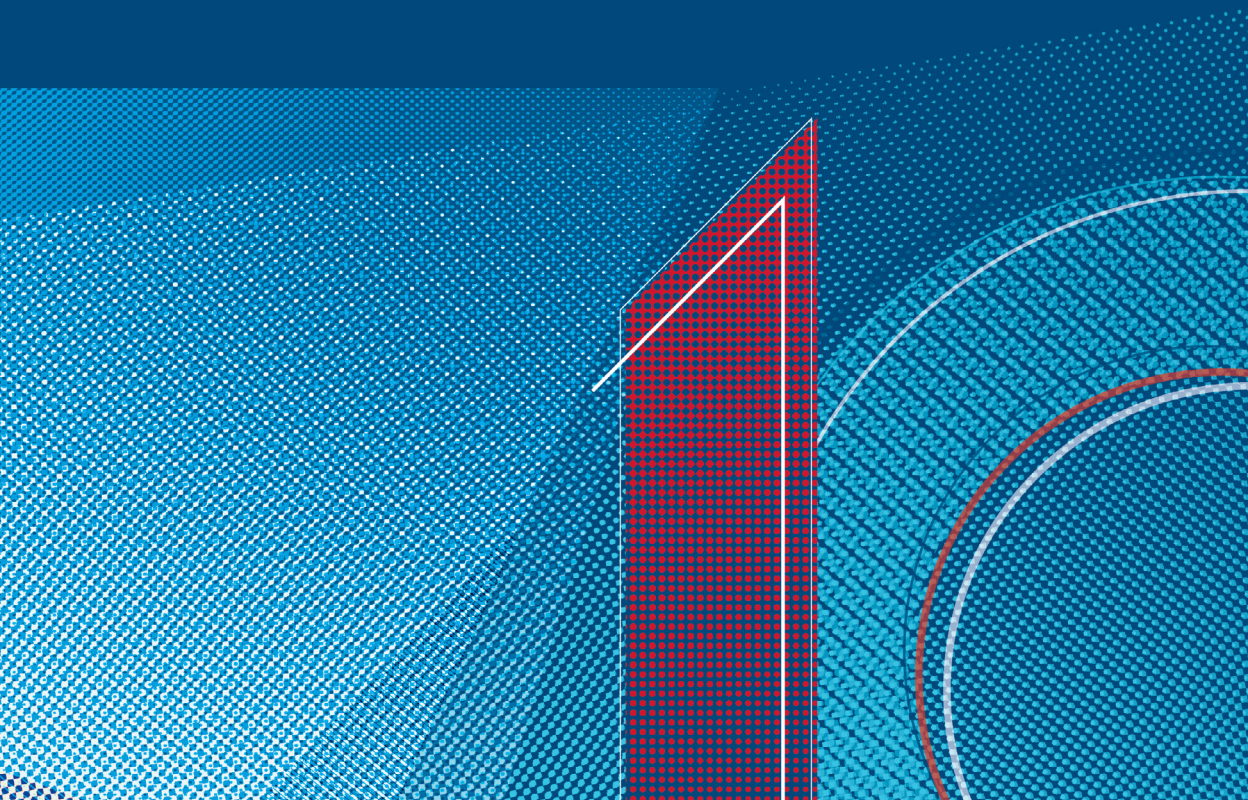


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The Shape of (Central) Europe 2022



Defense in Times of Interstate Conflict at the Strategic Level: Problems, Challenges and Solutions

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The text was prepared with input from experts from the Ministry of Defense of the Czech Republic and leading representatives of the Czech defense industry, and based on relevant documents, laws and information from authoritative sources.

The security environment has changed fundamentally since the thirty-year period after the end of the Cold War, at the beginning of the 1990s. Two decades of efforts by Russia and China to curb the influence of the West with the US at the forefront, which started at the turn of the millennium, culminated with Russian military aggression against Ukraine. Compared to the previous period, the use of military force at the interstate level on a massive industrial scale, using all the resources of the state to procure an army of hundreds of thousands, poses qualitatively new requirements and challenges for defense. NATO member states, and specifically the states of the Central European region, are coping with these challenges in different ways and through differently paced practical measures. The study focuses primarily on the Czech Republic, with a comparison of selected aspects in Poland and Germany.

Introduction: we face clear threats from state players

We once again find ourselves at a time when certain state players, such as Russia, have come to the conclusion that the use of force to achieve their defined political goals is the best course of action. Russia also claims that it is at war with the West. Unlike with the Cold War, this is a struggle between superpowers in the information age. Whoever wants to dominate the modern theater of operations has to be able to digitize and computerize the army and also conduct operations in an integrated manner in the cyber and information space. This consequently determines who knows about their adversary earlier and who is able to open fire first.

Russia has demonstrated that it is able to prepare and deploy an army of up to approximately 200,000 personnel with a large firepower to initial attack positions within four to five months (from October 2021 to 24 February, 2022)¹ and logistically manage the conduct of intensive military operations for many months. Both Russia and Ukraine have reaffirmed that, in addition to technological sophistication, quantity – firepower and number of military personnel – continues to be equally important. Russia was able to have superior firepower but lacked the soldiers required for its advance. Ukraine suffered from a deficiency in firepower systems until September 2022 but had “plenty” of highly motivated soldiers. The key value then was the ability of operational art to surprise the opponent and use the element of surprise for effective advance.

The time has returned when it is once again possible to have a major war of strategic importance on an industrial scale in Europe. The purpose, type and size of armies has to also reflect this fact. This also requires preparedness on national and societal levels and the ability to mobilize all the resources within the state and society. Preparations for the mobilization of personnel and material resources, according to army needs, is thus necessary already at the time of “peace”. What is important is the scale and speed of mobilization reflecting the attacker’s ability to prepare for an attack. Both quality and technological equipment and quantity play an important role.

Effective defense effort is once again a national issue

Ensuring the defense of every member state in the alliance environment hinges on **awareness of the content** of the [Washington Treaty](#) under which NATO exists. Two articles of the Treaty are crucial in this regard. First and foremost, Article 3: “In order more effectively to achieve the objectives of this Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, will maintain and develop their individual

1) The gathering of Russian forces on the border with Ukraine was covered by multiple media. For a summary from an authoritative source, see: [Congressional Research Service: Russian Military Buildup Along the Ukrainian Border](#).

and collective capacity to resist armed attack.” Only then is this followed by Article 5 on the possible use of collective defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter. It should be noted that Article 5 does not apply automatically. The invocation of Article 5 must be approved by consensus of the Member States.

The very wording of the Washington Treaty thus indicates that when faced with threats, the Member States are to do their utmost on an individual basis. The readiness to mobilize a wartime army is then the main means of military deterrence where a particular state only has conventional military power at its disposal.

From its inception, NATO Member States have based their defense against the Soviet threat on the minimum sufficiency principle. This means that based on the assessment of the threat - the intentions and military power of the USSR and Warsaw Pact satellites - technological and quantitative definitions were made of “peacetime” armies, “wartime” armies into which peacetime armies had to be able to develop/expand, and a mobilization system designed to ensure, within the required time (i.e., time within which the enemy - the USSR - is expected to be able to attack from the time the order is issued) the development of a peacetime army into a wartime army. This is because it is more economical to maintain a smaller peacetime army in times of peace and finance a mobilization system - i.e., a basis for the formation of mobilized units, the training of conscripts and active reserves, the storage of some of the material and weapons required for the wartime army, and the provision of production requirements for the wartime army, already in times of peace.

The period after the end of the Cold War was characterized by the elimination of the threat of a global war and strategic interstate conflict in Europe. The wording of the 2010 NATO Strategic Concept reflects this as well. Paragraphs 7-15 of the part entitled *The Security Environment* describe the security threats faced by NATO. Paragraph 7 states that the Euro-Atlantic area is at peace and the threat of a conventional attack against NATO territory is low. It is acknowledged, however, that certain countries are arming themselves and obtaining modern military technologies (paragraph 8). Terrorism is identified as the only direct threat in paragraph 10. The **implications** are clear: the fight against terrorism and the minimum conventional threat to alliance territory has resulted in an emphasis on small, professional, expedition-oriented armies, i.e., armies whose purpose, type, and size differ from those required for territorial defense at the strategic level. It has also led to a political justification of the non-necessity of functioning mobilization systems at the national level for territorial protection. **Defense budgets** have dropped, with some exceptions with

the USA at the forefront, well below 2% of GDP, often down to 1% of GDP.² In most Western countries, a “budget-friendly” departure from the mobilization principle has occurred, disguised in theses about switching to the deferred needs principle, satisfaction of material and commodity needs by the ‘just in time’ commercial method, etc. In most European states, the dismantling of the system of readiness for mobilization for wartime army deployment has ultimately caused the **demise of the combined arms operating core of their armies**.

There was even some confusion **in the Czech Republic** as to what and what kind of army was actually needed. This is evidenced by a 2011 statement made by the then President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Václav Klaus, at a command assembly of the Army of the Czech Republic (ACR): “To try to defend the need for our army primarily on the basis of its involvement in foreign missions seems inadequate to me. These missions - given the volatility of politics and the international situation - are not a sufficient argument and cannot become the sole source of the army’s legitimacy in the eyes of the public. I do not think we can be an army of chemical defense and field hospitals. Nor is it possible to turn the army into an auxiliary rescue corps during floods, for instance. While those things are also among the army’s tasks, the key word here is ALSO. The main role of the military is - according to the Constitution - to defend the integrity of our country. That is also where it all begins and ends. It is not about the army, it is primarily about the role of the state. If we do not want to surrender one of the basic attributes of the state and the state itself, then we do need the army. Unfortunately, there is no obvious answer to this question today.”³

As early as 2010, there were **warning signs** that the security environment is changing fundamentally. We are now aware that this included the Russian aggression against Georgia in 2008 - although who fired first, whether Georgian soldiers or Russian troops under the guise of peacekeeping troops, may still be under discussion. The growing scale and intensity of Russian provocations before the outbreak of the conflict, and above all, the outcome - the virtual annexation of a sovereign Georgian territory in favor of Russia - speak clearly. The occupation and annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 and the obvious military support for the Donbas separatists were also unquestionable warning signs. NATO Member States responded half-heartedly. In 2014, the Wales Summit adopted the Defence Investment Pledge and reaffirmed the commitment to spend at least 2% of GDP per annum on defense. Despite this fact, NATO Member States were unable to agree on a new threat assessment and thus on a new (or old-new) approach to ensuring defense. No

2) Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries was published as an annex to the GT NATOP Annual Report for 2021.

3) Speech at the command assembly of ACR (in Czech), Prague, 2 November, 2011.

clear indication was given as to what armies and defense systems should be built in light of the warning signs, in terms of purpose, type and size. The revision of the NATO Strategic Concept continued to be put off. It was only the massive aggression against the Ukrainian state using an army numbering hundreds of thousands of troops, which began on 24 February 2022, that helped the Member States unite on a qualitatively new threat assessment with major implications for the purpose, type and size of the alliance armies and for the need for a functioning mobilization system at the national level.

In June 2022, a [new Strategic Concept](#) (which describes the security environment in Articles 6–19) was adopted at the NATO Summit in Madrid. In sharp contrast to the previous version of 2010, it states (first sentence of Article 6 relating to the description of threats) that the Euro-Atlantic region is not at peace. The second sentence points out that Russia has violated norms and principles that have contributed to stability and a predictable European security order. Article 8 identifies Russia as the most significant and direct threat to the security of Alliance members and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic region. Article 10 refers to terrorism as the main direct asymmetric threat. Articles 13 and 14 are devoted to China, which is seen as a country challenging our interests, security and values. It is apparent that there is a deepening strategic partnership between Russia and China⁴ and mutually reinforcing attempts to undermine the rule-based world order. The implications for defense on the part of the Alliance Member States are obvious, including the consequences for the purpose, type and size of the armies required for defense. It is equally obvious to which specific threat (scenario) we must relate our defense effort – and that is a fundamental change. The combination of the size and capability of the armies, their combined arms nature, modernity, the size of economies and natural resources, makes the Russian-Chinese (de facto) alliance a grouping of such fundamental gravitas that defense must be provided for methodically, systemically, on a nationwide and society-wide level - we have to know how to mobilize human and material resources, protect the entire infrastructure of the state and the entire population.⁵

According to the latest edition of *The World Defence Almanac 2021*,⁶ **Russia** has 930,000 active military personnel, 250,000 personnel in the National Guard under the Russian president's direct command, four special forces brigades under military

4) The [Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China of 4 February 2022](#) must be viewed as a new quality, tantamount to a de facto alliance, in the Russian–Chinese joint stance and action vis-à-vis the USA and the West.

5) Russia and China have been conducting joint military drills of ground, air and marine forces for years. The last joint drill, “East 2022”, took place from 1 September 2022 with nearly 50,000 soldiers, 140 aircraft and 60 ships; for information, see for instance [this article](#).

6) A special issue of *Military Technology* journal of 2021.

intelligence, and a mixed conscription-professional system in which compulsory military service lasts 12 months. Thanks to the compulsory basic military service, Russia is able to mobilize hundreds of thousands to millions more soldiers, as illustrated by the declaration of partial mobilization on 21 September 2022 when 300,000 reservists were called up because of the war in Ukraine. In August 2022, President Putin decided to increase the size of the Russian army, the aim being to reach 1,150,628 active military personnel.⁷ The Russian army is of a combined arms type with strong firepower, tactical and strategic nuclear weapons. Russia has been constantly striving to equip its army with the most modern weapon systems for all types of troops.

Russia has been in a Union State with Belarus since 1999 and important Russian military bases (inter alia) are located in Belarus. In a worst-case scenario, the Russian and Belarusian armies have to be viewed as an alliance army (relative to NATO) and the Belarusian territory as its base. In this regard, it is relevant to include the Belarusian army numbers into the Russian army numbers. Belarus has a total of 44,000 active military personnel, as well as an internal security force of 10,600 and a border force of 13,000. Belarus has a conscription system,⁸ with compulsory military service lasting 6-18 months depending on the level of education attained.

According to the above, on NATO's eastern border – knowing that the theater of operations will possibly span thousands of kilometers – there is a need to estimate the Russian-led wartime army to number at least 500,000 personnel, the number of which can be quickly replenished with persons doing compulsory military service if need be. The contributions of Russian satellites need to be added to this.

In addition to assessing the numbers and combat value of a potentially aggressor army, it is equally important to assess the intentions of the state concerned. In addition to Russian strategic documents identifying NATO as the enemy, Russia's December 2021 proposals to NATO and the USA are the most relevant in terms of intentions.⁹ They are crucial because it was based on their rejection that Russia launched its aggression against Ukraine on 24 February 2022. From the perspective of Central and East European states, the following requirement is crucial (Article 4 of the proposal): neither Russia nor the NATO Member States that were members as of 27 May 1997 will deploy military units and weapons in other European states apart from those deployed as of 27 May 1997. All new NATO Member States thus become after 24 February 2022 a territory whose current affiliation with

7) [Decree 575](#) of President Putin of 25 August 2022. The previous decision is from 2017; it stipulated the number of active military personnel at 1,013,628, which means an increase by 137,000 personnel.

8) The armed forces are conscription-based.

9) For the Russian proposal for the USA, see this [link](#); for the proposal for NATO, see [here](#).

NATO is being disputed by Russia. By this demand, Russia is challenging the sovereignty and independence of these NATO Member States, i.e., the fundamental right of every state under international law to choose its alliances. A rational security and defense policy has to take this Russian intention into consideration and assume that Russia wants to regain this territory back into its sphere of influence.

The size of the peacetime and wartime army must be based on the threat scenario. If we know once again today that a potential Russian aggression is the scenario in Europe and that Russia is, in some form, in at least an ad hoc alliance with China, it gives us a sufficiently clear idea of what we have to be prepared to face. The size of the wartime armies of each Alliance member has to also be based on historical experience concerning the minimum balance of power relevant to planning. This dimension of military expertise is summarized in the following table:¹⁰

Task of own forces	Balance of power own : enemy	Operating (battle) position
Delaying battle	1:6	position assumed only
Conducting defense	1:3	pre-prepared and constructed defense
Conducting defense	1:2,5	hastily deployed defense
Conducting an attack	3:1	against a pre-prepared and built defense
Conducting an attack	2,5:1	against a hastily deployed defense
Counter-attack	1:1	flanking the attacking armies

It stems from the above that the armies of NATO Member States ought to, in their wartime form, create such balance of power that it would not be at all worthwhile for a potential aggressor to launch an attack. This is the case even after recalculating their own combat value against the combat value of the potential aggressor, i.e., Russia and its satellites, or so that in the event an attack is launched, the aggressor has no chance of attaining its objectives. It can be inferred that such a minimum balance of power is 1:1 in the theater of operations and the point of contact of own forces with the forces of the potential aggressor. (One should not forget that NATO continues to build a 360-degree defense, and that Russia's partnership with China and other countries will tie up the military power of the Alliance outside its eastern part as well).

In NATO's eastern part, in the area between NATO's eastern border and the eastern part of Germany, there needs to be available within 3-4 months of the decision a balanced

¹⁰ See [summary of military expertise](#) (in Czech) regarding the relative superiority of power, comparison of combat power of armies and general principles governing general balance of power (Ing. Jaroslav Kulišek: Relativní převaha sil. *Vojenské rozhledy* 4/2011, pp. 74-85).

combined arms wartime army numbering at least 500,000 personnel, with significant firepower, a robust C4ISTAR system (i.e., with information superiority to ensure faster decision-making and action on the battlefield compared to the aggressor), effective cyber domain operations and technological superiority in unmanned devices and robotics using artificial intelligence. In the interest of interoperability, the armies of the Alliance countries in the Central European region have to in principle build armies adequate to the modernization military strategy of the main ally, the USA, which aims to conduct multi-domain operations (land, sea, air, cyberspace and space) from 2028.¹¹

Although the combat value of an army is a variable involving both numerical size and training or technological levels, and thus a comparison of two armies may have the same combat value but different numbers of soldiers, the factor of achieving sufficient quantity in firepower or military personnel is essential. It is therefore important to achieve at least approximately the same balance of power in these fundamental dimensions. A wartime army does not and cannot arise from the mere sum of the sizes of current peacetime armies. A large part of the current peacetime armies has to remain in the territories of their states in order to secure the territory in the event of aggression, and only part can be sent to the wartime army which will initiate contact with the aggressor's forces and wage a maneuver warfare against them. It is important to reintroduce a system of effective conversion of peacetime armies into wartime armies and measures for the replacement of losses.

The current combined actual peacetime military strength of NATO Member States in the area between NATO's eastern border and Germany is 448,117 personnel.¹² If we take into account that about 25% of this capacity would be committed to a wartime army, it means that there is a shortfall of about 400,000 rapidly deployable trained soldiers in the eastern part of NATO. Given that the Baltic countries, even at maximum deployment, cannot make any significant difference to this strategic situation, it is up to Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Germany to adopt measures to ensure a 1:1 ratio to the anticipated Russian-led wartime army.

What this means for the Czech Republic is that the target count of a wartime army formed within four months ought to be 150,000 well-trained and ready personnel¹³ within

11) In 2018, the USA adopted the [National Military Strategy](#) which, in light of Russia and China's conduct, stipulated that conflicts needed to be contained by means of large and technologically advanced armies. This was followed by the adoption of the [Army Modernization Strategy](#) in 2019, which primarily addresses the shift from the Air-Land Battle concept of 1981 to the Multi Domain Operations concept.

12) For the total numbers of active military personnel in the Baltic states, Poland, Slovakia and Germany – see *The World Defence Almanac 2021*.

13) The situation during the Cold War is described in this book: Petr Luňák (ed.): *Plánování nemyslitelného – Československé válečné plány 1950–1990. Dokořán*, 2019, Praha, 446 pages. According to the Czechoslovak war plan of 1986, 250,000 soldiers (five divisions) ought to be ready to launch military operations within a time-frame ranging from several hours to a week.

a balanced (combined arms) army - i.e., ground, air, cyber and also space forces, given the decision to build a satellite center. This must be matched by the size of:

- the peacetime army which is the core and which must therefore contain everything a wartime army does, to a lesser extent - it ought to number a minimum of 35,000 personnel;
- active reserves - these ought to number at least 40,000;
- a group of individuals - conscripts - who will undergo modern basic training on a voluntary basis and on the basis of an incentive system (there is no need to call up entire respective year groups, as was the case before 2005). This group ought to be large enough to supplement the peacetime army and the active reserves in time to reach the requisite wartime army numbers of 150,000.

The above-outlined also means that NATO Member States have to build their armies in such a way that each army is primarily able to act by itself, yet is prepared to form multinational units (task forces) within the Alliance. Indeed, the need to act individually for a certain period of time, or to act independently in an assigned theater of operations, cannot be ruled out. Moreover, the ability to act individually ultimately determines the degree of strength of action within the Alliance framework.

Problems and challenges

There are specific problems and challenges facing the Czech Republic and countries in the Central European region which are relevant from a military and strategic perspective, i.e., Poland and Germany, based on a clearly identified and parametrically defined security situation and development trend. This study examines four key issues:

1. What is the status, i.e., how adequate to the security situation, of basic strategic guidelines for building up the national defense.
2. What financial resources are invested in the defense effort in light of the strategic threat of large-scale industrial warfare and the commitment within NATO to spend at least 2% of GDP per year on defense from 2024 at the latest.
3. Whether or not there is a functioning implementation mechanism for fulfilling the conscription duty. That is, the question of the existence of conditions for the effective development of a peacetime army into a wartime army, which in the light of the current great threat - the struggle between superpowers and interstate conflict at a strategic level - is once again a non-alternative approach to ensuring national defense.

4. Whether or not there is a strategy/guideline (as a tool for creating conditions) for procuring an industrial base at the national level which would provide the armies with security of supplies – both qualitatively and quantitatively – in a nationwide industrial conflict.

1/ Strategic documents – the question of the existence of guidelines to counter the current threat

Strategic documents determining the systemic action and building of an adequate army in terms of purpose, type and size, including the construction of forces, implementation of the mobilization system, etc., are crucial. Indeed, no country has resigned on building an army or on the conscription duty at the legislative level. The fundamental document at the national level is the security strategy, which is further supplemented by documents such as the “defense strategy”, the “army design concept” and others, in accordance with tradition and needs. The security strategy is always decisive. It defines the threats, including the degree of threat to the relevant country’s territory. This in turn determines the approach to ensuring security, including army building. There is a consensus at the NATO level that Russia is a direct threat.

The Czech Republic

- The Current Security Strategy is from 2015. (The follow-up Defense Strategy is from 2017, the Czech Army Design Concept 2030 is from 2019.)¹⁴ The Strategy could not reflect post-2020 developments.
- The Strategy contains a comprehensive approach to the promotion of security interests.
- The Strategy assesses that a direct threat of a massive military attack against the territory of the Czech Republic is low. It concedes that other NATO Member States on NATO’s borders may be under military threat. Russia is not expressly identified as a threat. A major industrial-scale war in Europe, affecting the entire state and society, is not admitted. Russia’s annexation of Crimea by military force is ignored.
- From the point of view of promoting security interests, the Strategy is adequate (as regards the building of the army) for the period when terrorism was identified as the main threat after 2001 and troops withdrawn from peacetime armies sufficed. The Strategy does not set specific tasks.

¹⁴) Both documents are available (in Czech) [here](#).

- The 2015 Security Strategy is completely inadequate for current threats and trends in the security environment. The Strategy needs to be amended in order to reflect the Russian threat of direct danger to the state and the possibility of using large-scale military force as the primary tool to attain political goals in Europe.

Poland

- The Current Security Strategy is from 2020. (Poland's Defense Concept is from 2017.)
- The Strategy contains a comprehensive approach to ensuring security.
- It expressly identifies Russia as a threat because of its neo-imperial policy, including the use of military force. It accepts the possibility of offensive acts by Russia with large military formations against NATO states in the Baltic Sea region, including Poland. The Russian aggression against Georgia and Ukraine (annexation of Crimea) is expressly mentioned. Russia's hybrid action and the joint action of Russia and China at the strategic level are expressly mentioned.
- The Strategy defines the need for comprehensive protection of the state (continuity of government, infrastructure, etc.), its territory and all citizens, and for securing the requisite resources to that end. It stipulates the task of adopting a law on civil defense.
- For the army, the Strategy defines, inter alia, the following tasks:
 - accelerate the development of capabilities and procure their financing, with the defense budget reaching 2.5% of GDP in 2024;
 - continue to adapt the peacetime and wartime structure of the army in accordance with developments in the security environment;
 - improve the mobilization system, including reserve training;
 - create territorial defense units;
 - create conditions for the domestic defense industry in order to cover the long-term needs of the Polish army regardless of the owners of Polish defense industry companies.
- The Strategy is adequate to developments in the security environment and sets clear tasks, inter alia, for legislative steps and army building.

Germany

- Germany still does not have a basic security document – a national security strategy. In this sense, Germany’s security and defense system in a comprehensive sense lacks a standard definition, and the building of the army is thus inevitably subject to the changing national policy. The December coalition agreement of the ruling parties, after the last German parliamentary elections in September 2021, set the goal of developing a national security strategy within one year. The process of strategy development was initiated in March 2022.¹⁵
- For the time being, [White Paper on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr](#) of 2016 is the basic document in which Germany responded to developments after the Arab Spring and the Russian occupation of Crimea and aggression in eastern Ukraine. The document promotes a comprehensive approach from territorial defense to the defense of citizens in light of a comprehensive security environment. The text argues that this is needed, thus demonstrating that a comprehensive approach cannot be taken for granted. The term “energy security” does not appear in the document even once. The White Paper also argues that a security policy is increasingly a task for the state, industry and society together.
- The White Paper expressly identifies Russia as a state that openly creates a question mark over the European peace order and is willing to use force to implement its interests in redrawing borders. It recognizes Russia’s global ambitions and puts an emphasis on rivalry with the West. The document characterizes Russia, however, as a security “challenge” for the foreseeable future unless it changes its approach and points out common interests and interconnectedness. In terms of ranking of threats, interstate conflict only comes third, after transnational terrorism and the cyber-information domain. Russia is perceived as primarily engaged in hybrid action against EU and NATO countries, below the threshold of conventional warfare. The document accepts the emergence of a multipolar world.

¹⁵) Information on the process can be found for instance [here](#).

- The White Paper draws – traditionally for Germany in recent decades – on the philosophy of multilateralism (UN, EU and NATO as institutions policing the international order) and the interconnectedness of the players and their individual responsibilities, especially if the player, as in the case of Russia, is a member of the UN Security Council. Significantly, what is stressed is the thesis that “a lasting peace and stability are created by law, rather than by force”. Despite the identification of Russia as an underminer of the international order, the document builds on negotiations with Russia. It does not acknowledge a direct Russian robust threat. There can be no more remote concept compared to Russia than the content of the White Paper. Russian aggression against Ukraine has stood the White Paper’s premises (German security and defense policy up to 24 February 2022) on its head.
- As regards the future of the Bundeswehr, while the document proclaims that the defense of the territory and population is the main task, there is no link to any specific scenario. A robust conventional military threat using large units is not envisaged; at most, NATO testing on its borders. The emphasis lies on hybrid action below or just above the threshold of overt use of military force outside Germany. Increasing demands on the Bundeswehr in terms of support from allies are identified in this respect, but not in the sense that there is a need for an army capable of developing into a war-time, combined arms, technologically advanced army.
- The White Paper is inadequate to developments in the security environment. Germany sorely needs a standard security strategy that will adequately respond to the possibility of a major conventional war in Europe and to a direct threat to the Alliance, and therefore German, territory in consequence of Russian ambitions that are in a de facto alliance with Chinese interests.

2/ Defense budget

Based on the historical experience of the last 150 years, NATO adopted an approach that in order to ensure adequate defense capability, defense budgets should not drop below 2% of GDP. After the end of the Cold War, however, this was the case. This commitment was thus renewed at the 2014 NATO Summit, with the minimum level of 2% of GDP to be reached by 2024 at the latest. In light of the current security situation, a minimum level of 2% of GDP is a bare necessity to ensure defense capability.

The Czech Republic

- The defense budget last reached 2% of GDP in 2005.
- In 2022, it reached 1.33% of GDP.¹⁶
- The Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Finance are preparing a draft law on defense financing, which will set the minimum level of defense expenditure at 2% of GDP.¹⁷ Defense spending ought to reach 2% of GDP in 2024. This indicates that the Czech government's plans have been accelerated – according to the 2021 [Policy Statement of the Government](#) (in Czech), the level of 2% of GDP ought to be reached in 2025.
- Reaching the 2% of GDP level will be a major challenge for the Czech political and budgetary system. It will nominally be an increase from roughly CZK 90 billion to CZK 150 billion over three years. Given the underfunding of the defense system and the army since 2005, the costliness of modern weapons systems and the neglect of the mobilization system, the Czech Republic will need to consider a defense budget higher than 2% of GDP per year in the face of the security situation.

Poland

- The defense budget is set at a minimum level of 2% of GDP from 2016 onwards by a [law](#) adopted in 2015.
- In March 2022, [the Defense Act](#) was passed which increases the defense budget to a minimum level of 3% of GDP per annum, starting from 2023.
- The government plans to increase the defense budget to 5% of GDP per year, as [declared](#) in July 2022 by Jarosław Kaczyński, the leader of the ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party.

Germany

- The defense budget reached 1.49% of GDP in 2021.¹⁸
- The defense budget has been below 2% of GDP since 1995, peaking at 1.5% of GDP since 2000.¹⁹

16) A presentation of the Deputy Defense Minister for economic division management, Blanka Cupáková, at the Fourth Armaments Conference in Ostrava on 16 September 2022.

17) See footnote 15.

18) The information is contained in [this document](#).

19) See [this link](#). The Cold War and post-Cold War periods are summarized in a document entitled [Budoucnost transatlantických vztahů ve světle amerických prezidentských voleb \(The future of transatlantic relations in the light of the US presidential election\)](#), pp. 18-19.

- In light of the Russian attack against Ukraine that began on 24 February 2022, the German government declared additional immediate defense funding of EUR 100 billion and promised funding at a minimum level of 2% of GDP from 2024. The defense budget in 2021, however, was nominally EUR 46.9 billion. To reach the level of 2% of GDP in 2022, the sum would have to be EUR 75.5 billion and then EUR 85.6 billion in 2026. The 2022 budget allocates, however, EUR 50.3 billion and then EUR 50.1 billion annually until 2026.²⁰
- Given the underfunding of the army over the last 23 years, Germany ought to consider a defense budget of more than 2% of GDP.

3/ Army size and ability to mobilize personnel²¹ –

ability to develop into a wartime army of the required size

Although mobilization plans, including numbers and time parameters, are not publicly available, the degree of effectiveness of mobilization (conversion into a wartime army) can be inferred from the following facts:

- the size of the peacetime army;
- the existence or absence of an active reserve (national guard) or its size;
- whether or not there is a conscription system or a professional army only with the statutory conscription duty not backed up by the military service of the relevant year groups or at least parts of them;
- the date when compulsory military service (conscription system) ceased to apply.

The answers to these questions will clearly demonstrate whether the current armies of NATO Member States are capable of developing into wartime armies with ready (trained) soldiers within 3–4 months.

The Czech Republic

- The active military personnel of the peacetime army numbered 26,621 in 2020; the target is 30,000 active military personnel by 2030.

20) A summary is contained in [this article](#). The failure to reach the level of 2% of GDP by 2027, despite promises made by the German government, is described in a [study](#) elaborated by the German Cologne-based think-tank, Institut der Deutschen Wirtschaft (an English summary of the study can be found [here](#)).

21) Information on armies in this part comes from The World Defence Almanac 2021; The Almanac is published annually as a special edition of the Military Technology journal.

- The Czech Republic does not have even a partial conscription system in place; it has had a fully professional army since 2005. (Those who last underwent basic military training are now in their forties).
- Active reserve system – personnel employed in the civilian sector and undergoing several weeks of training each year numbered 3,440 in 2020; the goal is to have an active reserve of 30,000 by 2030.
- The Czech state, represented by the Ministry of Defense, does not have a working implementation mechanism for the conversion of a peacetime army into a wartime army. This is evidenced by the amendment of several laws in 2022, in particular Act No. 585/2004 Coll., on conscription and its execution, Act No. 45/2016 Coll., on the service of reserve soldiers, and Act No. 222/1999 Coll., on securing the defense of the Czech Republic.²² The aim is not only, however, to build up the entire implementation mechanism of the mobilization system, i.e., to practically supplement the armed forces of the Czech Republic with trained citizens in reserve. This is only the first step towards ensuring the ability to register in times of peace, rather than only when the state is already under threat and when it is already too late (the threat of war is imminent). It is also a step designed to facilitate active civil involvement in national defense preparations.

Poland

- The active military personnel of the peacetime army numbered 111,500 in 2020; in addition, there is a territorial defense force of 29,000. There is also a paramilitary border force of 14,635 persons falling under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior.
- Poland does not have even a partial conscription system; the country has had a professional army since 1 January 2010. (Those who last underwent basic military training are now in their mid-thirties.) The adoption of the Homeland Defence Act in March 2022 more than doubles the size of the peacetime army to 300,000 persons as active military personnel.²³

22) Information on the legislative amendment process can be found (in Czech) for instance [here](#) or [here](#).

23) The information on the adoption of the Homeland Defence Act is contained in [this article](#).

- The task imposed by the National Security Strategy,²⁴ “to improve the mobilization system, including the training of reserves”, indicates that the Polish government is not satisfied with the effectiveness of the implementation system, which is a tool for the discharge of the conscription duty, or rather a tool for the conversion of the peacetime army into a wartime army.

Germany

- As of March 2021, the active military personnel of the peacetime army numbered 183,907. According to the government’s plan, the number ought to reach 198,000 by 2024 and 203,000 in 2025, respectively.
- Germany does not have even a partial conscription system; a professional army was introduced in 2011. (Those who last underwent basic military training are now thirty-four.)

4/ Strategy for mobilization of material resources and production capacities – defense industry

The industrial scale of warfare at the strategic level requires securing domestic production for important military material, be it munitions or armored vehicles. The war in Ukraine shows that if this is not secured, the country (and its fate) depends completely on the willingness of foreign governments to supply military material. It is not just, however, about production as such, but rather about the ability to produce the requisite quantities of material within a time-frame that meets the requirements of the fighting army. After 24 February 2022, it became apparent that NATO Member States themselves do not have the production capacities to meet the needs of the Ukrainian army – while the requirements are in many cases on the order of months, the capacities are on the order of years. This demonstrates a complete lack of industrial readiness of NATO Member States for securing their own defense capability.

The Czech Republic

- A vast majority of the defense industry – all key technologies and products – are privately owned.

24) See footnote 14.

- There is no national defense industrial strategy²⁵ that would identify the key technologies and products that need to be produced by the domestic defense industry and that would serve as a tool for the state to secure the requisite production capacities. There is only the [Strategy for Armaments and Support to Defense Industry Development of the Czech Republic](#) (in Czech) up to 2030. The strategy only tentatively and generally indicates the areas in which the state “prefers” to purchase from the domestic industry.²⁶ This is not even half a step in the right direction.
- No target quantitative and time requirements (what quantity within what time-frame) have been defined for the defense industry in order to provide for the army. It has therefore not been determined what capacities the defense industry ought to have in order to provide for the wartime army.²⁷ The Ministry of Defense as the founder of the Defense University thus does not even care whether there are enough munitions engineers in the country for the purposes of both the army and the industry.
- The state does not have a completely functional legislative tool (hence its amendment) in the form of Act No. 241/2000 Coll., on economic measures for crisis situations, so as to be able to preserve production capacities. The state has virtually no tool to create the requisite production capacities for the wartime army. The basic parameters of the wartime economy are set forth in legislation, in particular in Act No. 241/2000 Coll. (above) and Act No. 222/1999 Coll., on ensuring the defense of the Czech Republic. The option of invocation is outside the reality of the security environment. It has been established for the moment of an imminent military attack, which is too late in terms of preparation for a state of war and satisfaction of army needs. The practical absence of an implementation mechanism is yet another fundamental problem.

Poland

- A vast majority of the defense industry is state-owned. Fragmentation is a problem, and the government is trying to address the issue.

25) National Defence Industrial Strategy, such as that of [Great Britain](#) or [Denmark](#). Great Britain actually has a specific [strategy for the ground forces](#).

26) Areas see p. 11. The document follows up on the previous versions from 2016.

27) The situation and system in Czechoslovakia in 1918–1938 are described in this book: Radomír Zavadil: Na obranu republiky (For Defense of the Czech Republic). *Euromedia group*, 2021, 172 pages. Starting from 1932 at the latest, it was clearly determined by the Czechoslovak state (the Ministry of Defense) what products should be produced in what quantities and when so as to provide for a wartime army. In light of international political situation developments and the growing German threat, the state also decided on a massive re-dislocation of defense industry companies.

- Poland does not have a national defense industrial strategy that would identify the key technologies and products that need to be produced by the domestic defense industry and that would serve as a tool for the state to secure the requisite production capacities. As a result, Poland depends on foreign suppliers for a number of essential items, such as heavy-caliber munitions. There is, however, a broad political consensus that the weapons which the army is equipped with should be produced in Poland to the maximum extent possible. The Polish government is willing to invest robustly in acquiring technological know-how and production capacities. In many cases, however, the projects have not been successfully implemented.²⁸
- The Polish government is aware of the insufficiency of domestic production capacities – the 2020 National Security Strategy sets the task of creating conditions for the defense industry to be able to provide for the needs of the army.
- There is a [Strategy for Responsible Development](#) (in Polish), adopted in 2017, which is much more general and identifies re-industrialization of Poland as one of the main goals in general terms.
- The Polish state, through the Ministry of Defense, still practically applies a number of mechanisms of mobilization predetermination and exemptions from the system in order to preserve the operation of the country's industrial base even when the highest levels of emergency are declared. (It stipulates, for example, which individuals from the defense industry would not be mobilized to ensure the operation of the industrial base.)

Germany

- The defense industry in Germany is privately owned. There are companies such as KMW or Rheinmetall that are of at least European relevance and have a global reach. KMW has formed a holding company with the French company Nexter Defence Systems in order to become globally competitive.
- Strictly speaking, there is no national defense industrial strategy in Germany that would identify key technologies and products that need to be provided by the domestic defense industry and that would serve as a tool for the state to secure the requisite production capacities. There is a document from the Ministry of Economy and Climate Action, [Strategy Paper of the federal Government on Strengthening the Security](#)

28) The discussion in Poland is illustrated for instance by an [article](#) from February 2021 by Eugeniusz Chmiczuk.

and Defence Industry, adopted in 2020.²⁹ This document is a kind of “half-step” towards a full-fledged robust defense industrial strategy. It identifies, in an indicative way, which technologies should be secured at the national level and which can be secured at European and global levels. In addition, the government adopts a National Industrial Strategy once every few years.

- Although the government adopts a certain directive regarding defense industry development, up until 2022, the low budgets of the Ministry of Defense (max. 1.5% of GDP) did not permit the practical fulfillment and utilization of the domestic defense industrial potential. This is further combined with a restrictive export policy concerning military material.
- Paradoxically, the capabilities (competitiveness/quality, development capability) of the German defense industry exceed the German state’s ability to formulate and implement a defense industrial policy and a defense policy. In this regard, the mobilization needs of the army fall on fertile ground: the German defense industry is able to respond to army requirements. This is due to the global business ambitions of the German defense industry, the government defense strategy notwithstanding.

Defense industry and energy³⁰

The existence and development of a domestic defense industry is meaningless without creating sufficient energy independence from potential aggressors. Securing energy production is a task on an order of magnitude even greater than developing the defense industry as one of the industrial sectors.

In this respect, Poland, which has long relied on its domestic raw materials, especially coal, and on its self-sufficiency in power generation, has made the greatest progress. This corresponds to the importance attributed to energy security in strategic documents. This is the reason why it intends to build six nuclear units. Despite this fact, Poland has not managed to diversify its gas supply sufficiently either, importing around 55% of its gas from Russia in 97% of cases. As concerns oil, it strove to reduce its dependency on Russia – from 80% (on average) in 2014-2019 to 61% in 2019, respectively. Poland built an LNG terminal in Świnoujście, which has been operating

29) It replaces the Strategy Paper on Strengthening the Defence Industry of 2015 and the Strategy Paper on Strengthening the Civil Security Industry of 2016.

30) This part was written using information from experts from the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic.

since 2015. Generally speaking, Poland's access to the sea helps to address pressing energy needs.

It would seem that Germany did not fathom that there might be yet another war in Europe. Energy security was not an issue until 24 February 2022 – Germany does not have a national security strategy yet and the 2016 [White Paper on Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr](#) does not work with the term “energy security”. In the energy sector, everything revolved around coping with climate change and nuclear energy. Germany's strategy of getting rid of coal and nuclear power plants and using Russian gas to transit to an energy sector, based on renewable sources, has proven to be completely untenable from a security perspective. However, thanks to its access to the sea and economic efficiency, Germany is able to build LNG terminals swiftly. The approach to nuclear power and the use of coal is also being re-considered. The government is currently working on its first national security strategy.

The Czech Republic has been addressing its energy security since 2006. The National Security Strategy views energy security as one of the key issues. In 2006, the government established the post of a special envoy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In practical terms, however, the Czech governments has done nothing of long-term strategic importance and application until 2022. No new nuclear units have been built, the dependency on Russia has not been reduced – at the moment of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, dependency on gas was virtually 100%, as was our dependency on oil, despite the existence of the TAL diversification pipeline and the possibility of transporting Norwegian gas. As regards gas supply within the country, no legislative or practical conditions have been established to secure supply for the defense industry in the event of an emergency. This is partly addressed, on an ad hoc basis only, by the amendment to the Energy Act (No. 458/2000 Coll.) adopted in September 2022.

Conclusion

We are once again facing a direct strategic threat where provisions for national defense must be a nationwide matter with the capability of national readiness and mobilizations of resources across the entire state and society within the requisite time-frames. The least costly option³¹ is a functioning defense system where a peacetime army is able to convert into a wartime army large enough to repel a potential aggressor's attack; ideally, this system will deter a potential aggressor from aggression in the first place. This capability does not

31) Maintaining a permanent wartime army for defense purposes is unnecessary, inordinately costly and unnecessarily devastating for the economy. A functioning mobilization system is cheaper and as such represents a markedly more friendly approach for the economy and for conditions fostering prosperity.

yet exist, however, in the CEE region. Only Poland has announced an increase in its army size by – for Poland – adequate numbers, to be supplemented by the formation of territorial defense units. Germany and the Czech Republic do not plan, for the time being, to supplement their peacetime armies in a way that would make them clearly capable of increasing their size, in about four months' time, to numbers that would, together with allies in the region, create a wartime army capable of countering the Russian threat.

Compared to Germany and the Czech Republic, Poland has the most adequate approach in light of trends in the security environment. Poland's approach is due to the fact that its threat assessment recognizes the potential for a direct threat to Polish territory from Russia. (The Baltic states and Finland are similarly vigilant, followed by Sweden.) The Czech Republic and Germany, in their outdated strategic documents, do not supplement their security and defense systems with a directive providing for an adequate defense effort. The current government directives in Germany and the Czech Republic reflect the purpose, type and size of armies for which terrorism, rather than a direct threat to the territory of the state, has been the principal threat.

As regards the formulation of a national defense industrial strategy, while Germany has made the greatest progress formally, Poland is the most advanced in practice. In terms of real performance, the German defense industry is the best. The Czech Republic lags behind in all aspects – in the identification of key technologies and products, the scale of production capacities and the state's strategy for the development of the defense industry as part of the defense system to provide for the army's needs independently of foreign countries.

The energy industry has to be built in line with security and defense interests. Otherwise, there is a risk of losing the will to defend ourselves in light of an economic collapse.

Recommendations

1. Speedy amendment of strategic documents so as to allow the executive branch of the government to generate provisions for security and defense, including the building up of an army adequate to the current security environment. It is important to build armies of appropriate purpose, type and size. There is a need to re-introduce an effective implementation system for the rapid conversion of a peacetime army into a wartime army within several months. In this regard, there is a need to expand the active reserves significantly and supplement the professional army with a modern conscription system for part of the conscripts.
2. There is a need to allocate at least 2% of GDP per year for defense purposes. While this is a basic condition, it is not the only and a sufficient one. Ensuring defense capability is not a question of money only: it hinges on the entire system.
3. There is a need to plan for a specific main scenario, specifically, a direct threat to the territory by a robust military force deployable within months; a force that is modern, technologically well equipped, with a large firepower and extensive human resources. All the other scenarios are secondary and can be resolved by allocating task groups from one set of the main forces.
4. The approach to defense provision has to be comprehensive and has to utilize all the resources of the state and society. This is the only way to counter a strategic threat, ideally already at the level of deterrence.
5. The target numbers of wartime armies has to be determined and the volumes of supplies and production capacities which need to be available within a defined time to equip the army and, if necessary, to replace losses, should be inferred from those numbers. The state has to define the production capacities and provide them with appropriate financial and other tools.

6. There is a need to define a national defense industrial strategy and define the technologies and products that the domestic defense industry has to be able to provide.
7. There is a need to define the concept of defense of the civilian population, including the establishment of a civil protection and readiness system.
8. The defense industry has to be energy secure even in states of emergency and shortage of energy resources.
9. The state has to educate the requisite number of specialists for the army and the defense industry.
10. Qualitative changes in ensuring defense capability have to be made within five years.

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