secondarily for military operations abroad	emphasis on the capability to carry out military operations abroad
Modernization	In all types of arms	Only in selected areas
Active reserves	Medium degree of preference	High degree of preference

Another, rather alarming finding made by the author in the process of collecting material for this study is the deplorable fact that the other Czech parliamentary political parties, namely the Christian Democratic Party-Czech People's Party, the Union of Freedom and the opposition Communist Party have not managed to work out any coherent concept of the ACR reform. As we have already said, the government concept of the reform was actually prepared by military elites, and the social democrats only took over the responsibility for the concept and started its implementation in the period of its governments. The CDP seems to be the only party on the Czech political scene capable of preparing realistic and consistent reforms of the ACR partly independent on the view of Czech military elites.

It should be noted in connection with the army reform that the President of the Czech Republic, V. Klaus, puts, in direct opposition to the stance of his own party (CDP), more emphasis than does the former government reform concept and the concept of his own party (CDP) on the capability to defend the territory of the state, and he also rejects any one-sided preference for the build-up of the capability to participate in international military operations. But what is decisive in the process of determining the orientation of the ACR is not his view but the view of the government together with its ability to defend it in the Parliament.

On the other hand, it is necessary to take into account that since 2006 election the coalition government led by CDP has been going on military reform, which is in accordance to the concept approved by the former government (Social Democrats, Christian democrat and Union Freedom) in 2003. Civic Democratic Party gave up its military reform concept. Civic Democratic Party also doesn't execute the position of MoD, which belongs to the Christian Democrats and is nowadays appointed by a female politician (V. Parkanová).

The Czech military transformation has been under reconsideration since the new government came to power in 2006. With regard to cutting down the military expenditures, the Ministry of Defense plans to reduce the size of the army, so that it should have less than 20 000 soldiers, to cancel some military units and to decrease the

Czech participation in military crises management operations abroad. This process of reconsidering the military reform in the Czech Republic has not been completed at the time of finishing this study and the final parameters of the future Czech military are not known. Nevertheless, the trends in the development of the Czech military identified in this process are likely to continue.

### 3. 5 Perception of the Czech Armed Forces by the Society

Since the very beginning of the existence of the Czech Republic, there has existed one very important problem to deal with – to ensure on the part of both the population at large and the political elites some (at least basic level of) trust in the army institution. Given the predominantly bad experience of the population with compulsory military service in the 1980s and the widespread prejudice against the Czech army, this was by far not an easy task.

But, compared to the situation at the beginning of the 1990s, there have been several positive changes. The most of Czech public perceives the army as a politically neutral national institution. According to surveys conducted in 2000, 50.1% believed that Czech career officers were able to identify themselves with the democratic changes, while 23.7% were of the opposite opinion. (Kaprál 2001: 4) According to the results of a research conducted by the MoD Personnel Section, the number of people regarding the Czech army as a symbol of independence was growing in the 1990s. While only 58% respondents believed in 1997 that it was really so, in 2002 as many as 83% respondents subscribed to the view. (Jandová-Pavlíková 2003: 6) Gradually, the Czech society at large learned to trust the army, which can be demonstrated by the results of public opinion surveys conducted by various institutions. In 1996 50% respondents trusted the army, while 42% mistrusted it. By 2002 the number of respondents trusting the army had risen to 63%, while the number of those who mistrusted it had fallen to 34%. (Jandová-Pavlíková 2003: 19) The trend has been confirmed by other public opinion surveys as well. The same survey conducted in March 2003 showed that the army was trusted by 61% citizens. But the levels of trust of the public in the army should always be perceived against the background of the general mistrust of Czech people toward the other institutions of the political system of the Czech Republic. The March 2004 CVM survey shows that only 24% respondents trust political parties, the MPs being trusted even less, by only 22% respondents. The only exception to it was the president, who was trusted by 75% respondents.<sup>36</sup> Thus the Czech army has gradually become one of the most trusted (over a long period of time) state institutions.

Even though the Czech public dislikes a number of negative phenomena occurring in the army, one can conclude that, on the whole, *“the Czech public is convinced that it needs the Army, perceives it as a symbol of state sovereignty, and wants to maintain its own defence capability so as not to be entirely dependent on the allies. Our citizens are*

36 Centre for Public Opinion Research, Sociological Institute, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic: *Důvěra k některým institucím v naší společnosti a k lidem kolem nás. (Trust to some institutions in our society and to people around us)* Press release Pm40421, p. 1.



*aware of the importance of the Army and half of them also have a clear idea of what the goals of the Army should be at present. Its primary function, of course, should be the defence of the territory of the Czech republic. The other functions of the Army should, according to the public, be its external activities, especially its participation in military – both combat and peace – missions under the UN command”* (Jandová-Pavlíková 2003: 3) These attitudes of the Czech public toward the Army have obviously been influenced, among others, by its (successful) assistance in coping with the consequence of natural disasters.

The above mentioned data indicate that the gradual build-up of a still rather fragile trust between the Army and the democratic society at large started in 1990s and has continued successfully since then. The Czech society at the turn of the millennium does not (a priori) perceive the army as an alien element, even though, on the other hand, the most of Czech people are not ready to actively participate in the life of that institution, which is attested by the support they give to the abolition of obligatory military service. From these data (and from the fact that the voluntary form of recruitment is being preferred), which are in contradiction with the relatively high long-term levels of trust of the Czech society in the army institution, we can conclude that the support of the society at large for the army is in fact only relative, and only lasts as long as the citizens are not asked to make sacrifices for the benefit of the army. That is why the support for the army institution is best characterised by the slogan *“Let’s have an army ...but without me!”*

A combination of several factors is responsible for the existence of this widespread attitude. It is not easy to determine exactly the respective weights of these factors, but the most important one is probably the „1938 syndrome“. What one usually finds in Czech history textbooks – no matter whether they were written before or after 1989 – is a cliché interpretation consisting in the following schema: well armed, well trained, well entrenched and, most importantly, highly motivated Czech army gives in to French-British peacemakers and Nazi Germany and capitulates. Even though what happened was the responsibility of the Czech political elites of that time and (even more so) western politicians, who believed that a bad peace with Hitler gained at the cost of sacrificing Czechoslovakia was better than fighting a (victorious) war against Hitler, many Czech citizens blame it - unjustly – on the army. The army – whose command disapproved of what happened – followed just the orders of the political elites of that time. Not to follow the orders would be in sharp contradiction with the principles on which the functioning of the army of the democratic republic was based. Nevertheless, all the available historical materials suggest that, had the army been given the order to defend the country, it would have fought. On the other hand I do not think that 1968 USSR led intervention influences negatively the Czech society attitude towards the army because it is clear that Czechoslovakia did not have a chance to resist successfully. In this case, the Czech army is usually not blamed on non-fighting.

### 3. 6 Ethnical Issue in the Czech Armed Forces

After the transfer of the Germans in the period 1945 – 1946 and disintegration of the former Czechoslovakia in 1993, the Czech Republic became an ethnically uniform country. Immigration has not changed significantly the ethnical map of the Czech Republic yet. Despite of that, immigration into the Czech Republic is regarded as a threat to our security (see chapter 3. 2). By the end of 2004, about 250 000 (without the Roma) out of 10.3 mil inhabitants of the Czech Republic were foreigners. The Roma are the largest ethnical minority in the Czech Republic. Their real number is not known because they have the right to choose any nationality in the census and they very frequently choose Czech. The 2001 population census showed that only 12 000 of them acknowledged their nationality.<sup>37</sup> The real number of the Roma is unknown. It is estimated at about 200 000 inhabitants. Other significant ethnical minorities in the Czech Republic are the Ukrainians (80 000), Slovaks (38 000) and Vietnamese (34 000).<sup>38</sup>

The number of Czech Republic citizens with other than Czech nationality serving in the Czech army is not known or monitored. Due to the Czech history, a great number of Slovaks have been serving in the Czech army since the dissolution of the former Czechoslovakia. Once again, this number is not monitored. However, it is estimated that only a few Roma, Ukrainians and Vietnamese serve in the Czech army. On one hand, taking into account the way of recruiting in the Czech army (voluntaries), the army cannot be regarded as a tool of integration of ethnical minorities into the Czech society. On the other hand, the Czech army is not influenced by tensions among minorities because members of ethnical minorities usually do not serve there.

### 3. 7 Gender Issue and the Czech Armed Forces

Women were not allowed to serve in the Czechoslovak army before WWII. A more significant penetration of women into the military institution started at the end of 1980s, before the fall of the communist regime. The number of women in the Czech army has been steadily increasing since the early 1990s. In 2005, 2.947 women (12, 37% of the army) served in the Czech army. Nowadays, women serve both in logistics or health units and in combat units. Special forces constitute the only exception because of the physically and mentally extremely demanding training. Nevertheless, women in uniform are not a bone of contention within the Czech military institution. A majority of soldiers support the idea of increasing the number of women in the Czech military. (More Hřebíček 2006)

A special team was established in 1998 responsible for solving the gender issue in the Czech army. This team is composed of officers and officials from the Ministry of

37 Potírání rasismu v České republice. (Countering racism in the Czech Republic) [http://www.enar-eu.org/en/publication/national\\_leaflets/CzechRepublic\\_CZ.pdf](http://www.enar-eu.org/en/publication/national_leaflets/CzechRepublic_CZ.pdf), p. 4 (25. 9. 2007).

38 Potírání rasismu v České republice. (Countering racism in the Czech Republic) [http://www.enar-eu.org/en/publication/national\\_leaflets/CzechRepublic\\_CZ.pdf](http://www.enar-eu.org/en/publication/national_leaflets/CzechRepublic_CZ.pdf), p 4. (25. 9. 2007).

Defense, General Staff and high-ranking military commanders. In 2002 Minister of Defense adopted the order number 29/2002 focusing on establishing gender equality in the Czech army. There is a certain gender disparity in the share of men and women in commander positions in the Czech military. Only 5% of commanders are women, even though they form more than 12% of soldiers. (More Hřebíček 2006) Rather than discrimination, the reason for this situation could be that women have been steadily entering into the military institution since the early 1990s and most of them have not been serving for a sufficient time to be able to reach high ranking positions in the Czech army. So far, this situation is still not a bone of contention both in the military and in the society.

The issue of the (alleged) gender disparity has not been seriously discussed in the Czech society. The Czech population usually agrees that military institution is open for women. Before a Defense Act was passed in 2005, a certain debate devoted to gender equity took place. The new Defense Act established the duty to defend the country both for men and for women and therefore granted an equal right for both genders. As the Czech military is based on voluntaries, neither men nor women have been called up for military service. In case of war, men are supposed to be recruited first.

Paradoxically, this law was criticized by some women rights organizations despite of the fact that women have gained what they had wanted, namely the same rights and duties for men and women.

### **3. 8 Soldier–Citizen, Rights and Duties of Soldiers**

In the Czech Republic political parties are not allowed to operate in the Army or to have there any organisational units (the same ban holds for the other components of the Armed Forces as well), since to ensure the political neutrality of the army institution was one of the important aims of the post-1989 transformation.<sup>39</sup> For the same reason, soldiers are not allowed to hold political meetings in military facilities or to organise political agitation there. Soldiers in active military service cannot be members of political parties, movements or trade unions. Out of all existing interest organisations they are only allowed to be members of professional interest organisations. But their activities there must conform to the terms of the agreement on cooperation with the MoD.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, no law forbids soldiers to vote. They are also allowed to become independent nominees on ballot lists of political parties. This is partly a reflection of the historical experience from the period of the First Republic (1918-1938), partly it is an understandable response to subordination of the army to the Communist Party in the period of socialism-building.

39 Zákon o ozbrojených silách České republiky, č. 219/1999Sb., úplné znění, paragraf 4 (§ 4 of Law no. 219/1999 Coll. on the Czech Armed Forces, full statutory text).

40 Zákon o vojácích z povolání, č. 221/1999Sb, úplné znění, paragraf 44 a 45. (§ 44 a 45 Law No. 221/1999 Coll. on Career Officers, full statutory text).

This arrangement suggests that the German concept of “soldier – citizen in uniform” is (to some degree) applied in the Czech Republic. The ideal is a soldier who considers him/her self to be in the first place a citizen of the Czech Republic, and only in the second place a soldier, the purpose being not to allow soldiers to become a separate social caste that, being closed and isolated from the rest of the democratic society, could become a potential threat to it. But this image of the ideal soldier is not explicitly formulated in any legal documents, it is only contained in them implicitly. Soldiers are considered to be normal citizens and are allowed to participate in the democratic political process.

There were some attempts in the early 1990s to create a special apparatus for political indoctrination of soldiers so as to ensure that the army develops in the above mentioned direction, but they were finally discontinued with the coming into existence of the Czech Republic. The reason why these attempts were happening is to be understood in the light of the fact that, at that time, there were many people who used to work in the political apparatus of the Communist Party, and later, after 1968, found themselves in opposition to the communist regime and thus managed to gain the aureole of “freedom fighters”, even though in actual fact, they were actively serving the totalitarian regime in the 1950s. At the beginning of the 1990s they offered their “experience” to be used in the service of the army indoctrination again, but the right wing governments that got to power after the coming into being of the Czech Republic in 1993, being convinced (not without justification) that such projects were just an attempt to make it possible to survive in the army for officers who had been closely associated with the Communist party as experts on political indoctrination of troops. Besides, the permanent process of manpower downsizing in the 1990s did not create conditions favourable to the institutionalisation of political indoctrination in the Czech army, unlike the situation in the period 1918-1938, when a similar apparatus did exist in the army institution.

The present duties of soldiers in the Czech army are similar to those we find in other contemporary armies. Czech soldiers must: prepare for the defence of the Czech Republic and for fulfilling other duties in Armed Forces; learn and respect all the rules and regulations in the military; follow the orders and commands of their superiors; behave in conformity with the rules of politeness in the military; take proper care of all military equipment and material they use in the army, comply with the regulations for handling classified information and protect the environment.

So far there has been no proper discussion by politicians of what the ideal Czech soldier should be like. This might be surprising, especially in view of the historical experience of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic connected with the transition to democracy after 1989, but on the other hand, the fact tells us how little importance the Czech society attaches to this issue. What we can infer from the available data, is, in general, that the Czech society finds it desirable to have soldiers-citizens who will be integrated into the society at large and, at the same time, will respect the fact that the army should remain politically neutral. In other words, the ideal soldier will not engage in

politics in his/her capacity of a soldier, but in his/her capacity of a citizen.<sup>41</sup> It was especially president Václav Klaus, who has, in connection with the army professionalization, emphasised that we must make sure that things do not develop in a way that would finally lead to a state, where the army would be as special caste, cut off the interests and priorities of the rest of the society.

#### 4. Conclusion

The empirical analysis of the situation in the Czech Republic presents us with a rather complicated picture of civil-military relations. The historical tradition of the Czech Republic from the period 1918 – 1938 has played a significant role in the formation of what we can see in the picture. But since the communist regime managed to break the continuity of this tradition, its influence is now only indirect, mediated through the conviction of the Czech people that they must be good democrats because that is what the generation of their grandparents was. This belief in the inherently democratic nature of the Czech nation, which draws on the picture the Czech people painted by the authors on the 19<sup>th</sup> century national revival, is today an important factor in the formation of civil-military relations. Both political elites and the population at large assume that, given the democratic traditions of this country, the civil-democratic relations are bound to transform themselves more or less automatically and effortlessly into what we find in stabilized western democracies. Traditional Czech antimilitaristic attitude originated in resistance against Austrian- Hungary Empire is still present in the Czech society.

Another part of the Czech political culture is the conviction that big countries will always decide the fate of small countries without having to pay much attention to their interests. This conviction was formed especially under the impact of the historical experience with the French security guarantees of 1938 in the face of the threat posed by German expansionism and especially under the impact of the 1968 USSR led intervention. This historical experience generates both mistrust of big powers and a certain form of defeatism, which is characteristic especially of the older generation. On the one hand, national independence is much valued so as to be considered worth fighting for, but on the other hand, it is accepted a priori that the fate of this nation, since it is a small nation, will be decided by big powers anyway. In such an atmosphere, it is not easy for the army institution to make a convincing case for its own existence

Since 1993 the Czech army has undergone a number of reforms, which should be completed in 2010 – 2012. The target aimed at is an army recruited on the voluntary

41 Text vystoupení prezidenta republiky Václava Klause na velitelském shromáždění hlavních funkcionářů resortu dne 1.11.2005 (Text of the speech the president gave at gathering of commanders and leading MoD officials on 11th of January 2005) <http://www.army.cz/files/6829/prezident-projev.doc> (14th April, 2007) and Projev ministra obrany ČR Karla Kühnla na velitelském shromáždění v Praze, 1. listopadu 2005 (The speech of Karel Kühnl, CS MoD minister, delivered at the meeting of army commanders in Prague held on the 1st of November 2003) <http://www.army.cz/files/6829/mo-projev.doc> (April 14th 2007).

principle, capable of functioning within the Alliance in military crisis-management operations. Even though both military and political elites emphasise that the primary task is the defence of the home territory against external aggression, the character of the present international security environment makes that form of defence rather unlikely. A much more probable scenario of the participation of the Czech Republic in a military operation of common defence is the defence of an ally taking place outside the territory of the Czech Republic. In fact, the Czech military transformation prepares the Czech Armed Forces for military crisis management operations abroad. Therefore, even though the official documents give priority to the defence of the territory of the Czech Republic, the ideal Czech soldier of the future should be able to participate especially in out of area military crisis-management operations. As in other countries, a process of “demilitarisation of security” is taking place in the Czech Republic. Providing security to the citizens is more and more perceived to be the task for the police and secret service, and the army is being pushed to the background. That is also why no proper discussion about the abolition of the compulsory military service and full professionalization of the Czech army has taken place. Political debates of security matters are more or less limited, having for their topic especially acquisition programmes, avoiding thus substantial issues. The only exceptions seem to be the discussions about our accession to NATO and participation of Czech troops in out of area military operations that took place in the past, and the ongoing discussion about the participation of the Czech Republic in the American project of missile defence.

The available sources of data allow us to conclude that the ideal desired by the Czech society is one of “soldier-citizen-professional”. The ideal soldier is expected to master all the aspects of military profession, which was actually one of the reasons why the principle of compulsory military service has been abandoned in the Czech Republic. But that does not mean that the soldier should become a member of a special caste of military professionals who are detached from the democratic society at large. The Czech soldier is supposed to abstain from interfering in political matters from his/her position of a military professional, but on the other hand, qua citizen and with the aforementioned limitations, he/she can and should participate in the democratic political process. The society expects that the training and education of soldiers will be governed by the spirit of the democratic traditions and the traditions of the antifascist resistance of 1938 – 1945. The ideal Czech soldier of 2007, speaking about its attitude to the society, is not very different from the soldier of 1938. In this sense one can say that the Czech army of the present draws on the traditions of Czechoslovakia of 1918 – 1938. But unlike in the pre-war republic, today there is no well thought-out strategy of training and education of military professionals that could generate the ideal soldier, i.e. soldier-citizen. One of the reasons for that is the fact that, in the army institution, any form of political education is being perceived as an analogue of the political indoctrination with the ideas of Marxism-Leninism from the period of the building of the “developed socialist society”.

It is also obvious that the transformation of the civil-military relations after 1989 in the former Czechoslovakia and in today’s Czech Republic has similar features as the transformation that took place in Germany after the Second World War. Similarities to post-war Germany in civil military relation transformation and similarities to NATO

standards in military transformation are not stressed by Czech politicians because the contemporary Czech society is slightly allergic to the idea of foreign models. It is also the heritage of the Czech history and it is especially true regarding the Czech army. It is important to consider that the Czech army was built twice according to foreign models: first according to the French model in 1918 – 1938, and then according to the soviet model after 1945.

Of course, there is one important difference comparing the situation in post-Nazi Germany and nowadays in the Czech Republic: The extent to which the Czech Republic has so far been able to break-up and come to terms with its bolshevist past and its legacy does not come anyway near the radical solution that was forced on Germany, with respect to national socialism and its exponents, by the USA and other west occupying powers. This general conclusion also applies to the situation in the Czech army. People who used to work for political apparatus of the Communist Party managed to take roots in the Czech Army in the 1990s, and they still continue to exert (limited) influence on the process of its transformation. Paradoxically, this development only reflects the situation in the Czech society at large.

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