

(Post-)COVID World?

Analysis of the security consequences
of the COVID-19 pandemic



Created for the national conference
Our Security Cannot Be Taken For Granted

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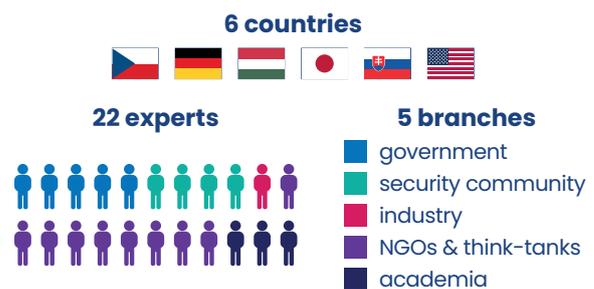
About the publication

„Our Security Cannot Be Taken For Granted“ is a prestigious Czech national conference held since 2014 that has regularly brought together top political representatives and leading security experts to assess current development and to present plans for defence and security of the Czech Republic.

The Jagello 2000 Association is the main Czech subject of public diplomacy in the field of **security policy and membership of the Czech Republic in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization**. The main goal of the association is to raise awareness among the general and professional public about security policy and transatlantic relations.

Within the 8th edition of (Czech) National Conference Our Security Cannot Be Taken For Granted, several experts focusing on different spheres of society were approached to foreshadow their view on the transformation of the security environment in the post-COVID world.

A total of **22 experts* from 6 countries** contributed to the material, in addition to the Czech Republic also from Germany, Hungary, Japan, Slovakia and the United States of America. The material is covering government sphere, security and academic area, as well as NGOs and think-tanks.



**Individual contributions by government officials represent only their respective private opinion, not an official statement by the institutions.*



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Foreword

Dear supporters,

the year of 2021 will go down in history as the year in which the Czech Republic went through a historically unprecedented period of conjuncture of several serious crises, when the global covid pandemic was joined by an absolutely unprecedented political-diplomatic crisis in Czech-Russian relations. There is no parallel in our history to such a complex situation.

Current events have pushed back from the spotlight the important anniversary of the thirty years since the Warsaw Pact was dissolved in Prague. That was not only a historic moment, but it opened the door to the Euro-Atlantic integration of former Soviet bloc countries, culminating in the 2002 NATO Summit in Prague. Symbolically, seven countries, with the exception of Slovenia members of the Warsaw Pact, received an invitation to join the Alliance right in the city, where the Warsaw Pact was dissolved.

Numbers of prominent figures participated in these historical events. Let me remind only one person here, and that is Luboš Dobrovský. At the end of the previous decade, he had begun to relentlessly draw attention to the change in the course of Russian foreign policy in the wake of the restoration of the Soviet Union's geopolitical power in Central and Eastern Europe. Many personalities disagreed with him at the time. Today we can look at his statement at the time from the perspective of the current presence of the Czech Republic on the list of enemies of the Russian Federation.

This year we decided for the first time to reach out to 22 renowned experts from 6 countries in order to have the best possible background for the conference. All these materials are now available in this booklet. Most experts completely independently agreed that:

- the current defence and security threats are complex and to maintain economic prosperity and stability it is essential to continuously invest in all defence systems - traditional - land, air and sea, but also new domains such as cyber and space;
- the three biggest security threats nowadays are, and will continue to be: the assertive behaviour of Russia and China and hybrid threats;
- - defence expenditure items must be continuous and predictable for long-term defence planning (86% of experts). Defence spending is not a budgetary expenditure, but an investment in the national future, not only of the military, but also of the domestic defence industry, which can be kept at the top of Europe. Defence and security, experts say, are a constant prerequisite for peace and prosperity.

We look forward to meeting again at the 9th (Czech) National Conference Our Security Cannot Be Taken For Granted 2022.



Zbyněk Pavlačík
CEO & co-founder
Jagello 2000

Summary

Transformation of the global security environment

Do you expect the global security environment to be the same or different in the years ahead? If different, how will it change? If the same, then why?

The global security environment is constantly evolving and changing dynamically, so it cannot be expected to remain the same. However, **the trends that dominated our society before the pandemic will not fundamentally change afterwards**. The world continues to face a multitude of challenges and threats, at national, regional and global levels, and the pandemic has only temporarily eased, or indeed highlighted some of them and this may eventually worsen the security situation.

During the pandemic, states assumed responsibility at the national level, and weak international cooperation amplified mutual distrust and great power competition. It may therefore be expected that **the consequences of globalization will intensify**, whether the positive ones, such as strengthening economic interdependence and limiting the risk of open interstate conflict, or the negative ones in the form of faster global dissemination of security threats.

Security challenges and threats

Do you expect a change in the perception of threats? What security challenges and threats will come to the forefront in connection with the pandemic?

The pandemic has largely exposed **the vulnerability of our societies and institutions**, as well as the fragility of international relations. What was initially a health crisis soon grew into economic and social crisis, **disrupting global supply chains** and providing opportunities for disinformation to **deepen public distrust towards institutions** and political representations. Cyber-attacks have increased with the transition to the „online world,“ underlining **the risk of hybrid threats**. Their influence has a major impact on critical infrastructure and society. It also increases the emphasis on developing **the disruptive technologies** that will be necessary to gain and maintain technological superiority. However, the pandemic did not eliminate pre-existing threats, it only accelerated some and weakened others. On the one hand, efforts to advance the geopolitical interests of various actors have been highlighted; on the other, some previously highlighted issues, such as global climate change, have receded into the background. One of the key challenges will remain **the rivalry between the great powers** and the struggle for the leading position in the world.

climate change
Russia terrorism
xenophobia and racism disruptive technology
hybrid threats
arctic region China
migration

We are facing the growing assertiveness of **China**, which will soon become the world's largest economy. In addition to strengthening its influence in the Pacific, the South China Sea or Southeast Asia, China is actively investing not only into its technological development, but also its defense. Thus a more intense great power contest between China and the United States of America may be expected.

Russia, with its deviousness and increasing assertiveness, remains an equally important player, especially in the regional context. A continuation of the strengthening of Russian-Turkish relations is foreseeable, while at the same time is there a weakening of Turkey's ties with its NATO allies.

Based on the experience of the pandemic, civil emergency planning is likely to become increasingly important, not only in the physical world, but in the online space as well. It has become clear how important it is to strengthen civil emergency management forces, which would not be able to respond adequately to the situation without the support and assistance of the armed forces.

A major threat that has come to the fore is the **deepening of the economic divide** between economically strong states and poor countries, which - especially when combined with **climate change** - can lead to both local conflicts, and uncontrollable migration and the threat of radicalisation, xenophobia and racism, or even international terrorism.

Given such a wide range of threats and challenges, the most important thing will be our ability to properly recognize and acknowledge threats, and to prepare for them so that we are able to respond adequately.



Defense spending in the pandemic times

Why is it important not to reduce defense spending, even during a pandemic?

The security threats we face have obviously not disappeared with the pandemic. On the contrary, their increasing number at regional, international, and global levels demonstrate **the importance of boosting defense spending**. Stability and security must be pursued not only at national levels, but also, critically, through international cooperation. Contributing of 2% of GDP to the national defense budget, to which we have committed as a member of NATO, is the absolute minimum of what we can do for our own stability and security. **Sufficient defense spending is a continuing prerequisite for peace and prosperity.**

During this pandemic it became clear that even when the Czech defense expenditure does not meet the needs of our military, it was nevertheless precisely our armed forces who played a crucial and positive role in addressing the consequences of the pandemic both in terms of personnel and logistical support. Here, however, it is important to **take into account the complexity of this issue and not only focus on the military compo-**

nents, but also on prevention, soft security or development aid. In order to counter hybrid and cyber threats, which are becoming increasingly important, it is necessary to invest in new technologies. Only in this way will we be able to respond to the likely international crises and potential conflicts, so it is necessary to invest adequately in our capabilities in all domains – land, air, sea, cyberspace and space.





Lt.-Gen. (Ret.) Heinrich Brauss

Senior Associate Fellow

German Atlantic Association

Do you expect the global security environment to be the same or different in the years ahead? If different, how will it change? If the same, then why?

I believe that the security environment is at an inflection point – the second time within a few years from a European point of view. In early 2014, Russia’s aggression against Ukraine and the illegal takeover of the Crimea peninsula fundamentally altered the security environment in Europe. The Russian leadership demonstrated that it was prepared to use military force against its neighbors with the aim of changing national borders in Europe to attain its geopolitical objectives. Consequently, after nearly 20 years of focusing on resolving international crisis management, NATO revived deterrence and defense as its core task. It has since been implementing a long-term program to significantly strengthen its relevant position. Today, only seven years later, the transatlantic community is confronted with a new strategic challenge of global proportion. The rise of China to world-power status in political, economic, technological, and military means is the most significant strategic development of our time. It profoundly changes the global balance of powers. We have entered an era of great power competition.

At the same time, while Russia continues to show an aggressive behavior pattern, we face several additional global and transnational challenges: enduring terrorism; continuous and enhanced cyber threats; risks from pandemics and the strategic implications of climate change with particularly significant consequences for the Arctic region where geopolitical competition will spill over. Finally, a major security risk are the emerging and disruptive technologies that will have a profound impact on security and defense, transforming the way armed forces are organized, equipped, and operate.

Do you expect a change in the perception of threats? What security challenges and threats will come to the forefront in connection with the pandemic?

Last year, the COVID-19 pandemic was termed by many a “global strategic shock”. It has affected almost the entire globe. The disease has had a profound impact on the populations and economies of nations, with possible long-term consequences. It has revealed the vulnerability of our societies, institutions, and international relations. This may come to impact our general understanding of security, leading to increased importance of human security beside national security. The concept of ‘resilience’ that has hitherto primarily applied to cyber defense, energy security, communications, measures against disinformation, propaganda, and other hybrid tactics, may in future also include enhanced civil preparedness and precautionary measures taken ahead of possible pandemics, including relocation of production sites and supply chains for medical supplies, protection equipment, and treatment

technology. Allied militaries have already been working to develop pandemic response contingency plans for contributing to civil emergency management.

Nevertheless, the current focus on managing the political and economic consequences of the pandemic does not mean that existing and emerging strategic challenges and potential threats for the transatlantic community and for Europe have disappeared, or that they are diminishing. On the contrary, the pandemic has had the potential to aggravate existing challenges. Potential adversaries have been looking to exploit the situation to further their own interests. Russia and China attempted to pursue geopolitical objectives by “a politics of generosity” (EU High Representative J. Borrell) driving a wedge between NATO Allies and EU Member States. Russia’s recent military buildup of more than 100,000 troops along the eastern and southern border of Ukraine has shown that it continues to be prepared to use military force to intimidate neighbors if Moscow deems it necessary. Moreover, if Russia deployed additional troops to Belarus – something that cannot be excluded considering recent developments there – the whole regional balance of forces would fundamentally alter. Furthermore, in breaching the 1987 INF Treaty, Russia has deployed new ground-based, nuclear-capable intermediate-range missiles in the Western part of Russia that are capable of striking key civilian and military targets across the whole of Europe.

At the same time, China poses a systemic challenge to the Western democracies as a whole cutting across the areas of security and economics. It will soon have the largest economy globally. Today, it already has the second largest defense budget worldwide and the largest navy. It is heavily investing in new capabilities including new and disruptive technologies. Its “One Belt, One Road” strategy attempts power projection through economics. Its investments in telecommunications, energy, and transport infrastructure in Europe could pose a risk to both the EU’s unity and NATO security. Beijing’s geopolitical claims and intimidating behavior in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond as well as its violation of human rights and democratic values require North America and Europe to develop a common approach on how to deal with China.

Why is it important not to reduce defense spending, even during a pandemic?

In view of the growing regional, transnational, and global challenges depicted above, it is of utmost importance for NATO Allies not to cease their efforts to invest in defense and enhance defense spending as committed to by way of the 2014 NATO Defense Investment Pledge. Namely reaching the goal of spending 2 percent of the national GDP by 2024. In 2016, at their meeting in Warsaw, NATO’s political leaders decided a comprehensive program to strengthen the Alliance’s deterrence and defense position. Substantial progress has since been made, but this process has not yet been completed. It must be implemented in full as soon as possible. What is particularly needed are sufficient forces at high readiness that can be moved rapidly across Europe to support and reinforce Allies that are located at NATO’s periphery and directly exposed to a potential military threat from Russia.

Moreover, there are growing indications of a Russian Chinese coalition causing the Western democracies to face two strategic challenges simultaneously – in the Euro-Atlan-

tic and Indo-Pacific regions. An example of this is Russia's recent buildup of large forces along its border with Ukraine paralleled by China conducting amphibious assault exercises and air incursions into Taiwan's air defense identification zone at the highest frequency in nearly 25 years. Nevertheless, containing China, countering Russia, and protecting freedom of navigation globally exceed even the U.S. potential. The United States also consider China its primary strategic competitor and a full-spectrum systemic rival. Washington is therefore shifting its strategic focus to the Indo-Pacific Region. It is currently reviewing its global force position and will likely strengthen its military presence there.

This has two major consequences. First, NATO must ensure strategic stability of the Euro-Atlantic region when the United States is engaged in the Indo-Pacific one. It must therefore continue to focus on maintaining credible deterrence and defense against Russia. Second, European Allies must do much more for the security of Europe—for deterring and defending against Russia, crisis management in Europe's southern periphery, and supporting the United States in protecting the sea lines of communications that are essential for Europe's economies. Therefore, they must invest in developing the forces and capabilities across all domains (land, air, maritime, cyber, space).



2014: *Signing of the Declaration on Ensuring Defence of the Czech Republic*



Vít Dostál

Executive Director

Association for International Affairs

Do you expect the global security environment to be the same or different in the years ahead? If different, how will it change? If the same, then why? Do you expect a change in the perception of threats? What security challenges and threats will come to the forefront in connection with the pandemic? Why is it important not to reduce defense spending, even in pandemic times?

The post-COVID-19 era will not be a return to pre-COVID-19 times. The world got faster, and the pandemic highlighted or accelerated some of the previously existing trends while other trends have been dampened. It has been a big test for the European Union, which on one hand tried to achieve agility and unity in public health matters, on the other hand did not want to abandon the highly ambitious program of green and digital transformation. The success rate of the EU in these matters suggests that it stood this test. Despite today's global politics being multipolar with many competing players, Europe is not heading towards oblivion and it will remain a leader in many areas.

Europe had been aware of the change of the international environment and its position in it, even before the outbreak of the pandemic. The EU is now more than an example for others and a laboratory that has been finding workable solutions inspiring and drawing attention of other countries and regions to act similarly. The good old days of the 90s' are long gone and many of the European representatives realized that the EU must not only behave well but become firmer and more resolute. The original thinking was first disrupted by the behavior of Russia, which rejected cooperation with the West and chose a path of confrontation, followed by China, which started its clumsy attempt to change the world order in its favor. Lastly, it is important to mention the Trump administration, which was less predictable for the allies of the US and was characterized by unparalleled transactional behavior.

Regardless of these changes, the basis of the European foreign policy has stayed the same – multilateral cooperation and effort to preserve rule-based order. The question is: How to combine this European ethos that enabled the success of the European integration with the confrontational and hostile international environment of today.

The EU must mainly take an active part in the process of reshaping the world order and international institutions and ensure that these changes will be in its favor. It should not believe in simple and easy solutions to the most pressing problems of today. Such behavior would be naive. There is simply no possibility for a fast recovery of European-Russian relations or closer cooperation with China. And likewise, it would be naive to expect smooth cooperation between the US and the EU being achieved just by the change of the US administration.

The EU must realize what assets it has in the matter of dealing with the global challenges of the 21st century. Europe has the highest quality of life in the world. It is a leader in science and technology, the cradle of deep and peaceful cooperation, the biggest economic block in the world, a pioneer in the matters of human rights (including digital rights), and a leader of the global effort to avert a global climate catastrophe.

It is also crucial to keep the EU as open as possible. This openness has always been its biggest asset. It was a source of its power, resilience, and assertiveness, and it is an integral part of its DNA. But this new international environment also requires an abundance of caution. Finding the balance between these two attitudes will be a big challenge in which every country can play an important role, including the Czech Republic.

Europe has managed to deal with the pandemic. (Central European institutions were sometimes more successful than some of its members.) This is a valuable experience that proved that the EU is capable of cohesive operation. Maintaining this cohesiveness when dealing with big challenges of the 21st century such as the green or digital transformation will be crucial. If successful, Europe can become a leader not only in economics but also in matters of international policy.



2015: Aleksander Kwaśniewski, former President of Poland, was the honorary guest of the conference

**Libor Frank**

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Do you expect the global security environment to be the same or different in the years ahead? If different, how will it change? If the same, then why?

There probably will not be a revolutionary change, but of course, we cannot exclude a “black swan event”. We can expect a more profound impact of globalization, be it a positive one like greater mutual economic dependence that leads to lower risk of war or a negative impact like a more dynamic spreading of security threats as we saw during the pandemic affecting the whole world in only a few months.

Do you expect a change in the perception of threats? What security challenges and threats will come to the forefront in connection with the pandemic?

As a result of the COVID-19 crisis the interest in previously emphasized security threats has been lowered (e.g., climate change, which had been highly discussed in 2019 and now is sidelined by both media and politicians). COVID-19 or pandemics in general will now, and soon, be in the focus of both politicians and the general public. This will lead to redistribution of resources and to partial neglect of other equally or more dangerous problems. The pandemic also revealed how easily the public opinion can be swayed when preferring security (or the feeling of it) to personal freedom. Disruption of cohesion of our society and the growing importance of information operations and disinformation is worrisome.

Why is it important not to reduce defense spending, even in pandemic times?

We could see that traditional sources of risks to our security, especially from authoritarian and imperialistic states (like Russia) remained a significant threat even during the pandemic. That is why maintaining sufficient means of military deterrence is of great importance. On the other hand, military is not the only category of defense spending. It might be more appropriate to talk about investments into security which include preventive measures, soft security measures, post-conflict assistance and development and so on. Large and well-equipped armies are highly effective in the deterrence of hostile states, but they are nearly unusable against big multinational threats or non-state actors the spending for which is insufficient on both national and international level.



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Do you expect the global security environment to be the same or different in the years ahead? If different, how will it change? If the same, then why?

Our inner conscience, which believes in international cooperation, is burning out. Although relevant international organizations, such as the World Health Organization, made enormous efforts to tackle the problems, each government took a major responsibility to protect human life by controlling their borders and implementing national health policy. In contrast to the previous global health crises, the global pandemic of COVID-19 has not fostered international cooperation, but it rather accelerated mutual distrusts and great power competitions, especially between the United States and China. One remarkable example of the mutual mistrust appeared when the Chinese military demonstrated their presence in the South China Sea by sending more fighter-jets to the Taiwan Strait while many countries have still suffered from the pandemic.

This clearly points to the fact that the strategic competition was not done by a single leader, like Mr Donald Trump. It is a systemic competition caused by the rise of the emerging power and exacerbated by the difference of political ideology of the U.S. and China. This will be the major aspect of global security environment in the upcoming years.

No small or medium-size countries can avert from the strategic competition. Even Japan, which still possesses the third-largest economic scale in the world, must carefully manage the security alliance with the United States and economic relations with China. Japan has long relied on a prescription called “hedging” – eliciting American engagement in the Asia-Pacific based on solid alliance while maintaining engagement with China based on the principle of open global economy and the de-facto regional production network. It has been doing so it can avoid being entrapped in making binary choices. Thanks to the leadership of the former prime minister Abe Shinzo, Japan successfully positioned itself as a normative leader of the so-called “Free and Open Indo-Pacific vision.”

Despite the heightened tensions between the U.S. and China, Japan has started taking side of the U.S. in the area of high-technology such as AI, quantum computing, and next-generation network. Some people may suspect it as a mere consequence of Tokyo’s confrontation with Beijing over the islands in the East China Sea. Japan, like the United States and liberal democratic partners, perceives China’s challenges as authoritarian. Country’s systematic challenges to liberal international order and an open economic system. As a democracy and true believer of international economic order, Japan is building a loose coalition against China. It wants to impose pressures on China’s further challenge to their periphery and international order and simultaneously keep a window of opportunity open for China to come back to the liberal order.

Do you expect a change in the perception of threats? What security challenges and threats will come to the forefront in connection with the pandemic?

While numerous people still suffer from the pandemic of COVID-19, scientific wisdom of the modern society is expected to incrementally reduce the threat of the virus to humanity. Given the recent development and distribution of the effective vaccine and medicines, COVID-19 per se may no longer be a major security challenge. However, the pandemic revealed new exogenous and endogenous threats, namely mutual distrust among states (great power rivalry), fears for free flow of people (risks of globalization), and xenophobia and racism (fragility in democracy).

The great power rivalry remains a key aspect of security challenge in the future. In addition to traditional security threats chiefly posed by states, there are new aspects of security issues in the great power struggle, such as the challenge of authoritarian regime to democracy and state capitalism to the liberal economic system.

Simultaneously, the COVID-19 pandemic induced new non-traditional threat perceptions. One is the fear over the free flow of people. Though anti-globalization movement is nothing new after the 2009 financial crisis, this pandemic raises concerns of many over the free movement of people, one of the fundamental aspects of globalization. Before the pandemic, for example, a risk of immigrants or refugees was considered in the context of domestic employment and social welfare. However, the threat of COVID-19 may add another layer of restrictions to border control soon.

Moreover, the emerging xenophobia and even racism is becoming a major security challenge in the western democracy, despite most of governments and ordinary people by no means incline toward such discriminative policies. This is a marginal phenomenon in each society. Because of this, the Japanese may feel threatened while visiting western nations due to several violent incidents against Asian people. Again, this sort of fragility in democracy is not new. Yet, while some democracies still struggle to resolve the long-lasting ethical issues, the pandemic further complicates it. People's instinctive "threat perception" over specific ethical groups should be considered a threat by security experts and statesmen of as many countries as possible

Why is it important not to reduce defense spending, even in pandemic times?

Military continues to play a key role not only in the protection of its own territory, but also in bringing peace and stability to the world. It is true that military could cause war between countries. Many modern weapons are designed to compromise adversary, including efficiently killing soldiers. At the same time, as we can see in NATO or Japan's Self-Defense Force as examples, their roles and responsibilities are broader than traditional military politics. NATO, an instrument of collective self-defense of member states, deploys its forces beyond their territory in support of peace and crisis management operations. Japan's SDF commits themselves to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, both domestica-

lly and globally. Recently, it also supports capacity-building of other countries' military for improving maritime domain awareness.

In the complicated security environment in which any states' military must address both traditional state-to-state rivalry and non-state security threat, it is impossible for any government suddenly reduce their defense spending. Especially not Japan which is surrounded by security hot spots – Korean Peninsula, Taiwan Strait, tensions with Russia. Defense spending should grow instead, from the current 1.3% of GDP to 2%. That means, the Government of Japan cannot radically increase its defense spending. As of 2021, the whole budget accounts for approximately US\$ 100 trillion; 35% for social welfare services, 15% for local municipality, 6.7% for infrastructure, 5.5% for education and 5.2% (US\$5 trillion) for defense. In an aging society, quantitative increase of budget may not be realistic. Japan, and maybe other advanced countries, must keep the quality of military without relying on quantitative increase.

Despite these budget limitations, the role of military is never shrinking, but rather expanding to the outer space and cyber space. Despite moral challenges, automation and unmanned vehicles should be utilized for surveillance and non-combatant activities. At the same time, the core of military is professional military personnel. Lastly, establishing and enhancing a society where military personnel can be proud of their missions without worrying about their living is key.



2016: The role of the keynote speaker was taken up by Alexander Vershbow, NATO Deputy Secretary General.



Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Ben Hodges

Pershing Chair in Strategic Studies
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Do you expect the global security environment to be the same or different in the years ahead? If different, how will it change? If the same, then why?

Great power competition...China as the top strategic challenge for the United States and the West. But Russia remains a revanchist power, a threat that routinely disregards international law and agreements it committed to. Their lack of transparency makes it difficult to trust or work with them.

Do you expect a change in the perception of threats? What security challenges and threats will come to the forefront in connection with the pandemic?

Leaders of the Western European countries have got to stay vigilant to the threats from China and Russia. They cannot use the pandemic as an excuse not to invest in defense capabilities and NATO, all of which are necessary to ensure stability and security.

Why is it important not to reduce defense spending, even in pandemic times?

The Chinese and the Russians have not reduced their aggressive threatening behavior at all, throughout the pandemic. Why do we think we can afford to let down our guard or stop the investments into proper defense?



Jana Hybášková

Special Envoy for Support of Czech Nationals in EU Institutions
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Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic

Do you expect the global security environment to be the same or different in the years ahead? If different, how will it change? If the same, then why?

At the moment, I see no reason that would lead to a fundamental change in security trends, those that we define and feel strongly about as well as those trends that we are just trying to realize and admit. That is why the resulting security environment will be different from what it is today. What these two security environments – the current and the future one – have in common is the advancing erosion of a quasi-stable security environment, the loosening of ties which we are used to, higher volatility, higher transactionality, random immediate alliances as globalization intensifies, demographic pressure, pressure on resources, climate change, recurring conflicts and unpredictability of new technologies and their use. The drive for development will be replaced by the drive for quasi-stability, with a false reduction in dynamics.

The United States cannot stop balancing with China, the way this balancing will look like will determine the major bipolar axis of our world. As a result, Europe will catch up with China, China to Russia and Europe to Russia. The question is how the transatlantic relations and the defense of Western democracy will look like in 20 years.

Without wanting to sound alarming, it is probably not possible to stop the temperature rise below 2 degrees. Africa will remain an issue because of its unstoppable depleting of resources, water sources and fertile soil. The Middle East presents another issue. Even though we would like to forget about the Middle East, the degree of emanation of their instability will not allow us to do so.

The fluttering of the new viral mutation wings, the global struggle for sequencing their genomes, the global struggle for vaccination, and the equally global production of vaccines point to advancing, not weakening, globalization.

The degree of volatility of the whole population and international system will be amplified by the degree of individual uncertainty of each and every one of us. Our awareness of a fixed place in this world is challenged daily by the awareness of our own inability to live a full life online – every upgrade to familiar applications, car sharing, child learning, love in self isolation, law enforcement through remotely controlled biometrics will further widen social gaps and increase the pressure of populism even to its extreme forms.

Do you expect a change in the perception of threats? What security challenges and threats will come to the forefront in connection with the pandemic?

Yes of course, I would very much like to see a change in the perception to happen. Preferably sooner than later. The ability to realize a threat and respond to is a key feature of living beings. We are all uncertain, anyone who has ever experienced a large earthquake knows how it feels to lose solid ground under their feet. It should help us overcome the non-sensical upbringing of the 20th century: Come on, it's nothing, go to sleep and it is going to get better in the morning. Furthermore, Central Europe is full of Monday morning quarterbacks saying, "We know very well what the government and the prime minister should have done last year to better face the threats". The problem is that in every one of our 26 security concepts and strategic documents a pandemic as a threat IS contained. Including the most recent strategic concept. So, it is not just about perceiving threats. It is about our responsibility and ability to accept and respond to the threats. Perhaps this could help us respond to challenges we cannot even imagine yet.

Why is it important not to reduce defense spending, even in pandemic times?

A pandemic is, just as flying surface-to-air missile, invisible. Yet, in our casted and interconnected world, it still attacks. The higher the level of unpredictable, unknown danger and global threats, the more important it is to have our own house in order. 2% of GDP for defense, as a clearly defined contribution to the protection of our "house" is the absolute minimum we can do for our own stability and security.



2017: NATO Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller



Jan Jireš

Head of Defense Counsellors

Permanent Delegation of the Czech Republic to NATO

Do you expect the global security environment to be the same or different in the years ahead? If different, how will it change? If the same, then why?

In the next decade, trends that began before the pandemic will continue, with some possibly accelerating somewhat. I consider the following to be the main trends:

- Growing global great-power rivalry, primarily between the US and China, but also Russia in a regional context. At the same time, in the case of both China and Russia, a growing domestic authoritarianism that will, among other things, lead to a further increase in their external aggressiveness as well as their willingness to use literally every power tool available, conventional or hybrid.
- The relative weakening of the US, including its unresolved domestic problems (institutional paralysis, political polarization, race relations, social problems, infrastructure) leading to further diminishing of US ambitions in international politics and security.
- The growing importance of new domains (cyberspace and space) for defense and security. Moreover, competition and confrontation are increasing in both domains.
- The growing importance of new and disruptive technologies for global power relations, the shape of conflicts, the power position of the West and its defenses. There will be a struggle for the West to retain technological supremacy in crucial technological areas.
- The defense and security impact of climate change. This concerns the shape and scale of conflicts and related needs in both military and non-military capabilities, as well as overall demographic and economic changes (including migration).

Do you expect a change in the perception of threats? What security challenges and threats will come to the forefront in connection with the pandemic?

It is clear that the experience of pandemics will reinforce the emphasis on protecting against biological threats, both those of natural origin and those created and deliberately used by humans (state and non-state actors). The issue itself is not new, pandemics have been on the list of security threats for years, including the 2015 Security Strategy of the Czech Republic. Another thing is that not much has been done. I therefore expect to see an increase in investment worldwide (including in Western countries and organizations) to protect against biological threats and weapons, particularly in the civilian sector, but also in defense (CBRN capabilities).

The pandemic has strengthened perceptions of global entanglement, which is generally a good thing, and it is not just about biological threats, but also about the climate, the economy, or energy. The experience of pandemics could also contribute to a greater emphasis

on comprehensive security policy coordination across the government/public sector and society as a whole (whole-of-government, whole-of-society). The absence of coordination (including unified strategic communication) is also a major problem in the Czech Republic.

Why is it important not to reduce defense spending, even in pandemic times?

In the end, the pandemic itself will not have as big a negative impact on our economy as it originally seemed. So, if some governments in Europe justify cutting defense spending with the economic hardship caused by the pandemic, it will be misleading. Such activities are rather intended to mask poor fiscal policies.

1. Threats and conflicts have not disappeared because of the pandemic. Not only are they still here and they will be for the future, but they're getting stronger and deeper. Local and regional conflicts in Europe's neighborhood continue, China and Russia will become increasingly aggressive. It is therefore necessary to reject the position that defense spending is just a kind of 'bonus' that we afford when we do not need money for anything else. Adequate defense spending, on the other hand, is a constant prerequisite for peace and prosperity. It's the basis on which the rest of it unfolds.
2. As the complexity of the security environment increases, technology is rapidly developing, and hybrid and cyber threats are having an increasing impact. To counter all this, we also need to invest in new and advanced technologies and capabilities. Investments in autonomous systems, cyber defenses, artificial intelligence, enhanced CBRN protection and the like must complement investments in conventional capabilities (ground forces, air defenses). In the current and future security environment, we need both, which means we will need more money.
3. Because the acquisition of weaponry with a large share of domestic industry has an anti-crisis effect. In addition, we will contribute diversification and greater sophistication of the Czech economy by supporting the development of the research and technology base in the Czech Republic.



Matej Kandrik

Director

STRATPOL – Strategic Policy Institute

Do you expect the global security environment to be the same or different in the years ahead? If different, how will it change? If the same, then why?

In the horizon of the next 5 years, I expect a serious international security incident that will significantly affect the interests of more than one major power. Directly or through proxy players, we will witness conflicting escalation between the great powers. Taiwan, the South China Sea, Belarus, Ukraine, Venezuela, Turkey, but also Afghanistan or Iran may be the sites of such a conflict. The increasing transformation of the international system towards more multipolar order will be accompanied by an increasing tension in the peripheries, the “points of contact” between individual alliances or blocks of individual powers.

Do you expect a change in the perception of threats? What security challenges and threats will come to the forefront in connection with the pandemic?

I expect more intensive debate and research in the areas of social resilience and civil preparedness. The central and universal lessons learned by the COVID-19 pandemic is, that the civilian forces of crisis management without the assistance of the armed forces would not be able to perform the tasks to the required extent. There is an internal debt in the capacities, capabilities, but also in the management and structure of our security system. This discussion should not leave out the issues of critical infrastructure (physical and cybernetic), the energetics, the health sector and supply chains for the economy’s critical sectors. Finally, we need to pay serious attention to the quality of democracy, social cohesion, and cognitive security.

Why is it important not to reduce defense spending, even in pandemic times?

Expenditure reduction is undesirable but necessary at the same time. Without a significant deterioration of the security environment, or at least a deterioration of its perception, there is no basis for a political order to keep defense spending at the level planned before the pandemic. Spending cuts must be accepted as a reality, and modernization and other defense plans must be adapted to them. At the same time, however, it is necessary to formulate a “red line” of minimum spending that ensures that forces as such will not degrade.

**Alica Kizeková**

Senior Researcher, Head of Asia Pacific Unit
Institute of International Relations Prague

Do you expect the global security environment to be the same or different in the years ahead? If different, how will it change? If the same, then why?

The global security environment was getting more dangerous even before the COVID-19 pandemic, primarily related to the increasingly assertive behavior of China, mainly due to strengthening of its influence in the Pacific, Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean. It is likely that this trend will continue considering more proactive international security and defense policy and efforts to reinforce the leadership and key members of the Communist Party of China (CCP). The Russian Federation has also become more assertive in recent years. This means that other states will find it more challenging to respond to actions of these great powers, especially simultaneously in cyberspace, in relation to territorial disputes and possibly activities related to hard military power. One way to boost resilience against these actions is to strengthen the cooperation between the EU, NATO, and alliances such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) composed of the US, Japan, India, and Australia and seek strategic cooperation not only in the sphere of security but also vaccine development or critical technologies. There is an effort to create an environment that would positively influence China to cooperate and not compete. The US with its America First policy made its allies feel uneasy, and as such, strategists will continue to find ways to build stronger and self-reliant military capabilities, as well as critical supply chains. However, it is debatable whether the internal decision-making processes will be streamlined because the strategic changes in the global security environment happened faster than anticipated. Domestic institutions and decisionmakers are not ready and do not have enough experience to respond effectively and update strategic documents or strengthen defense partnerships to reinforce the country positions against threats.

Do you expect a change in the perception of threats? What security challenges and threats will come to the forefront in connection with the pandemic?

There is a change in the intensity of activities of criminal organizations, in some cases reduced during the pandemic, giving us a false sense of security. Once the borders closed, not all these organizations were prepared for restrictions, which made transfers of weapons, drugs or people harder. Nevertheless, there are criminal organizations that are capable to exploit the current situation when government institutions and security forces have been preoccupied with executing solutions to counter the COVID-19 crisis. Additionally, bilateral and multilateral cooperation between countries decreased, which also helps organized crime to act without much interference by security forces.

There is a higher risk that employees will fall victims of cybercrime since they work increasingly from home. On one hand, social distancing lowers the risk of spreading

the Covid-19 virus. On the other hand, people are more vulnerable to cyberattacks, because not everybody has a secure Wi-Fi connection, up-to-date operating systems, software, or works with trustworthy information. There are also scams based on stolen personal information, which can have a serious effect on work, finances and private life of employees, or even on the security of the country.

Why is it important not to reduce defense spending, even in pandemic times?

The Czech Republic and the broader region face the most unfavorable strategic prospects since the World War II. Some even talk about the new Cold War. The relations with Russia are in crisis and there are increasingly tensions with the assertive China, which until recently did not take too many risks. President Xi Jinping did not risk his future nor the future of the China Communist Party with an open military conflict with Taiwan. Instead, Beijing focused on the annexations in the South China Sea, thefts of intellectual property or strengthening control in Hong Kong. However, one cannot completely rule out the possibility of an armed conflict. Nevertheless, the situation is riskier in relation to Russia, because Moscow conducted a military intervention in Georgia and Ukraine, regardless of the international law and the existing treaties in the last 13 years. The combination of security risks related to employees working from home in cyberspace, less joint military exercises with NATO Allies and the higher risk of military interventions of great powers call for an increase in defense spending so they adequately reflect the threats that the Czech Republic and its allies are facing. In the post-pandemic world, states will continue their efforts to become more self-sufficient. This also means that the Czech Republic will have to increase its defense spending because the country cannot fully rely on protections from other countries, including the US, which are also in a vulnerable position and they are trying to evaluate the efficiency of their security and defense institutions, flexibility of processes and their capabilities



The auditorium brings together representatives of the armed forces, representatives of ministries, security experts, diplomats or military attachés and other guests from the professional community.



Michal Kořan

President of the Board and Founder
Global Arena Research Institute

Do you expect the global security environment to be the same or different in the years ahead? If different, how will it change? If the same, then why?

The security environment has been changing quite rapidly in the past months, especially due to ever-increasing assertiveness and aggressivity of Russia and China and the strengthening links between these two. Looking beyond these immediate security traits, there are deeper trends that, if materialized, will have fundamental and transformative effect on the global security environment.

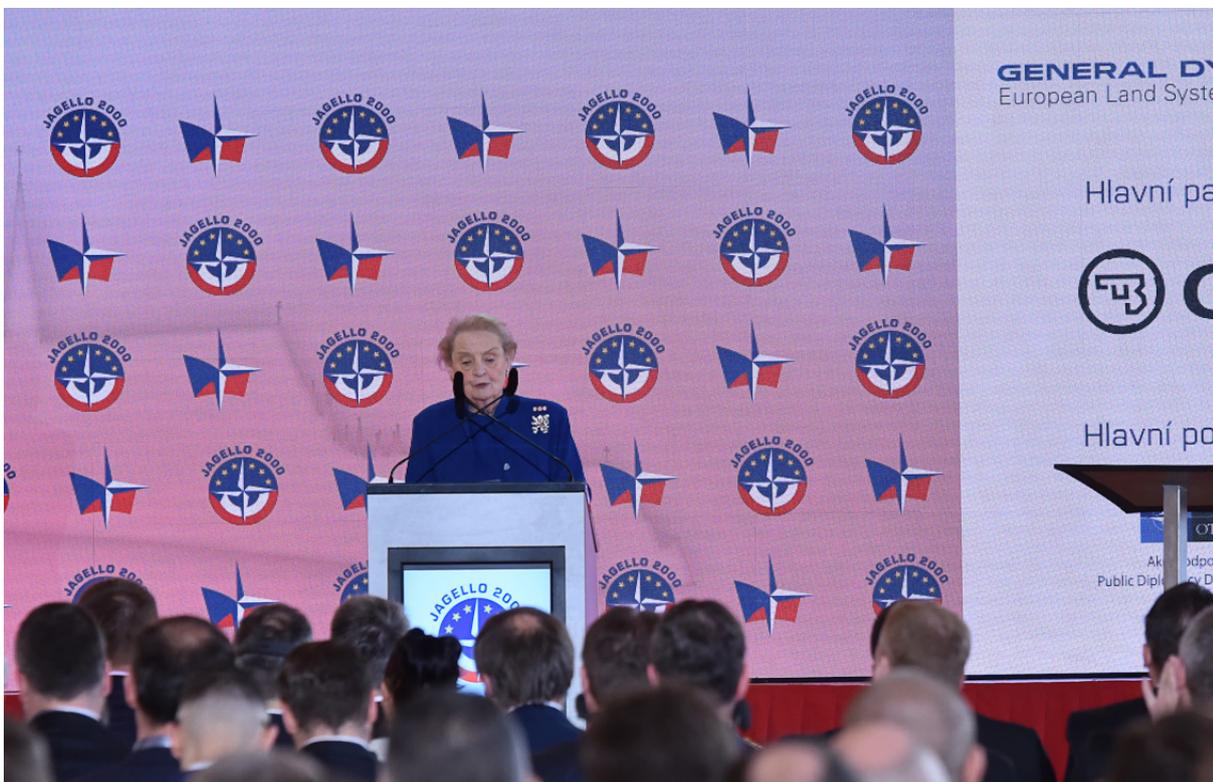
- Continuation of economic and political interconnection between US, China and Europe (decoupling) will lead to a less stable and less predictable global environment with more geopolitical security hotspot.
- Increasing role of technological competition with ramification to geopolitical and security environment.
- Increasing competition for rare resources, crucial for technological and energy transformations.
- Deepening link between cyber security, geopolitics and security in general.
- Further disaggregation of the Transatlantic community which begins to manifest itself in deepening rift between EU and Britain, Europe and US (especially in technological but also economic matters).
- Turkey's sliding further from the NATO family by restructuring its political, security, trade and economy position closer to its neighborhood and further South-East.
- Possible destabilization in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Do you expect a change in the perception of threats? What security challenges and threats will come to the forefront in connection with the pandemic?

The perception of threats has already changed, the meaning of the term „resilience“ has been strengthened again, and the issues of global connectivity and health issues have come to the fore. One particular security challenge that has already emerged is linked to the strained global supply chains and inflation: food security and the depletion of income of the middle class became much more prominent issue in the developing world, paving way to mass unrests (Kazachstan) and degradation of living conditions. In the past, these conditions have proven to be conducive to wider degradation of the regional security with ramification to global political stability as such. Another area which the COVID situation clearly affected is aggravation of political and social polarization in democratic and developed societies. This polarization can seriously hinder the democratic institutions leading to undermining the resilience and defensibility of these countries as such.

Why is it important not to reduce defense spending, even in pandemic times?

I believe that the development on the Russian – Ukrainian borders and the escalating situation around the Taiwan Strait, to name just two of many escalating security hotspots is an answer in itself.



2019: Madeleine Albright spoke on the occasion of 20 years of the Czech Republic in NATO

**Alice Krutilová**

Director of the Department for the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU
Office of the Government of the Czech Republic

Do you expect the global security environment to be the same or different in the years ahead? If different, how will it change? If the same, then why?

Cyberattacks, hybrid and disinformation campaigns will increase globally. The target of cyberattacks can be critical infrastructure or public administration information systems. Disinformation will continue to be disseminated in the context of managing the effects of a pandemic and in the context of elections not only in the case of world powers.

In the so-called offline world, the security situation may deteriorate for example in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of the US troops, further in Ukraine or the Middle East. The stability of the regime in Libya or developments in the Tigray Region will remain an issue.

Do you expect a change in the perception of threats? What security challenges and threats will come to the forefront in connection with the pandemic?

With the escalating attacks in the online world, the number of victims will increase, and thus the perception in terms of greater immediacy and proximity to the threat. In addition to endangering the provision of basic state services, there may also be a breach of the personal integrity of individual citizens. Citizens might be targets of data leakages or may experience loss of funds through online fraud. As the pandemic has moved many activities to the online environment, data protection and the robustness of the IT systems used will become increasingly important for the „ordinary“ citizen.

In the future, a pandemic may make governments much more inclined to close themselves in the event of threats to the outside world with regard to the need to ensure the protection of public health and consequently security as a whole.

At the same time, experience with dependence on the import of personal protective equipment or substances for the production of pharmaceuticals from non-democratic countries will incentivize EU governments to build their own capacities to strengthen the concept of strategic autonomy.

Why is it important not to reduce defense spending, even in pandemic times?

In general, from the point of view of the security situation of the Czech Republic, it is important not to cut defense costs simply because the „old“ security threats associated with political polarization will not disappear. The reason for that is the geography of the Czech Republic that will (hopefully never again) change, meaning that in our immediate neighbor-

hood there are and will be countries that are hostile to us. Especially if we refuse to be in their sphere of political or economic influence. Furthermore, the army has played a very positive role in dealing with the effects of the pandemic. The army provided both logistical and personnel support. A final reason for not cutting defense spending is that the spending has not been fully adequate in recent years.

With regard to the Czech Republic's involvement in the international community, it is essential that the Czech Republic is a reliable ally. In addition to continuing to achieve a certain percentage of defense spending in line with NATO membership commitments, the military must be able to carry out missions (such as those in Mali) and needs adequate staffing and equipment to do so.



Veronika Kuchyňová Šmigolová

Junior Deputy Minister and Director of the Department of the Americas

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic

Do you expect the global security environment to be the same or different in the years ahead? If different, how will it change? If the same, then why?

I believe that the security environment will continue to evolve, but unfortunately not for the better. Russia's assertiveness is growing, and its behavior is threatening a number of allied countries. Through aggressive practices, China is trying to gain more influence in its surroundings and in other regions (Africa, Latin America), where its policy can be called without exaggeration "neocolonial." China has also used pandemics to strengthen its influence in third world countries. As our NATO and EU allies become more aware of these threats, we should work together to find an appropriate response.

Do you expect a change in the perception of threats? What security challenges and threats will come to the forefront in connection with the pandemic?

Some threats have remained the same in recent years, others have been highlighted by the pandemic. The danger associated with cyberattacks (like attacks on hospitals, oil pipelines, etc.) and the digital environment in general is growing. The pandemic highlighted these threats by shifting a number of activities into the cyberspace during the pandemic.

Why is it important not to reduce defense spending, even in pandemic times?

The security threats from both adversary states and terrorist groups will not diminish or disappear due to the pandemic, we must maintain and strengthen our ability to respond adequately to them.



Gen. (Ret.) Petr Pavel

Former Chairman of NATO Military Committee

Former Chief of the General Staff of the Czech Armed Forces

Do you expect the global security environment to be the same or different in the years ahead? If different, how will it change? If the same, then why?

The development of the security environment cannot be separated from the overall development in the world. It will evolve just as dynamically. As a consequence of the advancement of new technologies, dominated by countries with incompatible governance and value systems, the effects of climate change and the resulting non-military threats, but also due to the widening of economic and social imbalances. The availability of sophisticated technologies will further complicate the identification of originators and strengthen commitment to hybrid and conventional aggressive actions.

Do you expect a change in the perception of threats? What security challenges and threats will come to the forefront in connection with the pandemic?

The global COVID-19 pandemic has clearly demonstrated the vulnerability and interdependence of the current world. The health crisis quickly translated into an economic and social crisis, disrupted global supply chains, provided opportunities for many categories of informers to deepen distrust of institutions and political representations. All this also has implications on the security situation. In addition, a number of countries have combined health crises with various forms of natural ones, such as floods, earthquakes or volcanic eruptions. The illusion of security in the Czech Republic, or even isolation from the crises of the outside world, has been replaced by many people's fears and frustrations about our lack of preparedness to deal effectively with complex crises.

Why is it important not to reduce defense spending, even in pandemic times?

Defense spending is part of a broader framework of security spending. The military no longer has only a role in keeping defense against external threats. As the lines between threats blur, it is essential to ensure adequate resources for all the elements involved in ensuring security in all its forms. Sustainable growth makes no sense without sustainable security.



Ivan Počuch

Director of Security Policy Department
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic

Do you expect the global security environment to be the same or different in the years ahead? If different, how will it change? If the same, then why?

The security environment, both regional and global, has changed significantly over the last decade. Number of current trends, most of them negative, will continue in the future. Global security will face many challenges. The recent NATO summit showed a clear consensus that the growing international geopolitical struggle and the strengthening of authoritarian regimes in the system of international relations are among the most serious threats. The impact of hybrid forms of warfare, including cyberattacks, is growing, and is usually used by powers with revisionist ambitions to an international rule-based order. The effectiveness of these forms of action/warfare is high for their perpetrators. In addition, they are extremely cost effective, therefore it can be assumed that their frequency and impact will increase. This will cause further instability in our surroundings and the wider world. Terrorism in various forms in the Middle East and the Sahel has also been contributing to this for a long time.



2019: The state ceremony on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the accession of the Czech Republic to NATO was attended by the Presidents of the Visegrad Four countries

The Euro-Atlantic Community is responding to these developments and defining appropriate responses. However, developments in Ukraine show that the traditional threats to European security are not disappearing. In the context of such a changing security environment, it is vital for the Czech Republic that NATO remains strong militarily, as well as cohesive politically, with the ability to respond to global security environment trends and challenges that may affect European and Euro-Atlantic security. The Alliance's complementary engagement with the EU is becoming an essential precondition for defending the existing international order and maintaining the security of Euro-American civilization.

Do you expect a change in the perception of threats? What security challenges and threats will come to the forefront in connection with the pandemic?

The pandemic clearly underlined the fact that threats to our security are not just a matter of a few ministries, that they do not have to be purely military, and that a comprehensive intergovernmental approach is needed to ensure security. The continuous strengthening of the resilience of state institutions, the public and private sectors and society is becoming the first line of defense against new type of threats. Together with NATO and EU partners, we have been seeing this for a long time. The pandemic shows that even entirely civilian means and instruments can be used as a weapon of geopolitical rivalry. Strengthening and expanding the areas of state and social resilience of our countries in parallel with adaptation to technological evolution and methods of hybrid warfare is and will continue to be the subject of discussions at the Alliance, European and national levels.

Why is it important not to reduce defense spending, even in pandemic times?

The pandemic of the new coronavirus also provided a very telling answer to this question. We still have in mind what a huge problem a situation can be when we are confronted with an unexpected threat and do not have adequate resources for an effective response. We have clearly seen the problem of obtaining „mere“ medical and protective material. The above-described instability and unpredictability of the global security environment and the wide range of traditional and so-called unconventional, asymmetric threats require adequate funding in line with the Czech Republic's commitments at the 2014 Alliance Summit in Wales. The cost of conventional defense and deterrence in peacetime is also rising, and the Allies are expected to agree to increase and expand joint funding from NATO's military and civilian budgets and the security investment program in the near future, based on a needs analysis.

**Josef Procházka**

Deputy Director

Centre for Security and Military Strategic Studies,
University of Defense**Do you expect the global security environment to be the same or different in the years ahead? If different, how will it change? If the same, then why?**

Global security environment is getting more dangerous. One of the indicators of this process is the so-called “Global Peace Index” by Institute for Economics and Peace, which is based on 23 criteria and covers military and non-military security challenges. During the last 12 years, this index decreased in 9 of them. Among 163 evaluated countries we could see an average 0,34% drop a year in this 12-year period. The Czech Republic now holds the 8th place in this security ranking and its security condition is therefore very favorable. Europe as a whole is also a very secure region. On the other side of the scale are traditionally the least secure regions – The Middle East and North Africa. The highest economic impact of violence (that reduced in some states the GDP by up to 60%) has been observed in Syria, Afghanistan, and South Sudan. Defense spending is nominally rising worldwide and its proportion to GDP as well. (First time in five years).

The global security environment is affected by the rivalry between global powers, ongoing climate changes, diseases, financial crises, and technological advancement. Climate change will probably affect all regions and all countries. Most of these challenges are not controlled by humans, nevertheless, they are still able to put the security and prosperity of our society to the test and can cause huge shocks with massive impact.

The climate change is an increasingly intensifying global threat and an amplifier of instability. The number of natural disasters tripled during the last four decades. Due to this we can expect big migration waves by the year 2050 – 86 million from sub-Saharan Africa, 40 million from South Asia and 17 million from Latin America. One billion people face shortage of food, two billion people face shortage of fresh drinking water. Humankind is also affected by worsening air quality. Climate change is accelerating instability of the international community, which is out of balance, defragmented and dominated by rivalry instead of cooperation.

Do you expect a change in the perception of threats? What security challenges and threats will come to the forefront in connection with the pandemic?

The human mind tends to perceive immediate danger impacting one’s security and prosperity quite sensitively. On the other hand, it tends to suppress weak signals that are more long-lasting, ambiguous, and not so obvious or urgent.

In the context of the so-called “hard security” we cannot expect any change in the trend of boosting military capabilities of NATO countries for near-peer high intensity war-

fare. It is a consequence of rivalry between global powers. This rivalry impacts every aspect of our society and plays its part even in managing global pandemic (e.g., manufacturing and distribution of protective gear, and vaccine development and trade).

COVID-19 pandemic affects the global security environment. Its impact is especially prominent on weak and failing states, where it deepens their economic fall and accelerates all negative trends that are already present, such as surge of violence, food deficiency, bad governance, and growth of migration. Stable and economically strong countries will be able to overcome the impacts of the pandemic much faster and with much smaller long-term effect on their economy and security.

The pandemic is also fundamental for proving the viability of the European integration project. It is vital for the EU to come out of this crisis stronger and viewed as an effective tool for solving not only economic issues but security problems as well. It must follow the path of solidarity, resilience and long-lasting consensual deals and avoid renationalization of processes like we saw during the migration crisis or the COVID-19 crisis.

Why is it important not to reduce defense spending, even in pandemic times?

Defense spending is an elemental part of Czech contribution to the collective defense. The era of multipolar world and rise of rivalry between superpowers brings the need for trustworthy collective deterrence, and relevant hard security military instruments. These instruments must be kept fully ready to deal with a wide spectrum of their possible implementation, including high intensity conflict. Strengthening of coherence of key international organizations is fundamental for Czech security and defense. Czech Republic must be viewed as a reliable, predictable, and solidary ally. Defense spending cuts and failures to comply with our international obligations can make us the “black sheep”. This situation would be dangerous for our defensive capacity. Defense cuts are sending negative signals to our allies and they are helping Russian efforts to disrupt ties between Western nations.

**Zsolt Rábai**

Vice President

International Center for Development and Democratic Transition
Foundation Hungary**Do you expect the global security environment to be the same or different in the years ahead? If different, how will it change? If the same, then why?**

In the upcoming years the security environment will be very complex. Rivalry of the two major powers, the USA and China spiced with the irrefutably assertive Russia will be a decisive factor. The fight over sea dominance, the Arctic and in the space will characterize the new era. In a worst-case scenario, the rivalry and fight for dominance might overshadow what should be the final goal of all security policies, ensuring human security. In other words, the aim is to create a safe, secure, and accountable environment.

Nowadays we can witness a worrying new arms race with globally increasing military budgets. The use of Artificial Intelligence for both internal and external security will raise a number of moral and legal issues.

The coming years will confront us with a number of burning questions concerning the efficiency of the present international institutions. Are they capable of handling the dynamic changes and potential power-shifts? A forced status quo would only deepen the tensions.

The present tendency of increasing economic protectionism, economic and financial consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic will increase the gap between the rich and the poor countries. This, together with the impact of global warming on the environment e.g., desertification, flooding, increasing water scarcity etc. will further strengthen the “push factors” for migrants. Illegal migration will be one of the central topics of the public discussions on security in Western countries and can be well used as a leverage for radicalization.

Internal cohesion will be crucial to both the EU and NATO! NATO is still the strongest, however its efficiency could be jeopardized from the inside by the lack of political cohesion. In several NATO countries one can witness a growing polarization of the society, growing nationalism, political corruption and erosion of democratic values. Those tendencies can cause serious problems for the internal cohesion.

The Balkan region is still an unfinished chapter that can have a serious impact on the security of Europe. Mismanaged minority policies added to international and internal power games can lead to serious conflicts, further radicalization, growing nationalism and the attempts to change borders by force.

Do you expect the global security environment to be the same or different in the years ahead? If different, how will it change? If the same, then why?

The COVID-19 pandemic seriously challenged the resilience of our nations and societies. Resilience factors go beyond military aspects, are multifaceted and often untraditional. The increased focus on resilience requires a wider approach to national security. Governments should seriously work on improving the interaction between the defense sector and the civilian one. The public-private partnership and the cooperation with the civil society will be crucial.

NATO capabilities and infrastructure should allow it to deal with issues such as pandemics or natural disasters. Though the origin of COVID-19 does not seem to be a biological weapon, the pandemic confronted NATO Allies with the fact that the Alliance was not properly prepared to handle the consequences of a possible attack with biological weapons. NATO could play only a very limited role in managing the crisis. NATO CBRN defense capabilities and procedures need further attention.

The COVID-19 pandemic created a situation, when cyber security became a question of survival for individuals, companies as well as governments. We could not see a more visible role of NATO in handling the difficulties other than focusing on maintaining its own cyber capabilities to function.

If the Alliance wants to remain relevant in the eyes of its constituents, the only protection of NATO troops and infrastructure is not enough in the case of both CBRN and cyber defense capabilities.

Why is it important not to reduce defense spending, even in pandemic times?

The COVID-19 pandemic has confronted our nations with certain shortcomings relating to resilience which require further attention and investment. At the same time the situation that led to the need to increase the defense budgets has not changed. The declared goal of China and Russia is to challenge the present international order. Both countries have started modernizing their armed forces with the desire to use them as a practical instrument in advancing their global foreign policy interests.

Therefore, defense budget should be not cut, but rather be extended or well-coordinated with the investment needs of the resilience factors beyond strictly military aspects.



Jana Robinson and Prague Security Studies Institute Team
Managing Director

Do you expect the global security environment to be the same or different in the years ahead? If different, how will it change? If the same, then why?

The global security environment will continue to move towards greater complexity. Apart from traditional threats, we will be increasingly exposed to new non-traditional risks and threats, many of which are linked to the development of new technologies and the ambitions of the authoritarian regimes of China and Russia to erode the current international status quo and shape the international environment to their benefit.

The longer-term trend of shifting from state military hard power to other forms of combat, including activities of non-state actors, often indirectly controlled by states, will continue. The field of hybrid activity is evolving particularly rapidly. Its tools are being constantly improved and continue to produce new threats for critical infrastructure and society, requiring an equal degree of sophistication of prevention systems, identification, and response to these operations. In regard to the distribution of power relations in the world, China's assertiveness will continue to grow, largely in the context of the continued modernization of its military, especially naval, air, missile and space forces. This modernization enables to project power more effectively through a civil-military fusion strategy. Cooperation between China and Russia in certain areas, such as the Arctic and the space domain, is becoming a challenge.

Do you expect a change in the perception of threats? What security challenges and threats will come to the forefront in connection with the pandemic?

The perception of threats is constantly evolving, but the pandemic highlighted the consequences of the state's lack of preparedness to respond to non-traditional challenges and threats. For example, the pandemic highlighted the ongoing vulnerability of society to misinformation. The long-term underestimation of the influence of misinformation and the fact that prevention can no longer help in a crisis has been demonstrated. The state's lack of preparedness to coordinate and communicate effectively inter departments and clearly with citizens has also been demonstrated. Indirectly, it has also increased awareness of threats in cyberspace, particularly in the context of the transferring of operation of many companies and of educational and other state and non-state organizations to online form. It has increased the need to take an interest in cyber security and the general awareness of employees, workers, and other users (e.g., teachers) about safe online behavior in general. During the COVID-19 crisis, the number of cyberattacks also increased rapidly (multiplied by the general of recent years).

In general, more interest can be expected in less traditional and overshadowed forms of security such as human security, biosecurity, and environmental security.

Why is it important not to reduce defense spending, even in pandemic times?

The risk of other threats did not decrease with the onset of the pandemic. On the contrary, the pandemic has shown the need to invest more resources to face harmful and dangerous activities in non-traditional domains such as the economic and financial market or the information space.

Great power competition between the most important state actors has not lessened, it has in fact strengthened, therefore not only the reduction but also the stagnation of defense spending would have serious consequences for our nation's defenses, both in terms of open military conflict (e.g. obsolete technology), as well as the aforementioned hybrid effect, which may paralyse the functioning of society or undermine the democratic values and principles on which our state is founded.

In the context of hybrid operations, it is important to concentrate resources in securing critical infrastructure against attacks, mainly through developing strategic communication systems and adequate and timely response capabilities. This will also be helped by investments in regular simulations and stress tests to verify the resilience of the system.

Moreover, the military itself can be very helpful in dealing with crisis, including the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., deploying military doctors in hospitals or ordinary soldiers at checkpoints or vaccination centers etc.). The military should not serve as a primary actor to deal with crisis situations, but can play an important role in them, when it is deployed effectively in accordance with the functioning of state law (e.g., in the aftermath of environmental disasters etc.)

Finally, it is critical that the state works to gain social trust. This can only be achieved through the most effective coordination and strategic vision, involving not only the public and security forces, but also the education, media, non-profit and private sectors. And, of course, close cooperation with partners in Europe and the US.

**Michael Romancov**

Political Geographer

Institute of Political Studies of the Faculty of Social Sciences
of Charles University**Do you expect the global security environment to be the same or different in the years ahead? If different, how will it change? If the same, then why?**

Relations between superpowers are and have always been crucial for the development of the global security environment. At the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century it seems to be obvious that the era of cooperation between global superpowers (China, Russia and the US) is gone and we are entering the era of high competition that can easily turn into an era of confrontations (probably similar to that during the Cold War). The EU has not yet taken advantage of this situation to transform itself from a “supermarket” to a respected global power. But maybe Brexit, that caused the fact that nowadays only one member of the EU has a seat in the UN Security Council and nuclear weapons, will change that. Britain, which decided to become “global”, now wants to strengthen its cooperation with its former dominions – Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. This way it can establish itself as a true global player. Similarly, France, of course with the help of Germany, can become a key player in the process of establishing “Global Europe”. The country which will clearly be more and more assertive with its growing potential is India. Russia, on the other hand, is declining in all measurable aspects and will be more and more reliant on China. I assume that in medium-term horizon (approximately 15 years) all above-mentioned powers will play a major role in the world and it is clear that their relations will be affected by now unforeseeable processes, similar to Arabic Spring in 2011.

Do you expect a change in the perception of threats? What security challenges and threats will come to the forefront in connection with the pandemic?

Undoubtedly yes. The pandemic showed us negative aspects of the global economy and the key players will now try to minimize them. Just as China and Russia have been for years trying to minimize the impact of the internet on the political and economic stability of their political regimes, democratic states will now try to minimize weak spots exposed by the pandemic, like vulnerability of supply chains, big concentration of production of key components or medicaments in one part of the world, or security of naval trade routes and so on.

Why is it important not to reduce defense spending, even in pandemic times?

Because there is no freedom and sovereignty without robust defense. And if we do consider these values important, it is time to prove it.



Eva Svobodová

External Relations Director

CZG – Česká zbrojovka Group SE

Do you expect the global security environment to be the same or different in the years ahead? If different, how will it change? If the same, then why?

We expect a continuation of the trend of competing state actors on a global scale (especially the US and China) and on the regional level (US, China, Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, India, Pakistan etc.), as well as continued influence of non-state actors in the form of international terrorism. Both trends will be reflected in the growth of defense spending.

Do you expect a change in the perception of threats? What security challenges and threats will come to the forefront in connection with the pandemic?

The perception of threats has already changed, with not only conventional threats but also hybrid threats, i.e., cyberspace, disinformation, etc. The pandemic, whose beginnings were characterized by border closures and lack of protective equipment, brought back to the fore the role of state vs. transnational organizations, which were sidelined in the handling of the pandemic, as well as the issue of national self-sufficiency or, in other words, ensuring strategic independence vs. long supply chains, which have been disrupted by the pandemic to a large extent.

Why is it important not to reduce defense spending, even in pandemic times?

Apart from the fact that the Czech Army has been significantly involved in helping the population during the pandemic, it is necessary that it has sufficient resources to modernize and thus be able to fulfil its tasks and allied commitments, because global threats have not disappeared with the coronavirus. Moreover, defense spending and modernization also provide opportunities for the domestic defense industry, which, like other sectors of the economy, is coping with the effects of the coronavirus crisis.

**Gen (Ret.) Jiří Šedivý**

Head of the Department of Security Studies
CEVRO Institute

Do you expect the global security environment to be the same or different in the years ahead? If different, how will it change? If the same, then why?

COVID-19 crisis brings a substantial change to the international security environment. At present, it is not sure how big this change is going to be, but it will certainly alter relations between superpowers on a global scale and it will also affect big regional problems at the same time. The ongoing crisis will also affect the future standings of global powers. It is obvious now, which countries will come out of the crisis strengthened and which will have to fight to keep their present time position. For example, ambitions of China to use this crisis for its self-empowerment are obvious. We can't overlook the increased activity of China in the South China Sea and its growing influence in Africa and the Middle East – as the new Sino-Iranian 25-year Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, signed on the 27th of March 2021, shows us. But this is not only about China. NATO Allies, including the Czech Republic, are increasingly frequently targets of a large spectrum of malevolent Russian activities, as we could see in Bulgaria or Italy, where a Russian spy network was recently exposed. Another problem, which we have not been able to manage yet, is Turkey and its pro-Russian orientation and ambitions to become a regional power.

Do you expect a change in the perception of threats? What security challenges and threats will come to the forefront in connection with the pandemic?

We will become more aware of hybrid threats than ever before because they will become less theoretical and more real. The war will also remain a threat, especially the probability of conflict between China and the US will increase. This will also affect the Chinese-Russian relationship, and we can expect strengthening of their partnership. For us it means that we will have to deal with even bigger ambitions of Russia and its partners in Europe. The cyberspace won't be the only hybrid battleground in the post- COVID-19 era, because the economic "battleground" will be much more important. Countries that will remain economically strong, or even stronger than in the pre-COVID era, will use their economic power much more ruthlessly than before. Potential economic and financial crises will become new sources of rivalry and subsequently also sources of security risks. Generally, our competitors will have a much wider range of instruments in their hybrid warfare arsenal. They will also use these instruments much more aggressively against any weak spot we show them.

Although we are more focused on traditional threats, a COVID-19 crisis in Africa or the Middle East can spark a new wave of mass migration or terrorism – even larger than in recent years. Let's keep in mind Mali, Nigeria, still unsolved Afghanistan, or the European problem called Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Why is it important not to reduce defense spending, even in pandemic times?

Everything mentioned above is only a brief overview of our future security problems. The situation is much more complicated and serious problems can appear in no time. We have experienced this before. War in Eastern Ukraine or the rise of ISIS were also very abrupt. Deep analysis and understanding of the background of crises should lead us to the realization that the situation in the world is drastically changing and the international environment, which the Czech Republic is a part of, along with it. Every country tries to improve its position – among its allies and among its adversaries. The power of the country has three main pillars – political, military, and economic. Every pillar must be as strong as the other two and none of them should become a weak point. This also applies to the Czech Republic. We must be aware of the increased complexity of the international environment. Decisions that will be made in this phase can be as dangerous or advantageous as decisions that had been made after WWII or after the collapse of the Soviet bloc. All these decisions have a strong impact even today. Having a strong military pillar was advantageous for us during our history. Our legions during WWI and our units abroad in WWII secured the status of the victorious power for Czechoslovakia and the deployment of our troops in the Balkans helped us achieve membership in NATO. And this crisis shows us that our military is still valuable for our society. Only a well-prepared military with good equipment and good structure can fulfill its role whenever it is needed.



Kristína Urbanová
Editor in Chief
CyberSec.sk

Do you expect the global security environment to be the same or different in the years ahead? If different, how will it change? If the same, then why?

The security environment is no different from human life - it is dominated by continuous change. These may be stimulating or self-propelled, expected or unpredictable, almost unobservable or groundbreaking changes, sometimes sudden and sometimes lengthy. Since the beginning of time, the dynamic system in which we ensure our security in reflects the social processes indicated by technological progress. The pandemic has noticeably accelerated this development. In all areas of human interaction, the pandemic pointed to an unprecedented dependence on chips, servers, and cyberspace. The development of modern technologies in combination with fragile global standards of norms paves the way for the irreversible asymmetry of relationships in the security environment. It enables the rise of conventionally marginal states as well as determined non-state actors. For this reason, it is necessary not only to adapt to this environment, but also to confidently shape it in accordance with our values. The future security environment will be different. However, today we are deciding to which degree will the future security environment be stable.



2020: The COVID-19 related restrictions allowed participation of the NATO Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoana only via videoconference.

Do you expect a change in the perception of threats? What security challenges and threats will come to the forefront in connection with the pandemic?

The change in the nature and subjective perception of threats occurs in parallel with the focus of their impacts gradually shifting within society. The world has slowed, the perception of threats has intensified. Whether it is the erosion of democratic principles and the law, the weakening of social cohesion and state authority, cognitive manipulation and the spread of misinformation, economic instability or climate change, security is no longer a concept detached from everyday life. We also immediately perceive the vulnerability of critical infrastructure and supply chains, perhaps the most tangible evidence of which is the recent cyberattack on the United States oil industry. We are currently facing threats that know no geographical boundaries, do not distinguish the civilian from the military, and take place below the threshold of armed conflict. Therefore, it is necessary to formally reformulate the threat threshold and to increase its sensitivity to more widespread but seemingly insignificant destabilizing factors and actions. The easiest way to weaken society remains from within.

Why is it important not to reduce defense spending, even in pandemic times?

In both the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the pandemic has demonstrated in practice the indispensability of defense institutions for resolving crisis situations of any nature. This was thanks to staff numbers, the ability to quickly mobilize and coordinate, and thanks to technical equipment. Contrary to the often-used public discourse, defense spending does not mean spending taxpayers' money on pieces of pointless technology. Defense spending means fulfilling a commitment to the Allies, without which it is bold to expect a helping hand in time of emergency. Defense spending paves the way for successful competition in the labor market and the development of cooperation with the private sector. Defense spending means a declared adaptation to a dynamic security environment and the ability to face a wide range of modern threats. Defense expenditure is not expenditure but rather a strategic investment in crisis mitigation and preparation, which is always more advantageous than damage resolve.



Robert Vass
President
GLOBSEC

Do you expect the global security environment to be the same or different in the years ahead? If different, how will it change? If the same, then why?

The nature of the current security landscape suggests that core principles like great power competition and the struggle of competing governance models will remain in place, and most likely intensify. The competition between the United States on one hand and China and Russia will only grow in the nearest future. Rivalries between these states over the control of emerging disruptive technologies (EDTs) and dominance over international norm setting represent two of the most pronounced aspects of this current landscape that shows no sign of slowing down.

Underscoring this competition is the re-emergence of a pronounced ideological struggle between democratic and non-democratic states on the global stage. Not since the Cold War, has there been such an impetus by democracies to organize and defend their principles. This exercise is complicated by the fact that within western democracies, trust in democratic institutions and the legitimacy of electoral outcomes has been severely weakened by social media platforms who struggle with policing disinformation that has created a space for exploitation by western adversaries.

Looking to the future, one area that can be expected to change is the development and rise of soft security threats derived from climate change. An existing body of evidence already confirms that adverse impact climate change has severe consequence on human and economic security. With dwindling access to natural resources, like water and agriculture, in vulnerable regions, it is fair to assume more localized conflicts will take place.

Do you expect a change in the perception of threats? What security challenges and threats will come to the forefront in connection with the pandemic?

For the most part, nations will remain preoccupied with traditional threat perception centered around hard security challenges. The geographical focus will however continue to evolve as apparent in Pentagon's latest budget proposal, which shifts spending priorities to deter China. More money will go to the Navy and Air-Force whilst Army will experience cuts. This trend is likely to continue as the Pacific is becoming main area of super-power competition.

The last few years have seen a rapid expansion of advanced micro-electronic technologies and their application by the military. Whilst the US has lagged behind China in this process, the current administration has recognized this gap. The Pentagon's budget foresees a major hike in research and development spending to the tune of \$ 112 billion, including major investments in micro-electronics, artificial intelligence and 5G networks. The

role of advanced unmanned technologies will undoubtedly grow in our security perceptions of the future.

As the role of the pandemic is concerned, it has highlighted two essential trends, which will continue to grow with time. Firstly, the role of information and its possible weaponization. Secondly, the geopolitical role of modern medicine. The misinformation about the pandemic fueled a number of conspiracy theories, some of which were used and even spread by government agencies to achieve certain geopolitical goals. The race for the development of vaccine has also had a geopolitical edge. The current application of competing vaccination products around the world is too having geopolitical implications.

Why is it important not to reduce defense spending, even in pandemic times?

If we have learned anything from the pandemic, having a military that is fully operational and ready is imperative both for mission success at home and abroad. Geopolitics does not stop because of a pandemic, where there are countless examples of countries using the state of the pandemic to advance their foreign and security objectives. Consequently, not only does this investment in defense spending serve to deter potential aggressors, it also represents an area to stimulate economic growth and generate innovation through more research and development opportunities. It is clear, for example, that more resources would need to be directed towards the acquisition and development of modern technologies.

8th national conference Our Security Cannot Be Taken for Granted



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